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The Seeming Paradox of Austrian Foreign Policy: The Mutual Dependence of Austrian Neutrality and Integration Efforts

Summary: Although it may sound paradoxical, neutrality and European integration efforts are closely interconnected in the framework of Austria's post-war domestic and foreign policy. Neutrality is an inseparable part of Austrian identity till now. Neutrality and the establishment of the Austrian Republic, freed of the occupation of the Four Powers, became closely intertwined and determined Austrian statehood. The state sovereignty based on neutrality gained also great respect in Austrian social and political consciousness. The article therefore evaluates different perceptions of neutrality, as presented by the most important political actors in Austria after World War II. The main focus, however, is on the new dimension of Austrian neutrality, as well as on the present domestic discourse on foreign policy and neutrality after the 2006 elections.

The notions of neutrality, identity and integration appear most frequently in the Austrian political discourse on foreign policy. Although it may sound paradoxical, neutrality and European integration efforts are closely interconnected in the framework of Austria's post-war domestic and foreign policy. This phenomenon is closely linked with the concept of Austrian national identity, which, from the very beginning, was linked to the concept of neutrality. After the First World War, when the Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed and the successor states were established, Austria had to cope with a significant loss of its dominant position in Central Europe, as well as with a huge loss in the number of its inhabitants and territory. Austria

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is 'the state nobody wanted' or Austria is 'what was left' – those were the characterizations given to the Austrian successor state by both foreign and domestic politicians. Therefore, the Austrian citizens had to face not only a difficult economic and social situation, which all the successor states had to deal with, but also were confronted with a new territorial and political identity they did not agree with, unlike the inhabitants of the other successor states (with the exception of Hungary, which was in a similar position). It was this new reality and the reluctance of the Austrians to identify with the new territory and with the status of a defeated country that caused an absence of a stable concept of foreign policy and bilateral relations with their neighbors. The process of identity-building was also hindered by the effort to merge with Germany – the so-called 'Anschluss' – perspective that dominated the vision of Austrian politicians on both sides of the political spectrum from the beginning of the existence of Austria in 1918.¹ However, the 'Anschluss' – perspective proved unreal and unfeasible within the inter-war framework of international relations. The idea of 'Anschluss' presented a compensation to the 'unjust' post-war order in the minds of many Austrians. On the other hand the idea itself prevented the strengthening and creation of Austrian identity and a new civic consciousness. Moreover, it contributed to the instability of the domestic political scene and created a stalemate situation between the political Left and Right that resulted into civil war in 1934 and the establishment of an authoritarian regime, the so-called *Ständestaat* with its corporatist features. The Austrian identity was strengthened only during the Second World War, i.e., after the 'Anschluss' (annexation) of Austria by the Third Reich in 1938, when it had to face the German element with its arrogant and oppressive character. The national consciousness of the Austrian people was definitively formed, more or less, during the occupation by the Four Powers in 1945 – 1955. The main reason was the people's disappointment by the cohabitation with the Germans in the Third Reich and the strong belief

¹ Formulation of the Austrian attitude towards the German state was the dominant factor in the process of the making of the First Austrian Republic after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918. The development of the Austrian statehood after the First World War was closely linked with the issue of 'Anschluss' – effort to merge Austria with Germany and to identify itself as a German periphery, as a 'rump state'. A state that was too small to pursue its own independent existence. The frustration of political representatives, intellectuals, artists as well as that of the mass population, who suffered from a poor economic situation, logically led to the belief that the only possible way out of crisis is to merge with Germany. On this issue see: P.J. Katzenstein *Disjoined Partners. Austria and Germany since 1815*. (London: 1976), p. 140; Z. Poláčková, "Historical Background of Slovak –Austrian Relations", *Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* Vol. II, No.1/ 2002, pp. 107 – 121.

that the new Austria should be built and understood as an 'antithesis' of the old 'Anschluss' Austria. The polarization of the society, a legacy of inter-war Austria compounded by the civil war, should be overcome by the cooperation of all political parties on the building of a new Austria – a society based on a general consensus. Austrian historiography and political science contributed to the growing 'reconciliation'. They did not tackle certain sensitive issues connected with the key periods of Austrian history and the formation of identity and democracy. Social and human sciences began to revise their standpoints towards the issues they had tried to avoid in the past only recently. Thus the conditions were created in Austrian society that reinforced consensus, whose democratic character defines the Austrian identity.

