

Switzerland

# From bad to worse

## In the war of the roses between the USA and the EU, Switzerland is siding with Brussels – and thus moving further away from its neutrality

by Michael Straumann\*



Michael Straumann.  
(Picture ma)

The last few weeks and months have shown a major rift between Washington and Brussels. Initially, *J.D. Vance's* speech at the *Munich Security Conference* caused a stir, giving Western Europe's political elite a lecture.<sup>1</sup> This was followed by the public quarrel between *Donald Trump*

and *Volodymyr Zelensky* in the Oval Office,<sup>2</sup> which ended with the USA cancelling<sup>3</sup> its further participation in military aid to Ukraine. The European Union's reaction was unequivocal: it intensified its blind loyalty to Kiev. The EU now stepped in to replace the weapons that the US had previously contributed.<sup>4</sup>

Political observers watched with interest to see how Switzerland would position itself in this war of the roses between the US and EU, especially in view of the fact that the Federal Council had spoken positively about the Trump administration and its efforts in the Ukraine question.<sup>5</sup> Did this indicate a return to the strict policy of neutrality that Switzerland had largely abandoned in recent years? The interim conclusion is clear: no.

### EU accession with the “flexible” neutrality

Instead of using the rift between Washington and Brussels wisely for itself, Bern threw itself – and not even out of necessity – at Brussels, as a recent vote in the Swiss National Council showed. On 6 March, the parliamentarians of the National Council voted 115 to 66 in favour of closer security cooperation with the EU.<sup>6</sup>

In its statement, the National Council recommended that the Federal Council examine fur-

ther possibilities for security cooperation with the European Union, for example within the framework of the European Defence Agency *Hub for European Defence Innovation* (HEDI). In addition, the federal government is called upon to present concrete steps for security policy cooperation with Brussels. Switzerland's role as part of the European security architecture must be strengthened.

Last summer, the now-resigned head of the defence department, *Viola Amherd*, signed the *European Sky Shield Initiative* (ESSI),<sup>7</sup> which provides for a common European air and missile defence system in Europe. It is doubtful whether things will improve in the Swiss army under Amherd's successor, *Martin Pfister*, who was elected as the new Federal Councillor by the Federal Assembly on 12 March. In his first press conference, Pfister announced that he would<sup>8</sup> “flexibly shape” neutrality – which is nothing more than a euphemism for “eroding” neutrality.

### Sanctions and censorship

As for the sanctions against Russia, Switzerland is cheerfully going along with it. On 4 March, for example, it adopted the *16<sup>th</sup> package of sanctions imposed by the European Union* – as if the first 15 packages had had any serious effect. While the Federal Council has so far refrained from censoring Russian media since Russia invaded Ukraine, this has now changed: The Russian news portals *South Front* and *News Front* have been blocked.<sup>9</sup> This clearly shows how the erosion of neutrality ultimately also endangers freedom of the press in Switzerland. To put it bluntly: neutrality is a protective shield for fundamental rights. In my text “Of War and Servitude”, I once explained how a non-interventionist, peace-oriented foreign policy protects citizens from restrictions on fundamental rights in their own country.<sup>10</sup>

Instead of returning to the proven success model of neutrality, Bern continues to create irre-

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versible facts – until a return to a neutral foreign policy will be simply impossible. Apparently, even the current dispute between Washington and Brussels will not change much in this regard. Only the Swiss electorate can change this by voting out the neutrality abolitionists in the next legislative period and by showing the Federal Council the red card with a yes vote in the upcoming referendum on the “Neutrality Initiative”.<sup>11</sup>

Source: <https://www.straumedia.ch/p/vom-regen-in-die-traufe>, 18 March 2025

(Translation “Swiss Standpoint”)

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/live/pCOsgfINdKg>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZrYHvE8mcM>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/03/us/politics/trump-ukraine-military-aid.html?utm\\_source=substack&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/03/us/politics/trump-ukraine-military-aid.html?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/13/eu-5bn-euro-boost-for-ukraine-military-aid-fund-russia?utm\\_source=substack&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/13/eu-5bn-euro-boost-for-ukraine-military-aid-fund-russia?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email)

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.straumedia.ch/p/sinneswandel-in-bundesbern?utm\\_source=substack&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.straumedia.ch/p/sinneswandel-in-bundesbern?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.parlament.ch/de/services/news/Seiten/2025/20250306130907515194158159026\\_bsd100.aspx?utm\\_source=substack&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.parlament.ch/de/services/news/Seiten/2025/20250306130907515194158159026_bsd100.aspx?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.straumedia.ch/p/krieg-gegen-die-volkssouveranitat?open=false#%C2%A7european-sky-shield-neutralitat-zum-abschuss-freigegeben>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/arena-zu-martin-pfister-flexible-neutralitaet-neuer-bundesrat-bringt-svp-auf-die-palme?utm\\_source=substack&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/arena-zu-martin-pfister-flexible-neutralitaet-neuer-bundesrat-bringt-svp-auf-die-palme?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email)

<sup>9</sup> [https://rtde.online/meinung/238794-medienfreiheit-in-schweiz-gefaehrdet-bern/?utm\\_source=substack&utm\\_medium=email](https://rtde.online/meinung/238794-medienfreiheit-in-schweiz-gefaehrdet-bern/?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email)

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.straumedia.ch/p/von-krieg-und-knechtschaft?utm\\_source=substack&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.straumedia.ch/p/von-krieg-und-knechtschaft?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email)

<sup>11</sup> <https://neutralitaet-ja.ch/>