

Austria

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In order to understand Austria's security policy and its strategic culture it is above all necessary to appreciate the history of the country, resulting in peculiarities seldom found in other countries of the European Union (EU). After World War II (WWII) the country had to regain its full sovereignty and especially with regard to security and defence policy. However, the Allied Powers imposed certain restrictions in this field. In the course of the negotiations on Austrian independence, one of the preconditions, set especially by the Soviet Union, was the declaration of neutrality on 26 October 1955. This declaration has to be seen in the wider context of the *State Treaty* of 15 May 1955, restoring the independent and democratic state of Austria. The Federal Constitutional Law on Neutrality stipulates in Article 1 that the neutrality should be of a permanent nature and in its second paragraph, that Austria is prohibited from joining any military alliance or allowing the deployment of foreign troops on its territory. As Hauser rightly points out, Austrian permanent neutrality was a product of the Soviet peaceful coexistence policy that created a neutral Alpine wedge, together with Switzerland, cutting NATO's northern flank from the southern one (Hauser 2007: 46). Initially, Austria's neutrality was to be modelled on the concept of Swiss neutrality, but quite soon, Austria's neutrality changed and developed in its own way, but maintained the myth of comparability to the Swiss model. Henceforth the concept of Austrian neutrality was the subject of intensive debates in the country, spurned by its accession to the UN in December 1955 and the European Council in April 1956. According to Karl Zemanek, there were already contradictions at the time between the Austrian concept of neutrality and the obligations deriving from UN membership (*ibid.*).

Compared to the international dimension of Austrian foreign policy, the European dimension was underdeveloped. In 1959, Austria became a founding member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), while EC membership was rather untenable at the time due to restrictions set by the neutrality. However, in 1956, the Austrian armed forces were called on to deal with the first of two border crises with profound consequences for Austria's strategic thought. In the same year the Hungarian uprising was crushed by the Soviet Union, and 170,000 Hungarians fled into Austria. The second crisis took place in 1968, when Warsaw Pact troops invaded neighbouring Czechoslovakia. Austria's experiences during the Hungarian and Czechoslovak crises helped clarify the nature of the potential threat to the nation's neutrality and led to a reorientation of defence policy and consequently to a revised definition of the military's mission. At the beginning of the 1960s,

Austria actively engaged in UN peacekeeping operations, such as the operations in Congo (1960–1963) and Cyprus 1964 (Kramer 2006: 813). During the Cold War period, Austrian neutrality became important within the framework of a very active and peaceful neutrality policy as stated by Chancellor Kreisky during his tenure from 1970 to 1983. At that time all major parts of Austrian foreign policy were considered to be subsumed in Austria's neutrality (Skuhra 2006: 843). Austria was by then actively involved in the drafting and adoption of the Helsinki Final Acts in 1975 in the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and was still an active member of international organisations. As a consequence, Austria's neutrality policy and attitudes shifted towards active neutrality.

With the fall of the Iron Curtain and the Austrian accession to the EC/EU in 1995, the security policy changed significantly and was from then on directly linked to the developments on the European level. When Austria joined the EU together with Finland and Sweden, no special arrangements were made to accommodate the new "neutral" members. On the contrary, they had to sign a joint declaration, which was added to the Final Act of the Accession Treaty, stating that they would be ready and able to participate fully and actively in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the EU and that their legal framework would be compatible with the rules and traditions of CFSP (Hey 2003: 102). In fact, with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, the creation of CFSP became one of the main objectives of all EU member states, including the *de jure* neutral countries of Austria, Finland, Ireland, and Sweden. As a consequence of the Austrian EU membership, the understanding of neutrality has changed fundamentally and the importance of the concept in policy-making has diminished considerably. Article 23f (Article 23j after the Lisbon Treaty) of the Austrian Federal Constitution (Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz, B-VG), which was introduced in the course of the Austrian accession to the EU, allows the Austrian participation in CFSP activities spanning the whole spectrum of the Petersberg tasks, including crisis management and peacemaking operations. Therefore, in the opinion of the country's leading constitutional law experts, the concept of neutrality has lent itself to consistent derogation in practice (Öhlinger 1999: 96; Walter/Mayer 2000: 168).

In 1995, Austria also became a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. Both the new obligations resulting from the EU treaties as well as membership in PfP have changed Austria's traditional approaches to security and defence policy drastically. Therefore, it is now necessary to take a look at the issues dominating the Austrian approach to security and defence policy.