The signing of the State Treaty ('Staatsvertrag') in 1955 is an important milestone in Austrian history.² The proclamation of Austrian neutrality was considered a *conditio sine qua non* for the establishment of an independent Austria – the Second Republic. Neutrality is an inseparable part of Austrian identity till now. Neutrality and the establishment of the Austrian Republic, freed of the occupation of the Four Powers, became closely intertwined and determined Austrian statehood. The state sovereignty based on neutrality gained great

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² The Austrian State Treaty established Austria as a sovereign state. It was signed on May 15, 1955 in Vienna at the Schloss Belvedere among the Allied occupying powers (France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Soviet Union) and the Austrian government. It officially came into force on May 15, 1955.

³ The book *Zur österreichischen Identität* by Anton Pelinka, renowned Austrian political scientist and historian, his one of the essential works focused on the issue of the Austrian identity. Statement that past has continuously burdened the formation of Austrian identity is the framing idea of the book. This refers especially to the years of 1918 and 1938 when the Austrian citizens called for the 'Anschluss' with Germany with great enthusiasm. Pelinka concludes that Austrian identity after 1918 was framed mainly by sub-national identities – especially that of class and of confession of the two biggest political groups: social-democrats and Christian socialists.

In this context see also *Bundesministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten. Außenpolitischer Bericht*. (Yearly published); H. Gärtner, A. Rendl, "Österreichs Außenpolitik", J. Bellers, T. Benner, I. Miriam (Hg.) *Handbuch der Außenpolitiken von Afghanistan bis Zypern, München*. (2000), pp. 192 – 199; M. Gehler, "Finis Neutralität? Historische und politische Aspekte im europäischen Vergleich: Irland, Finnland, Schweden, Schweiz und Österreich", *ZEI Diskussions-Papier* C922001, (2001).

respect in Austrian social and political consciousness. The importance of analyzing the issues connected with the making of modern Austria is also shown by the permanent discussion on this matter, both in scientific and intellectual circles and in the mass-media.³

The Neutrality of Austria after 1955: a Crucial Part of its Identity

The Development of the Attitudes of Political Parties towards Austrian Neutrality as an Indicator of Future Changes in the Perception of Austria's State Identity

Austria gained independence by signing the Austrian State Treaty in 1955 and thus terminated the period of being dominated by the Four Powers. However, Austria was committed to maintaining its neutrality. Therefore the Austrian security policy was linked to the effort to maintain neutrality for many years. In Austria, the notion of maintaining neutrality was closely linked to the completion of the formation of a modern Austrian nation and strengthening its identity. At the beginning, after the creation of Austria – the state nobody wanted – after the First World War, its independence was imposed on its people. The League of Nations, whose policy was dictated by Great Britain and France and on which Austria was dependent both economically and financially, imposed a ban on the ‘Anschluss’ – the option of merging with Germany. The Austrians had problems with defining their own identity and identifying with their territory and welcomed the ‘Anschluss’ as the possibility to join Germany. Paradoxically, it had not been until their cohabitation during the Third Reich that the Austrians began to understand that they differed from the Germans and that they were not the same as them. The post-war occupation and forced administration by the four Great Powers (the USSR, Great Britain, France and the USA), which ended only after 10 years in 1955, caused neutrality and independence to become the two closely linked determinants that shaped Austrian statehood.

The Austrian Republic could not determine its foreign policy independently until 1955, and therefore it did not have a great influence during the Cold War. Austria, occupied by the four Great Powers (GP), represented a kind of transitional territory in the strongly polarized Europe, a territory that was governed both by the Western Powers and the USSR. Political and economic orientation towards the economic and policy-making structures of the West gradually took precedence in the 1950s. The promoted neutrality meant, in practice, first of all military neutrality. The neutrality of Austria – ‘Weder West – noch Ostorientierung’ – was still a leitmotif of Austrian foreign policy; however, it mainly designated neutrality in reality. The USSR and its political

representatives openly criticized a closer economic cooperation of Austria with the European Economic Community (EEC) and they openly described it as an economic base for the NATO military pact. For an illustration of the Austrian way of neutrality, its attitude towards the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the *Warsaw Pact* armies in 1968 may be mentioned. Although it was clear from the beginning that the Austrian borders would not be threatened, the invasion of Czechoslovakia caused quite some fear among the Austrian political leaders and population. Austria had had to suffer 10 years of occupation by four GP, and such actions by the *Warsaw Pact* raised negative associations in society. The Minister of Foreign affairs Kurt Waldheim (ÖVP – *People's Party*) enforced the government's approach that proclaimed strict neutrality towards the events in the neighboring country. The Federal Chancellor (Bundeskanzler) Josef Klaus (ÖVP) was encouraged to express cautious criticism of the invasion of Czechoslovakia only after heavy criticism by the media and the population.

