

On Swiss neutrality

Swiss Government opens the debate on the “Neutrality Initiative” with a lie

by Christoph Pfluger,* Solothurn



Christoph Pfluger
(Picture www.christoph-pfluger.ch)

Dear readers

What many people don't know: Neutrality is part of Switzerland's DNA. But it is not enshrined in the constitution.

This is why Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis was able to throw it overboard at the end of February 2022 without a Swiss government decision, without a parliamentary decision and without a referendum.

Something like flexible neutrality now applies. You can wage economic warfare and still claim to be neutral.

The popular initiative “Preservation of Swiss neutrality” aims to stop this “flexibility” – i.e. abolition – of neutrality by defining its principle and form in the constitution.

The horrendous pace at which the Federal Council is dealing with the initiative shows just how unpleasant this is for the Swiss Government.

At a horrendous pace

It was submitted on 11 April 2024, declared valid on 28 May and just under a month later the Swiss government recommended that it be rejected without a counter-proposal.

Such unprecedented speed shows two things:

- Neutrality should not be the subject of a broad debate;
- The vote should take place while the public mood still favours the collective West.

To date,

no provision for neutrality in the constitution

The Swiss government argues dishonestly: it writes that “the current regulation and practice of neutrality has proven itself”. But the Swiss Federal Constitution does not regulate neutrality at all.

The Swiss government can therefore interpret neutrality as it wishes. This is why Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis was able to adopt the EU's



sanctions against Russia practically single-handedly.

The argument that the Russian invasion of Ukraine is a war contrary to international law is true but does not stand up if Switzerland does not sanction all wars of aggression that violate international law. It did not do so for NATO's war against Yugoslavia in 1999, the US war against Afghanistan in 2001 or the US-founded “coalition of the willing” against Iraq in 2003.

A false representation

The Swiss government is also misrepresenting the initiative, hardly out of ignorance, but rather out of deliberate calculation. It writes: “With the new constitutional provision, Switzerland would no longer be allowed to take sanctions against belligerent states in future, among other things.” That is complete nonsense.

The text of the initiative explicitly states that participation in military conflicts between third countries and in non-military coercive measures is prohibited:

“Obligations towards the *United Nations Organisation* (UNO) and measures to prevent the circumvention of non-military coercive measures of other states are reserved” (para. 3)

To sum up, it can be said that the Swiss government is already lying in its first official statement

* Christoph Pfluger, born in 1954, is a Swiss journalist, publisher and author. He has been writing about issues relating to the monetary system since the 1980s. Since 1992, he has published “Zeitpunkt”, “a magazine for intelligent optimists and constructive sceptics”.

on the neutrality initiative. This does not bode well for the referendum campaign, which will probably have to be held as early as next year.

Referendums today are characterised less by expertise than by emotions. And these are characterised by slogans with few words and catchy images. Even if the initiative text is short, very few voters will read it before going to the ballot box. They will follow the slogans and artificially promoted feelings.

Neutrality requires reason, not emotion

But neutrality is not a question of sentiment, but of reason. Switzerland's stance during the First World War shows this clearly. While the majority of German-speaking Swiss felt they were on the side of Germany, French-speaking Switzerland was on the side of France. Despite this, Switzerland successfully maintained its neutrality and kept the peace domestically.

The upcoming vote on the neutrality initiative worries me. On the one hand, it will be characterised by emotions and, on the other, by the "political class" and the administration, who want to move closer to NATO and buy more and more Western military equipment until we have reached the NATO target of two percent of gross domestic product. The traditionally anti-war left and the Greens are (so far?) firmly in the camp of NATO friends.

Initiative as a risk?

The neutrality initiative, as necessary as it is, also entails a risk. If it is rejected, this means tacit approval for its further flexibility, i.e. abolition.

Without the protection of the constitution, neutrality will be sacrificed to the great powers and their henchmen in Switzerland. [...]

It is about further rapprochement with NATO and ultimately about war and peace. No one can

stand on the sidelines. Corona brought life to a temporary standstill. A war will end it.

Prepare for the voting campaign

So, prepare yourself not to leave it to others to fight for neutrality in the voting campaign. Prepare yourself for action on the direct democratic front of peace. That may sound a little martial. But if you want peace, you must make sure that people don't take up arms.

You can offer "resistance without opposition" by campaigning for neutrality now instead of against war later. "Gouverner c'est prévoir" [to govern is to anticipate] is an old piece of statesmanlike wisdom. And if the sovereign must govern – because the government fails to do so – then we must anticipate and act accordingly.

With best regards

Christoph Pfluger, Editor of "Zeitpunkt"

Source: <https://mailchi.mp/zeitpunkt/wer-frieden-will-muss-sich-jetzt-fr-die-neutralitt-einsetzen-2888244?e=002064d508>, 5 July 2024

Further arguments in favour of the initiative "Preservation of neutrality" can be found below:

- "Zeitpunkt"-Focus edition 176 "Can we still be neutral? Or do we even have to be?" (can be ordered *here* for CHF 15).
- Call from Left and Green Supporters: Yes to the Neutrality Initiative! <https://www.schweizer-standpunkt.ch/news-detailansicht-enschweiz/call-from-left-and-green-supporters-yes-to-the-neutrality-initiative.html>
- Argumentation of the initiative committee (in German): <https://neutralitaet-ja.ch/argumentarium/>
- Text of the initiative (in German): <https://www.bk.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis540t.html>