Level of Ambition: Between Active Engagement and Neutrality

Joining the UN in 1955 and the EU in 1995 were decisive steps for the future deployment of Austrian troops abroad and set the stage for Austrian action on the international level. Since its EU membership, the traditional Austrian focus has shifted towards implementing its security and defence policy in the framework of the UN and towards taking on an active role as a member of the EU in spite of its neutral status. Therefore, it is not surprising that the primary aim of Austrian security policy has been to promote Austria's role as an active player within the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in order to safeguard national and European security interests, as well as to maintain Austria's position in the group of EU's core financial contributors and policy shapers (Reiter/Frank 2004: 1).

Considering such developments from a legal perspective, in the course of a revision of the B-VG in 1975, Article 9a B-VG was introduced declaring the concept of comprehensive national defence (CND, in German: *umfassende Landesverteidigung*) as a national state objective. Its aim is stated as guaranteeing the independence of the Republic and to defending the neutrality of Austria. Generally speaking, the concept of a comprehensive national defence comprises elements of military, psychological, civil and economic national defence. This concept was then extended to comprehensive security precaution (CSP, in German: *umfassende Sicherheitsvorsorge*). Article 9a B-VG lays down the basis of the Austrian conscription system in its third paragraph. Article 79, paragraph 1 B-VG stipulates that the Austrian armed forces have to be developed as a militia system (Walter/Mayer/Kucsko-Stadlmayer 2007: 361).

Austria's geographical responsibility clearly lies in its neighbourhood. The political guidelines foreseen in the draft Security Strategy prioritise missions and operations in Central and South East Europe and the Middle East. If required by the international situation, the Austrian engagement might be extended towards the Danube and Black Sea Region, to the Caucasus and via the Near and Middle East also to Africa (Security Strategy 2011: 13). Due to its membership in the UN and the EU, the AAF engage mainly in missions within the UN and EU framework. However, without being a member of NATO, Austria has expanded its activities in NATO-led operations as well as within the PfP framework. Since 1960, more than 90,000 Austrian troops and civilian personnel have been participating in more than 50 international peace support and humanitarian missions. The geographical focus of Austrian foreign engagement is on the Western Balkans, i.e. Bosnia and Kosovo, but traditionally the Near and Middle East have also played an important role. Austria's participation in operations in Africa and Asia is rather limited.

Nevertheless, it made a considerable contribution to EUFOR Tchad/RCA in 2008/09. Currently, approximately 1,500 personnel are engaged in various international operations, with the majority currently participating in the NATO-led KFOR operation in Kosovo, UNDOF in Syria/Golan Heights, EUFOR Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina and UNIFIL in Lebanon. Since 2002, Austria has also participated in the ISAF missions. Currently three staff officers are deployed. Furthermore, in May 2012, Austria has agreed to provide financial support for the training and capacity building of the Afghan police force to the tune of € 18 million during 2014–2016.

Taking a closer look at the different types of missions abroad, there is a widespread willingness among Austrian officers to take part in humanitarian engagements as well as in peacekeeping and monitoring missions, especially in Europe, but also in Asia. Peace enforcement in general as well as peacekeeping and monitoring missions outside Europe, mainly in Central and East Africa, are less accepted. This can clearly be seen in a survey carried out among officers by the Austrian Ministry of Defence in 2007. Generally, there is a broad consensus regarding participation in foreign engagements, as only one fourth of the officers surveyed oppose a participation in missions abroad (Langer 2007: 329).

The level of ambition with regard to international engagements has been defined as two battalions plus support forces for unlimited deployment on stabilization and reconstruction missions of low to medium intensity. In addition, a framework brigade at 30-day combat readiness, sustainable for one year, was planned for high-end intensity missions such as separation of forces, and the government aimed to develop the ability to maintain a classical peacekeeping deployment similar to its mission in the Golan Heights (Giegerich/Nicoll 2008: 66).

Focusing on Austria's participation in EU crisis management, the Austrian efforts are thus rather biased. Since the inception of CSDP, Austria has been strongly committed to crisis management exercises and participation in civilian, as well as military, crisis management operations. Again, the same geographic regions can be identified as fields of action, namely the Western Balkans and Africa, both bearing strategic importance for the EU as well as for its member states. Considering the significance of the Western Balkans to Austria's security, it seems rather obvious that there has always been a need to engage in the neighbourhood. The various strategic documents affirm this recognition, and have guided the traditional engagements in the region.