The events in the neighboring country were mainly criticized by Bruno Kreisky (SPÖ – *Social Democratic Party*), at that time the chairman of the party, who was also emotionally engaged in this issue, for both his parents were born in Czechoslovakia; and he himself was one of the political immigrants who found asylum in Czechoslovakia after the Austrian civil war in 1934. He endorsed the idea that the Austrian neutrality must be overcome to some extent and he contributed to the fact that the Austrian government was willing to shelter immigrants from the occupied Czechoslovakia. Kreisky, who became Chancellor in 1970, tried to normalize Austrian-Czechoslovak relations but had to cope with the resistance of the then communist ‘normalization government’ in the CSR.⁴ Contacts with the opposition after 1968 were developed especially by Erhard Busek, a local politician from Vienna.⁵ Austrian foreign policy in the mid 70s may be defined as oscillating in between the antagonists of East and West.

The Austrian political leaders felt uneasy with the neutrality and the insufficient integration into the international community, which meant that Austrian policy played only a marginal role on the international scene.

⁴ As for the reactions of Austria to the occupation of the CSR by the *Warsaw Pact*, see the manuscript of the thesis by M. David, *Österreichisch-Tschechoslowakische Beziehungen nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*. (Yet unpublished manuscript of an academic work), pp. 7 – 14.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 75

Kreisky's pro-Soviet policy was criticized especially by the representatives of the ÖVP, who reproached him for naivety and credulity towards the USSR. On the other hand, the Austrian political leaders felt uneasy with the neutrality and the insufficient integration into the international community, which meant that Austrian policy played only a marginal role on the international scene. A turn of events came in the 1980s in the framework of the process of dynamization, intensification, and widening of West-European integration within the EC. And it was within this framework that Austrian foreign policy became more European Community oriented. However, the 1980s brought also damage to the foreign image of Austria, caused by the 'Waldheim Affair'. At the end of the 1980s the effort to be admitted into the European Community was growing stronger, endorsed especially by the Austrian *People's Party* (ÖVP); but the *Social Democratic Party* also gave support to the policy of entering the European Community. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Alois Mock and Chancellor Franz Vranitzky submitted a draft-proposal to the Council of Ministers, which passed it. The main argument consisted in the assumption that a full Austrian presence in the internal markets of the European Community could only be achieved if Austria gained full membership in the EEC. In this proposal, Austria pledged to fulfill all the duties of a regular EEC member, but on the condition that it should maintain its status of a neutral country.⁶ The proposal was submitted to the Austrian parliament, which passed it. At the same time, the *People's Party* and the *Social Democrats* agreed on joint negotiations with the EEC about the Austrian admission. The most important special clause was the common agreement stating that the integration objectives of Austria must not threaten Austria's employment and social policies. Environmental protection was also an important issue of the application in the sense that Austrian standards must not be negatively affected by its admission to the EEC. Among the opponents of joining the EEC were also *Die Grünen* (*The Austrian Green Party*), who grouped their arguments around the traditional interpretation of Austria's economic policy and neutrality, which allegedly would have been threatened by EEC membership. *The Greens* were most afraid of losing independence in the fields of defense policy and foreign policy. *The Greens* offered also an alternative which consisted of closer cooperation with the Eastern European states: the CSR (CSFR, the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic), Poland and

⁶ ...womit Österreich zum Ausdruck bringen wolle, an der Integration Europas voll teilzunehmen und die Pflichten und Rechte eines Mitglieds der EG unter Wahrung seines Status der immerwährenden Neutralität zu übernehmen... In: *Aussenpolitischer Bericht 1989*, p. 189.

