

Switzerland – going to war with NATO?

Independence and neutrality (2)¹

by Thomas Scherr*

A new understanding of independence and neutrality has spread like mildew across the Swiss media world and is now being instilled into the public's consciousness. Even politicians and federal councillors are now of the mistaken opinion that a rapprochement with NATO could somehow be compatible with the country's neutrality. An extremely fatal error.

Switzerland is slowly and imperceptibly finding itself in a situation that hardly anyone could have imagined. As a small state, it is threatened to become a cog in a huge military machine – there can no longer be any talk of neutrality and independence. And this even though the value of neutrality is consistently ranked first in surveys of how the Swiss see themselves. Politicians affirm the country's neutrality again and again, while they themselves stand idly by... or are actively involved in steering Switzerland into a highly dangerous situation.

Germany is preparing for war ...

This year, of all years, is a test: the war in Ukraine threatens to turn Europe, currently Eastern and Central Europe, into a war zone. The willingness of many European politicians to send their own soldiers to the Ukraine, but also the announcements by France and Germany that they are reorganising their own economies for war, as well as the delivery of ATAMCS missiles from the USA, are more than clear signals of a further escalation. Obviously, the Ukrainian front is to be supplemented with soldiers, including weapons, directly from NATO states. This makes NATO a direct party to the war ...

And it is precisely in this situation that Swiss politicians are sending out signals that further weaken Switzerland's position as a neutral state. In doing so, they are jeopardising the country and its population.

... and the Federal Council is tampering with neutrality

Observers criticise the serious mistakes made by the Federal Council and its administration: by participating in the EU's unilateral coercive measures against Russia (wrongly referred to as "sanctions"), which violate international law, the Federal Council crossed a red line in March 2022. These measures are not legitimised by the UN. It would have been easy for the Federal Council to invoke Switzerland's globally recognised neutrality. However, Bern decided against the country's tradition – and the clear will of the population.

The fact that Geneva was catapulted out of the premier league of international negotiating centres and that Switzerland is no longer considered a politically reliable banking centre is merely "collateral damage" of this anti-neutrality policy pursued by the Federal Council and its administration. Much more serious is the obvious rapprochement of our army with NATO and the EU and the resulting international loss in the reputation of Swiss neutrality.

Federal Councillor Viola Amherd makes Switzerland a target

The *Defence Department* (DDPS) stands out with its course. It ordered the overpriced, nuclear weapons-capable F-35 multi-role combat aircraft from *Lockheed Martin* in the USA. Head of office *Viola Amherd* did not wait for the upcoming referendum but acted as if guided by a ghost hand. This overpriced stealth jet only makes sense as part of large-scale NATO military operations. For a small neutral state, the purchase is neither confidence-building nor does it make any military sense.

Shortly afterwards, Mrs Amherd topped it with the agreement on a European missile defence shield together with twelve NATO states. Other solutions were ignored. A missile defence shield co-financed by Switzerland will protect the future belligerents of the EU/NATO, to which Switzerland does not belong. In terms of neutrality

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policy, but also defence policy, this treaty is complete nonsense. This will make the country even more to a target itself.

Many false signals

The role of Federal Councillor *Ignazio Cassis* remains completely incomprehensible and downright embarrassing. Without the necessary prior diplomatic agreements with Moscow – but on Ukrainian President *Zelensky's* terms – Mr Cassis tried to invite Russia to take part in a “peace conference” in Switzerland. What was to be expected materialised: Russia described this conference as a farce and no longer considers Switzerland to be neutral. – It should be remembered that Russia has been a signatory state of Swiss neutrality for over 200 years.

In addition to the counterproductive behaviour of the Federal Council, there are now numerous wrong signals that Switzerland is sending out through its official representatives. The voting behaviour in the *Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe* on the “Navalny Resolution” alone was completely one-sided and contradicts any sensible policy of neutrality.²

The call for Switzerland to leave the Council of Europe is not as wrong as it is presented in the mainstream media. (Side note: interestingly enough, *Alain Berset*, a Swiss national, is being discussed as the future Secretary General of the Council of Europe).

Chance to decide for yourself

It's five to twelve and high time for a course correction. Neutrality is like pregnancy: “A little bit” is not possible.

In view of the foreseeable expansion of the war in Ukraine to the European NATO states, a rethink should begin in the Swiss political landscape. Back to a credible policy of neutrality suitable to the country.

The upcoming referendums on the neutrality and sovereignty initiatives offer citizens the opportunity to determine their own future and remind them of the framework for a clear policy of neutrality.³

Small state Switzerland under pressure

It would be a chapter of its own to analyse why our country is now in danger of becoming an appendage and paymaster for NATO. At this point, there are just two points to keep in mind: In a

genuinely plural, democratic media landscape, such aberrations would hardly have been possible. The issues at stake would have been discussed more broadly and controversially. This refers to the disastrous role of the mainstream media, including SRF (Swiss Radio and Television).