In addition, Africa is of particular interest to the European Union, and reinforced by the large number of crises on the continent, this region is crucially important for the CFSP, as well. Consequently, Austria will not be able to shirk the common responsibility of the EU, which means that missions in

Africa will become more and more likely (Segur-Cabanac 2006: 17). It already has lengthy experience with peacekeeping missions in Africa within the framework of the UN, which dates back to 1960 when the country participated with a medical contingent in ONUC in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Moreover, Austria participated in UNEF II in Egypt from 1973 to 1974 and sent military observers to Cambodia, Somalia and Rwanda.

Looking at the ongoing and completed military CSDP missions from an Austrian point of view, the picture is rather ambivalent. While Austria's engagement, primarily by deploying staff officers, in the CSDP operations Concordia, Artemis and the Congo was of a rather symbolic nature, Austria played an important role in EUFOR Althea and EUFOR Tchad/RCA. International assignments are carried out under the auspices of the Federal Constitution and especially the KSE-BVG. The draft security strategy for the first time has set up various conditions under which deployments could take place (Security Strategy 2011: 13):

- The security political implications of an event for Austria;
- European solidarity and the importance of an action for the security of the EU and Europe;
- international solidarity and the implications of a concerted action on global security;
- the implications of an Austrian participation with regard to its status within an international organisation;
- geographical component of a mission;
- the availability of suitable Austrian civilian and military forces to be deployed;
- possible financial implications of a deployment.

The conditions are not stated in a formal order of importance due to the fact that it would have been difficult to reach an agreement on the ranking of the different considerations among the political parties; nonetheless it can be assumed that the presented list ranks the criteria for foreign deployments on an informal basis.

Scope of Action for the Executive

In the field of Austrian security and defence policy, the key players can be found in the Austrian government, mainly the federal chancellor, the minister for European and international affairs and the minister of defence. Nonetheless, the Austrian Parliament also plays a key role with regard to foreign deployment of the AAF. According to Article 80 B-VG, the president of the

Republic is commander-in-chief of the armed forces, but the supreme command is held by the minister of defence, above all through the officers and military commanders. According to Article 79, paragraph 2 B-VG, the armed forces, i.e. the Austrian Bundesheer, have to protect the constitutionally established institutions and the population's democratic freedoms; to maintain order and security inside the country; to render assistance in the case of natural catastrophes and disasters of exceptional magnitude (Wagner 2006: 36). Therefore one could argue that national defence is the key task of the AAF but, due to its foreign engagements and the duties deriving from membership in the UN and EU, supporting international crisis management missions and operations is also of major importance. Thus, it became necessary to regulate the practice for the deployment of Austrian troops abroad. As a consequence, the National Assembly adopted a constitutional legal act, the so-called KSE-BVG¹, in 1997. In its paragraph 1, this law permits the deployment of Austrian troops for peacemaking missions within the framework of international organisations, the OSCE or the CFSP as well as for providing humanitarian aid and support in international crisis management exercises. This norm also determines that in case of any deployment the Austrian responsibilities as set out by International Public Law and the basic principles of CFSP need to be respected. Paragraph 2 (1) KSE-BVG states that such a deployment requires a consensus between the Government and the Main Committee (Hauptausschuss) of the Austrian Parliament. All other deployments, such as training activities for instance, lie in the sole remit of the minister of defence. Paragraph 4 KSE-BVG stipulates the principle of volunteerism as the core principle for foreign deployment of Austrian troops. In the case of an urgent decision, the federal chancellor, the minister for European and international affairs as well as other concerned ministers, such as e.g. the minister of defence, or in the case of a humanitarian deployment, the minister of interior can decide upon consensus. Nonetheless they need to report to the Government and the Main Committee of the Austrian Parliament (paragraph 2 [1] KSE-BVG). The Main Committee can issue a veto within two weeks. This committee comprises 32 parliamentarians (out of a total of 183) and also has a strong role with respect to Austrian actions in the framework of the EU. Thus, on the one hand prior parliamentary approval is required before a deployment can be made; but on the other hand, this approval is given by a committee and not by the plenary (Wagner 2006: 36). Moreover Wagner points out the following: "[a]lthough the members of the main committee