Hungary, i.e., by developing stronger bilateral cooperation. The *Communist Party of Austria* (KPÖ) protested against EEC membership as well, justifying its stance by pointing to the disagreement of the USSR and Art. 4 of the Austrian State Treaty (banning a merger of Austria and Germany). Extra-parliamentary opposition rejecting EEC membership was quite broad: it ranged from former diplomats (the most prominent of them being the former Minister of Foreign Affairs and State President Rudolf Kirschlager) to individual politicians, scientists, artists, and groups of ecologists and trade-unionists.⁷

The ongoing debate confirmed the great importance of the issue in the eyes of the Austrian general public and the political scene before the year 1989, which completely changed the post-WWII world order. The disintegration of the Soviet Block and later of the USSR as well, connected with the collapse of the *Warsaw Pact*, brought the end of the Cold War. The unification of Germany in 1990 meant a new stage in the expansion of the EEC. The Treaty on the European Union was signed in 1992 in Maastricht. Austria became a member of the UN Security Council in 1990 and when the Kuwait crisis broke out in 1990/1991, its troops participated in the military intervention against Iraq.

The New Dimension of Austrian Neutrality

Definitive Differentiation of the Attitudes of Political Parties

The disintegration of the post-war bipolar world-order and the crises in Iraq and in the former Yugoslavia confronted Austria with a completely new international situation that required a new definition of Austrian neutrality. Neutrality was now connected with the notion of solidarity – solidarity with the UN against Iraq, solidarity with Slovenia and Croatia against the remainder of Yugoslavia.⁸ On the other hand, the Council of Europe and the Commission of the EEC were considering the possibility of harmonizing the integration of Austria with maintaining its neutrality. The disintegration of the USSR was the crucial event that facilitated the final decision on Austria's admission to the EEC. The supreme bodies of the EEC stated that Austria was practically integrated into the EEC. Austria was considered a country with a developed economy, whose integration would greatly contribute to the economic area of the EEC. The main issue in the political field was the

⁷ For details, see H. Schneider, *Alleingang nach Bruxelles*. (Bonn: 1990), pp. 17 – 45.

⁸ The central point of interest of the Austrian foreign policy, lead by Alois Mock, was acceptance of the independence of Slovenia and Croatia. For details, see: A. Skuhra, "Österreich im Sicherheitsrat der Vereinten Nationen 1991/1992", *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* No. 4/1995, p. 414.

interpretation of Austrian neutrality and the necessity of its new definition within the framework of strengthening a future common foreign and security policy of the EEC. EEC representatives considered the thesis of Austrian foreign policy that Austrian neutrality contributed to maintaining peace and security and that, therefore, it should be 'freed of certain obligations under contract', these being unsustainable.

The ongoing negotiations with Austria on its admission to the EU asked from Austria in 1993 a declaration that Austria would participate 'actively and collectively' in the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union as postulated by the Maastricht Treaty.⁹ Austria stated in a Foreign Policy Report in 1993 that EU membership would help to maintain stability in the following 4 areas: 1. International Economic Cooperation; 2. the Environment, Crime, Incontrollable Migration, and the fight against Drug Smuggling; 3. preventing crises and conflicts in Europe; 4. the creation of a mechanism of Common Defense with the provision that it could not be predicted how the relations between the EU, NATO, and WEU would develop in the future. In March 1994, the Federal government submitted to parliament (the National Council) a Governmental Law Proposal on the Amendment of the Federal Constitution in connection with the Admission to the EU. The date for the referendum that was to decide on this was set for June 12, 1994. The approval of EU membership was the result of the broad consensus of the country's parliamentary and extra-parliamentary bodies, which agreed that this important matter required the consent of the whole nation. Some conflicts in parliament arose because of the proposed law that would enable the Austrian government to sign the Treaty on the admission to the EU after getting the consent of parliament and a successful referendum. *The Greens* and especially the *Freedom Party of Austria* (FPÖ) were opposed to the act and argued that admission to the EU would bring the loss of Austrian identity and waves of immigrants. *The Greens* argued that it would be no longer possible to maintain environmental policy standards, which were much stricter in Austria than in the EU member states. Both parties regarded the admission as a violation of the country's neutrality. Moreover, both claimed that the Austrian admission to the EU would induce vast changes in legislation that could not be foreseen by Austria's citizens, who therefore did not know