A second point that can only be hinted at here is *realpolitik*. It is and always has been clear that a rapprochement or even an alliance with NATO means risking the country's neutrality. In the 1990/2000s and the emergence of the unipolar world order, increased pressure on the small state of Switzerland could be perceived. Think of the looted gold debate, the FACTA laws, but also the many pressures from the EU. Without external pressure and the personal vanity of individuals, these undesirable developments would hardly have taken place. In the current situation, the responsible authorities have reacted too late and often incorrectly to the general geopolitical situation.

Creeping integration into NATO

The article by *Jean-Paul Vuilleumier*, “On Swiss neutrality. Dangerous entanglements of the Swiss Armed Forces with NATO”, presents a clear chronology.⁴

The author traces the various stages of the creeping integration into NATO that has been going on for over three decades. A few key points from the article are outlined below:

1996:

Participation in “Partnership for Peace” (PfP)

- “Developing military co-operation relations with NATO”
- “Development of armed forces that can operate better together with NATO forces”..

1997: Participation in “Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council” (EAPC)

The Federal Council agreed on three conditions when it signed the EAPC:

- Commitment to participate in four annual NATO meetings at ministerial level;
- Commitment to meet under the chairmanship of the NATO Secretary General;
- Commitment to co-operate with NATO in the “fight against international terrorism”.

1999: Revision of the Federal Constitution

The new constitution weakens the “militia principle”, curtails the competences of the cantons, takes away some of the powers of parliament and thus removes important obstacles that had stood in the way of rapprochement with NATO.

1999: NATO transforms itself into an “offensive alliance”

On 24 March 1999, NATO forces unleash the first war of aggression on European soil since the Second World War – without a UN mandate and therefore in violation of international law. It is planned in Washington and executed from there. For 78 days, civilian infrastructure in Serbia was bombed daily by NATO aircraft.

On April 1999, one month after the start of the war, the government representatives of the NATO states adopt a new “Strategic Concept” in Washington, with which they transform the so-called defence alliance, which has existed since 1949, into an “offensive alliance”.

2001: Revision of the Military Act

Despite the aggression of the NATO war alliance against a European country in violation of international law, the Federal Council submits a revision of the Military Act to Parliament in 2001 to allow the arming of Swiss troops abroad and military co-operation with NATO states.

2003: “Army XXI”

- Massive downsizing and rejuvenation of troops;
- Reduction and dissolution of entire troop formations;
- Cancellation of the existing corps, divisions and regiments and replacement by the NATO categories “battalions” and “brigades”;
- Cancellation of the right of the people to have a say in fundamental matters of the armed forces.

2010: “Further development of the armed forces” (WEA)

Following Army 95 and Army XXI, the *Further Development of the Armed Forces* (FDEA) is a further reorganisation of the Swiss Armed Forces.

On 6 June 2023, the *Swiss Association of Military Societies* (VMG) came to the sobering conclusion that the WEA has by no means achieved its objectives in its central core areas of full equipment and personnel resources. The final report is therefore described as inadequate and disappointing.

In the last 30 years, the number of soldiers has been reduced by 75 per cent, from around 400,000 to 100,000.

2022: “Partnerships 360 Symposium”

In 2022, the third “NATO Partnership Symposium” was held on Swiss soil at the “Maison

de la Paix” (sic) in Geneva. It was the first time that such a meeting was held in a partner country and not in a NATO member state.

2022: “Supplementary report to the 2021 Security Policy Report”

In 2022, the Federal Council published a “Supplementary Report to the 2021 Security Policy Report on the Consequences of the War in Ukraine”. This 37-page document constantly refers to “cooperation” and “collaboration” – but only with NATO and the EU.

2023: Participation in the “Sky Shields Initiative” – a NATO-Project

In July 2023, a D-A-CH meeting of the defence ministers of Switzerland, Austria and Germany took place in Bern at the invitation of Federal Councillor Viola Amherd. – Now, in May 2024, the agreements have already been signed by Switzerland and 12 NATO states.

Vuilleumier concludes:

“The Federal Council’s approach described above has led to a significant weakening of Swiss sovereignty and neutrality over the past decades. Our country has thus become an easy victim of political and economic blackmail. The involvement of the Swiss army with NATO is a 180° turnaround in the previous policy of neutrality and peace, which has contributed greatly to the security and stability of our country even in turbulent times.

It is crucial that we return to a credible and reliable policy of neutrality and no longer utilise our own resources for ‘foreign affairs’, but for the independence of our country.”

There is nothing to add to this.

(Translation «Swiss Standpoint»)

¹ <https://www.schweizer-standpunkt.ch/news-detailansicht-en-schweiz/independence-and-neutrality.html>

² On 17 April, Marianne Binder-Keller and Pierre-Alain Fridez voted in favour of Resolution 2540 on behalf of Switzerland in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe: (cf. <https://pace.coe.int/en/votes/39716>).

³ <https://swiss-standpoint.ch/news-detailansicht-en-schweiz/call-from-left-and-green-supporters-yes-to-the-neutrality-initiative.html>

⁴ Jean-Paul Vuilleumier. «Swiss Standpoint», 28 July 2023. <https://swiss-standpoint.ch/news-detailansicht-en-schweiz/dangerous-entanglement-of-the-swiss-armed-forces-with-nato.html>