1 BVG über die Kooperation und Solidarität bei der Entsendung von Einheiten und Einzelpersonen ins Ausland (KSE-BVG), BGBl I 1997/38, Constitutional Law on the Cooperation and Solidarity in the Case of Deploying Troops Abroad. Cooperation and Solidarity in the Case of Deploying Troops Abroad.

reflect the composition of the entire parliament, the delegation of competencies from the plenary to the main committee is likely to compromise the influence of the parliament. As a committee, the *Hauptausschuss* is likely to receive less publicity than the plenary.” (ibid.) Due to the fact that the committee also reflects the strengths in parliament, the committee is very likely to follow the government’s proposals. Apart from the Main Committee, the Standing Committee on European Affairs also has the possibility to voice opinions to the respective federal minister. These are legally and politically binding and can be issued regarding all areas which fall under the competence of EU law. In this context, the executive can only deviate from such binding opinion for “compelling reasons for foreign and integration policy”.

The actions of the AAF and the intelligence agencies are scrutinised by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces and the Standing Subcommittee of the Committee on National Defence. Therefore, the Austrian Parliament plays a rather active role in controlling the actions and deployments of the AAF.

Foreign Policy Orientation

For Austria, the main frameworks for cooperation in security and defence matters are obviously the EU and the UN. The draft of the new Austrian Security Strategy underlines this assessment by declaring that Austria primarily takes part in crisis management operations in the frameworks of the UN, the EU, but also the OSCE, NATO-PfP and the Council of Europe. Furthermore, regional initiatives, such as the Danube initiative and the Black Sea initiative form part of the possible frameworks for action as well.

With regard to the EU, Austria has actively participated in the Battle Group in the first half of 2011 together with the Netherlands, Germany, Finland and Lithuania. In the second half of 2012, Austria will again take part in the second Battle Group together with Germany and the Czech Republic. The draft Security Strategy also reiterates the implications of the Lisbon Treaty for EU Member States regarding capability development and underlines the need to further develop CSDP and to provide the necessary capabilities (Security Strategy 2011: 11). Additionally, it states that Austria will fulfil all its commitments implicit in the Treaties. Interestingly, the draft strategy also calls for a closer cooperation between the EU and NATO. Nonetheless, the nature of the future cooperation between the two organisations is not specified. With respect to NATO and Austria’s participation in PfP, the draft Security Strategy emphasises Austria’s participation in the further development of the Alliance and underlines its willingness to take part in non-Article 5 missions. Comparing the draft Security Strategy with the previous Security

Doctrine of 2001, it is clear that NATO plays a rather limited role. Whereas a possible membership in NATO was subject of ongoing evaluations in the 2001 document, NATO membership as such is not considered by the current Security Strategy. Nevertheless, the option of becoming a NATO member, while not on the agenda for the time being, has not been excluded.

For Austria, the Central European region is of vital security interest as well, and thus it is not surprising that Austria has actively engaged in various multinational structures focused on it. In particular, Austria plays an active role in the context of the Central European Nations' Co-operation in Peace Support (CENCOOP), as there are shared interests between Austria and its neighbours in the field of security policy. The political dimension of CENCOOP is an example of a regional cooperation mechanism to be potentially used in the future to not only share analysis, but also as a burden-sharing arrangement regarding European security (Wosolsobe 2006: 9). In 2010, cooperation among Central European neighbours was again revitalised and as a consequence, meetings on security political directors' level have been taking place on a regular basis. Such a forum can also be found in the Salzburg Group which deals with matters related to Justice and Home Affairs.

Willingness to Use Military Force

In general, the use of military force is perceived as an instrument of last resort. Nonetheless, foreign deployments continue to play an essential role in the key tasks of the Austrian armed forces. Military expenditures in Austria amount to approximately 0.8–0.9 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The total budget ran to € 2.5 billion (SIPRI) in 2010. Approximately half of the budget is currently spent on personnel expenditures, with 24,000 personnel under contractual arrangements plus an additional 30,000 personnel in the conscript system. The conscript system is calculated to amount to around € 200 million a year. Besides the AAF, the draft security strategy also focuses on the role of diplomacy in international relations, underlining above all the Austrian experience and the special role of Austria as a host country for international organisations.