⁹ "Österreich geht davon aus, dass die aktive und solidarische Mitwirkung an der GASP mit seinen verfassungsrechtlichen Regelungen vereinbar sein wird. Entsprechende innerstaatliche Anpassungen werden angesichts der geänderten politischen Rahmenbedingungen in Europa im Zusammenhang mit dem Beitritt Österreichs zur Europäischen Union vorzunehmen sein."

for what they gave their authorization to the government.¹⁰ The Austrians were given the following referendum question on June 12, 1994: Should the decision of the National Council of May 5, 1994, on the *Federal Constitutional Act on the Admission of Austria to the EU take legal force?*¹¹ The referendum was participated in by 81.27% of the voters; 66.58% of the participants gave their consent; 33.42% rejected it. The Treaty on the Admission of Austria to the EU was signed on a high-profile meeting of the EU's Prime Ministers on Corfu in June 1994. The Treaty was ratified by the Austrian Parliament in November 1994 with 141 votes in favor and 40 against and came into effect on January 1, 1995. During the Treaty ratification, a consensus arose in parliament on Austria's future integration ambitions. At the same time, with the accession to the EU the notion of neutrality took on a new shape, with the viewpoints of the ÖVP and the *Social Democrats* becoming even more polarized. Whereas the *Social Democrats* insisted on maintaining the strict rules of neutrality regarding a possible engagement with NATO or the WEU, the ÖVP expressed the opinion that the status of neutrality was obsolete and that Austria should soon enter NATO. Benita Ferrero-Waldner (ÖVP), Minister of Foreign Affairs, gave her opinion in a speech to the Austrian Association for Foreign Policy and International Relations held on February 12, 2001. She said that Austria was at that time revising its neutrality also because of statements by high representatives of both the EU and NATO, who had no understanding for the meaning and functioning of Austrian neutrality within the new international political conditions and who defined neutrality as a 'concept of a bygone era'. It is necessary to mention that as soon as the Treaty on EU accession had become valid, Austria became an observer at the WEU meetings, and in February 1995 she signed the framework document *Partnership for Peace*

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¹⁰ A. Khol, "Konturen einer neuen Sicherheitspolitik: Von der Neutralität zur Solidarität", A. Khol, G. Ofner, A. Stirnemann (eds) *Österreichisches Jahrbuch für Politik*. (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 2001), pp. 48 – 85.

¹¹ "Soll der Gesetzesbeschluss des Nationalrats vom 5. Mai 1994 über den Beitritt Österreichs zur Europäischen Union Gestzeskraft erhalten?" Compare H. Kramer, "Austrian Foreign Policy from the State Treaty to the European Union", Kurt-Richard Luther, P. Pultzer (eds) *Austria 1945-1955. Fifty Years of the Second Republic*. (Dartmouth: 1996), pp. 161 – 180.

with NATO. The different approach of the political parties to the neutrality of Austria after 1989 reflected the need for changes in both foreign and domestic policy. The accession of Austria to the EU was a milestone in the process of revising the definition of the Austrian State identity, which was closely linked to the concept of neutrality for almost the entire 'short 20th century'. There is still a discussion going on in Austria on whether the state should maintain a form of neutrality, a discussion that truly focuses on the 'new' Austrian identity.

The Elections of 2006 and the Present Domestic Discourse on Foreign Policy and Neutrality

The Austrian discourse on domestic policy in 2006 was focused on two main issues, closely linked to foreign policy activities in Europe: the Austrian presidency of the EU in the first half of 2006 and the parliamentary elections in October of the same year. Austria has returned to the consensual policy of the two major parties after the elections of 2006, whose cooperation influenced mostly the development of the Austrian domestic and foreign political scene in the second half of the 20th century. The Austrian political elites dedicated a lot of attention to the development of a civil society and strengthening the consensual trends in the society after the formation of the independent Austria in 1955. A balanced power-sharing between the ÖVP and the SPÖ was also an inseparable part of the development. The SPÖ had been the ruling party in the 1970's and 1980's, replaced afterwards by the Grand coalition (ÖVP/SPÖ) from 1987 to 1999. The government parties ÖVP and SPÖ suffered defeat in the 1999 election and a new coalition of ÖVP and FPÖ was formed instead, raising a wave of criticism from the part of the EU, and Austria had to face the already mentioned sanctions. The domestic population protested as well, given the fact that the chairman of FPÖ was known for his anti-Semitic statements and reverence of Nazism. The early elections of 2002 strengthened the position of the ÖVP and somewhat weakened and precipitated into decline the FPÖ, which split, giving rise to a new party BZÖ (*Bündnis Zukunft Österreich*) under the lead of Haider. SPÖ gained a relative majority in the elections of October 1, 2006, the grand coalition has been reinstated after 7 years under the lead of the chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer (SPÖ) and the deputy chancellor Wilhelm Molterer (ÖVP).¹² The electoral political discourse was focused mainly on the domestic

