

Review of: André Gerolymatos and Dennis Smyth, with James Horncastle, *Neutral Countries as Clandestine Battlegrounds, 1939-1968: Between Two Fires*, Lexington Books, 9781498583206, hbk, 2020

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Neutral and non-belligerent countries often function as important sites of overt and covert warfare. Given the enormous importance of espionage, clandestine operations, code-breaking and intelligence gathering during the Second World War, it is all too appropriate for historians to focus on the use and abuse of neutral territories as sites of covert warfare. This volume not only brings together an impressive array of intelligence scholars, it also highlights just how significant neutrality was as a key factor in the conduct of this clandestine warmongering.

Where the collection is very strong is in explaining how particular neutral countries – most notably Spain, Switzerland, Ireland, Turkey and the United States – functioned as important sites of overt and covert intelligence operations during the Second World War, particularly those conducted by the Germans and western Allies. Most of the chapters that focus on these questions also bring to the fore the key roles played by neutral governments in enabling, restricting and/or obfuscating these clandestine belligerent activities, despite the international legal requirement that a neutral state does everything it can to police and prevent any abuse of its territorial neutrality. Altogether, the volume reveals the dynamism and agency of neutral governments, neutral spaces and neutral communities in time of war. As Denis Smyth's thoughtful introduction argues, while neutrality was a formally bounded concept in international affairs, the parameters of neutrality shifted in surprisingly flexible ways after 1939. No two neutrals were the same. They also ran a 'full gamut of behaviours' (p. 2) to protect and defend both their neutrality and their other interests. As such, the diversity of neutral experiences and engagement with clandestine operations underline how difficult it is to essentialise neutrality in praxis.

There are some bemusing things about the collection, however, not least its title. I'm not sure why it was given the sub-title *Between Two Fires*. In almost none of the case studies utilised in the chapters was the neutral in question negotiating solely between two enemy camps. The entry of United States, Japan and the USSR into the global war in 1941 ensured that any remaining neutrals were caught between *many* fires. That there is barely one mention made of Japan across the chapters seems like an important oversight as well. I also think the volume would have worked much better if it had focussed solely on the Second World War (with due reference made to the pre-history of neutrality and espionage during the First World War and inter-war eras). Editors putting together collections out of a conference sometimes find it difficult to exclude an outlier chapter, but given the enormous differences between non-alignment in time of a 'cold' war and neutrality in time of a 'hot' war, Paul McGarr's otherwise excellent final chapter on Cold War India jars given the others' tighter focus on the 1939-1945 years.

Some of the volume's chapters were also clearly written by historians more interested in clandestine operations and networks than the question of neutrality *per se*. This disconnect is most obvious in the chapter by James Horncastle on the relationship between Stalin's USSR and Tito's Yugoslavia and Eunan O'Halpin's chapter on Afghanistan. The former does not use the word neutrality even once (and non-alignment only once), even though both Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union were formal neutrals in the war waging in Europe until late 1941 and Yugoslavia was a neutral in the war fought between the USSR and Finland. In contrast, the chapter written by Neville Wylie and Marco Wyss on Switzerland, stands out for the deeply considered connections it makes between neutrality and clandestine activities in time of war. Wyss and Wylie begin with the importance of neutral spaces as 'whispering galleries' for wartime information gathering and investigate the difficulties and opportunities proffered to the Swiss state in managing the intelligence activities of the various belligerents. Vasilis Dimitriadis and Denis Smyth's chapter on Ireland and Egeen Beczi's chapter on Turkey also play up the fascillating behaviours of the Turkish and Irish governments, which aimed both at protecting their country's non-belligerency and supporting their other foreign interests. These three chapters were the highlights in the collection for me.

Altogether, the volume deserves to be read by scholars interested in the history neutrality, intelligence operations and the Second World War. It also offers a fitting tribute to Prof. André Gerolymatos's lifetime of academic research and story-telling.