In the case of a UN mandate for crisis management operations, Austria usually deploys its AAF without national caveats. This also holds true for combat missions. The draft security strategy, however, does not explicitly limit the participation on missions with a UN mandate (Kammel 2011: 3). Thus it is not surprising that Austria fully takes part in the whole Petersberg spectrum of the EU. This has been inserted into the Austrian constitution following the Amsterdam Treaty. Therefore, also peace-enforcement mis-

sions both in the framework of the UN, e.g. under Chapter VII, and of the EU would be possible. Additionally, the draft security strategy calls for strong civil-military relations: "Civil-military cooperation is of vital importance to carrying out tasks internally and abroad. Therefore it should be further strengthened as it forms the basis for cooperation in the international environment." (Security Strategy 2011: 9)

As regards the acceptance of foreign deployments, these are in general highly accepted within the Austrian society, but deviations can be seen with respect to combat missions. This was clearly the case with the Austrian engagement in EUFOR Tchad facing a strong public opposition. Opinion polls carried out in January 2008 showed that 64 percent of the population opposed the government's decision to engage in Tchad. Fortunately no casualties occurred in this particular operation which would have led to debates about the legitimacy of Austrian participation in combat missions. So far, in more than fifty years of AAF foreign deployment, 48 Austrian soldiers have been killed.

Already before the elaboration of a new security strategy, debates began about the future of the AAF. As stated above, the Federal Constitution calls for a militia system based on conscription. In the course of the debate, preference towards a professional army has been articulated by the Minister of Defence. Nonetheless, the transformed AAF should continue their tasks on the national level, above all in the fields of national defence and disaster relief, but also engage on the international level. However, no consensus has been reached so far within the current coalition government. The Austrian Armed Forces Reform Commission (AAFRC) suggested a reduction of the personnel strength of the AAF from 110,000 to 55,000. In the future structure of the AAF which should have been in place already in 2010, a contingent of 10,000 soldiers for domestic operations was foreseen. In emergency cases, this contingent can be reinforced by mobilisation by the minister of defence who can mobilise 5,000 militia troops (Frank 2006: 135). While the CND was organised on a purely national level, and mainly oriented toward a passive threat-reaction concept, the CSP relies on the principles of prevention and European solidarity. However, the concept of comprehensive security has remained valid. The report of the AAFRC highlights the special importance of the domestic responsibilities of the AAF. Connecting homeland security with the threat and risk analysis, it states: "The Reform Commission recommends attributing an important role to the Austrian Armed Forces, within the framework of providing assistance in police security operations as well as within the framework of national crisis management, in protecting vital civil information and communication technology infrastructure or having backup systems in place, respectively, in the event of disaster or threat.

The Commission further recommends [...] keeping sufficient forces available that can be deployed simultaneously with the contingents deployed abroad, for assistance operations at home, in case of natural or man-made disasters or a terrorist attack as well as for assistance operations in support of the law enforcement agencies.” (Bundesheer 2010: 49f.). Providing a future outlook on the organisation of the AAF and the necessary capabilities, the report recommends: “[...] to provide ready forces for tasks at home of 10,000 personnel within the frame of the operational organization/troops. If need be, as for instance in assistance operations, these forces are to be reinforced by call-ups, activating the conscript postponement clause, and particularly by committing militia forces.” (Bundesheer 2010: 51–53) In the course of the debates of a new Austrian security strategy, 1,500 personnel are foreseen for international deployments in the transformed AAF to be committed under the conditions referred to in the previous chapter. This would mean that approximately 2.7 percent of the total personnel of the AAF would be deployed in international missions. Leaving the conscripts aside, the percentage would increase to 6.25 percent.

Conclusion

Due to historical developments there is a strategic culture in Austria composed of two diverging poles: solidarity within the European Union and non-alignment outside the EU. As this chapter has shown, the classical concept of neutrality has never been fully exercised from the start and its importance has been further diminished by Austrian membership in the UN and EU. However, from a political perspective, neutrality remains on the table in the various discourses and it still serves as a fig leaf for inaction on the international level. Furthermore, the advantages of neutrality, especially Austria being perceived as an honest broker in international peace talks or as a host country for international organisations, are still considered. Austria has so far been active in the development of a genuine European security and defence policy and will remain so. The new draft security strategy, if approved in 2012, will not change this course, but will further increase the pressure for an active Austrian security and defence policy. However, the ideas need to be put into action and hopefully rhetoric will not prevail. Eventually, further developments in CSDP will facilitate Austria’s orientation in security and defence policy.

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