¹² SPÖ gained 35,34%, ÖVP 34,33 % , *The Greens* 11,04%, FPÖ 11,03% and BZÖ (*Bündnis Zukunft Österreich*) 4,11% of the votes.

issues of education, medicare, pension reform, and position of women in society. *The Greens*, lead by Professor Alexander van der Bellen, re-opened the issue of nuclear energy and sharply criticized the ÖVP and the SPÖ for the fact that as much as 27% of the imported energy comes from nuclear power plants. The surprisingly high electoral gain of the SPÖ may be credited especially to the high unemployment rate and introduction of university fees during the rule of the black-and-blue and black-and-orange coalition in the years of 2000-2006. At first, the electoral competition was pursued at the personal level between Wolfgang Schüssel and Alfred Gusenbauer. Schüssel profited from the role of Austria as presiding country of the EU. He entered this role after Tony Blair and promised dedication to the German effort. At the beginning of the presidency, he focused on dealing with the most arduous issues of the EU: energy security, the situation in the Middle-East, development of cooperation in Central Europe and strengthening of the joint European defense. The Austrian presidency let analyses being elaborated by the renowned *Österreichische Institut für Internationale Politik* on the two important issues that are closely linked to the Austrian governmental interests in foreign policy. The first was tackling the issue of Turkish membership in the EU, to which no Austrian government has had a clear approach.¹³ The second is cooperation in Central Europe and the Austrian opportunity to profit from its dominant position in the region within the framework of the European structures.¹⁴

The conclusion of the Austrian presidency of the EU in June 2006 and its evaluation became part of the electoral campaigning in Austria. The *Social Democrats* through Peter Schieder, the spokesman for foreign policy, evaluated very positively the participation of Austria in the EU policy towards the West Balkans. They presented a considerably more critical approach towards the opening of the issues of the European constitution and for neglecting the social problems of the EU. *The Greens* traditionally focused on the issue of sustainable energy sources and labeled the ÖVP and SPÖ as 'energetic fossils'

¹³ "The atmosphere of the debate in Austria, which has an estimated Moslem population of 300,000, the majority of Turkish origin, has been fuelled by controversial remarks by the Bishop of Sankt Pölten, Kurt Krenn, who warned against an 'Islamization' of Europe. He has called Islam a 'very aggressive kind of religion' that will not easily allow for a political unity with the Christian faith." Cited after <http://www.euractiv.com/de/erweiterung/politische-parteien-osterreich-gegen-eu-beitritt-turkei/article-106231>

¹⁴ Austria is one of the most powerful investors in this area. See OeNB: Direktinvestitionen Österreichs im Ausland (aktiv) – Transaktionen in Mio.EUR (2006). <http://www.oenb.at/isaweb/report.do?lang=DE&report=950.1>, abgefragt am 4.10.2006. See also Z. Poláčková, "Historical Background of Slovak –Austrian Relations", *Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* Vol. II, No.1/2002, pp. 107 – 121.

and observed an overall regress in this regard. In general, all the Austrian political parties evaluated positively the acting of Austria as the presiding country of the EU and of Wolfgang Schüssel as European president.

The election campaign of the SPO focused on a classical social-democratic agenda: fair distribution of the wealth across society, decrease in the unemployment rate, free education. The purchase of the military aircraft Eurofighter was also an important topic, as it doubtlessly had clear international connotation¹⁵ that could not be omitted. The election slogan of the SPO was strengthening neutrality and Austrian independence (i.e. identity) and this therefore meant rejecting the purchase of the Eurofighter jets, claiming they were too expensive. The decision to purchase the multi-role combat aircraft was taken during the rule of the black-and-blue coalition (ÖVP/FPÖ) in 2000. The line was adopted despite the protests of the then opposition party SPÖ. The main governmental point was modernization of the air force within the framework of strengthening security in Europe. At the same time, the ÖVP had the opportunity to act independently for the first time in the history of the 2nd Republic and enforce its own viewpoint of Austrian neutrality, which was presented in a far more flexible way than SPÖ, mainly in the context of the overall European security. When SPÖ formed a new government in January 2007, it was forced to accept the purchase of the aircraft. However, an investigative committee was set up in October 2006 to revise the circumstances of the purchase. The first half-year of the reinstated grand coalition was framed by the arguments of the aircraft purchase. The process resulted in a reduced purchase – 15 Eurofighters were provided instead of 18 – the SPÖ signed the contract without the consent of the ÖVP.¹⁶ SPÖ justified its action by the motto 'Neutralitätsflieger statt ÖVP – Kampfbomber!' and by saving EUR 370 million. SPÖ promised to use the saved funds in medicare and education. According to the opinion polls, executed by Meinungsforschungs-Institut OGM, as much as 58% Austrians agree with the reduction of the defense of the Austrian air space.¹⁷ The right-wing parties FPÖ and BZÖ¹⁸ focused on the battle against the European Constitution in their election campaigns,

¹⁵ See more on EADS issue <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EADS#Criticism>

¹⁶ The first jet landed at the Hinterstoisser military airport of Zeltweg, Styria on July 12, 2007.

¹⁷ Bevölkerung für weniger Jets, July 3, 2007, <http://derstandard.at>.

¹⁸ The political party *Bündnis Zukunft Österreich* was established in 2005 and until 2006 it was chaired by Jörg Haider; Peter Westenthaler became the chairman shortly before the elections of 2006. Its program is almost identical with that of FPÖ. Both parties form the so-called 'Dritte Lager' – the label which they use to be differentiated from the SPO and ÖVP.

against the admission of Turkey to the EU and to tightening the immigration act under slogans such as (*Sozialstaat statt Zuwanderung, Daham statt Islam, Sichere Pensionen statt Asyl-Millionen, Heimat statt Schüssel und Brüssel*). Thanks to them, they gained partial support of those citizens, who felt threatened by the immigration waves and asylum-seekers, as well as by the threats of Islamists and terrorists towards Austria.¹⁹

The renowned Austrian political scientists (Emmerich Tálos, Peter Filzmaier and Anton Pelinka) define the first half-year of the rule of the Grand coalition as a period marked by internal confrontations. The coalition itself therefore provides for the role of the opposition as well. Their opinion is that the government program has not yet begun to be fulfilled properly. Pelinka sees a lack of governmental support in managing a serious internal discourse on immigration and asylum, on security policy and the processes of Europeanization. The image of the government is declining and government loses the support of the inhabitants.²⁰

Conclusions

In the period 1955 – 1995 – the years between the signing of the State Treaty and the EU accession – Austrian political discourse on the relation of neutrality and integration had several stages. Interestingly, the Austrian concept of neutrality was different from those of the other 'neutrals' in Europe – especially Finland and Sweden. The two Scandinavian countries are informing each other on their domestic discourse and are preparing joint projects; Austria, however, keeps to itself, refusing help or assistance from outside.²¹ While in the framework of political discourse in the 1970s

¹⁹ One of the important topics of the internal discourse in foreign policy in the 1990's were the wars in the former Yugoslavia: in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Kosovo. The military operations took place directly at the Austrian borders with Slovenia, and Yugoslavian air force violated Austrian air space several times. The result of these military conflicts was a great number of refugees, who sought for asylum in Austria. This was the reason why the support of the FPÖ was rising, along with the support of various extremist movements, promoting hatred against foreigners and against domestic minorities as well. An overall consensus was to be found in Austria in those times on the support of the asylum-seekers who were provided assistance within the framework of "Nachbar in Not Program". The situation changed after the 9/11 attacks and Austria has begun to tighten the Asylum Act and Act on the Residence of Foreigners. However, Austria is not an exception in this regard, for a similar trend is to be found all over the EU.

²⁰ http://www.diepresse.com/home/politik/innenpolitik/316395/index.do?_vl_backlink=/home/politik/aussenpolitik/index.do.

²¹ O. Rathkolb, *Internationalisierung Österreichs seit 1945*. (Innsbruck, Wien, Bozen: Studienverlag, 2006), pp. 79 – 89.

Austrian defense policy was treated as a question of national defense based on obligatory military service, since the late 1980s and especially after the Balkan wars and 9/11 the issue of inevitability of NATO membership was more and more accentuated. The situation changed after the election of the new president Heinz Fischer of the *Social Democratic Party* in 2004, who criticized the war in Iraq and the approaching humanitarian catastrophe. He gained the support of Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel. The membership of NATO was postponed indefinitely and neutrality as the core political doctrine of Austria was actually maintained.

The admission of Austria to the EU reinforced its self-esteem. It was the result of the efforts of one generation of politicians, who realized the

The membership of NATO was postponed indefinitely and neutrality as the core political doctrine of Austria was actually maintained.

consequences of the globalization process and the necessity of taking part in the integration process in Europe. Austria found itself isolated as a result of the 'Waldheim Affair' in the midst of the 1980s. On the domestic political scene, this led to a consensus between the *People's Party* (ÖVP) and the *Social Democrats* (SPÖ) on the necessity of Austrian integration into the European community. This process was spearheaded by the leaders of both parties – Alois Mock (ÖVP) and Franz Vranitzky

(SPÖ). They expressed the opinion that fewer and fewer issues could be resolved at the national or regional level. The unification of Germany in 1990 and the disintegration of the Soviet Union were other stimuli that likewise convinced the political elites of the necessity of integration. On the other hand the unification of Germany also strengthened the deeply rooted fear of a powerful Germany associated with the 'Anschluss' of 1938 and the consequent loss of independence. The collapse of the Soviet Block opened up new possibilities for an independent Austrian policy in the Central European region. At the beginning of the 1990s various publications, both scientific and fictional, appeared expressing nostalgia for the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. Austria, from the beginning of the 1990s, deliberately began to deepen its contacts with representatives of the neighboring countries. The Austrian governments always supported the EU enlargement process towards the East, although they were skeptical about the date of accession given the level of economic development of the candidate countries. In this regard two issues dominated the views of the Austrian politicians and experts from the very beginning: the issue of immigration and labor markets and the issue

of creating equal standards in environmental policies, where the biggest problem was the existence of power plants in Slovakia (Mochovce) and the Czech Republic (Temelín).²²

The approach of the Austrian policy towards EU enlargement was and still is important in the negotiations of EU institutions. In particular, however, it played a considerable role in foreign policy, ideas on foreign affairs, and strategies of the reform states. The ten-year long Austrian experience and actions within the EU was acclaimed by different representatives of the Austrian political spectrum and of industry and commerce at a ceremonial meeting of Austrian and foreign politicians on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of Austria's EU accession and the 50th anniversary of signing the State Treaty²³. However, these ten years were not without problems. The creation of a 'black-blue' coalition government of the ÖVP and FPÖ in 2000, outraged and alarmed representatives and citizens of many European countries.²⁴ Sanctions were introduced and many states imposed limitations on their relations with Austria. Paradoxically, it was then that the entire political spectrum united in order to prove that Austria is and shall remain a democratic country. A consensus was reached in the field of foreign policy to make an effort to obtain the best possible relations with the country's neighbors and to help enforce their admission to the EU – a strategy that significantly improved the position of Austria within the EU.

Austria returned to the cooperation of the two biggest parties of SPÖ and ÖVP after the 2006 elections. The fact that the SPÖ remained in opposition for seven years enabled the ÖVP to enforce their vision of neutrality more freely. The maintaining part of the definition of the Austrian neutrality consists of declining the warfare-conduct and participation on them. However, Austria reserves the right to participate in the execution of the joint European defense and peacekeeping and humanitarian actions all over the world.

²² The Austrian 'nuclear policy' gained a European dimension after the admission of Austria to the EU in 1995. Afterwards Austria began to oppose the nuclear power plants of its neighbors. The Austrian 'visionary' policy trying to obtain a 'nuclear policy' Europe has a wide support of the environmentally conscious population. On the other hand, it is not a very well known fact, that Austria imports cca 20% of electricity generated in the neighboring nuclear power plants. Therefore a question arises, whether the Austrian foreign policy is really supporting the fight against the nuclear PPs in the neighboring countries or is only a well-thought-out political instrumentalization.

²³ *Gemeinsame Erfahrungen-Gemeinsame Perspektiven, Bundesministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten*, (Vienna: 2005).

²⁴ "Erweiterung: Verheugen übt Kritik an Österreichs Position", <http://www.diepresse.at>, December 4, 1999.

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