

Neutrality: a service to others – not merely a form of protection

by Colonel Jacques Baud,* Brussels

(CH-S) Switzerland has lost credibility as a mediator. On 25 April, in an opening address delivered online to the general meeting of the association “bene.swiss.ch”,¹ Jacques Baud called for a return to an active neutrality that serves others.

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Neutrality is a key issue for our country today – not only because it will be the subject of an upcoming referendum, but also because it is under threat from various political decisions relating to different conflicts, such as the war in Ukraine, but also other conflicts. More than ever, neutrality is necessary.

To understand why it is necessary, however, one must also understand what neutrality really means. There are many people – including some of you – who have very idealistic notions about it. Sometimes I get the impression that in Switzerland we view neutrality too much as something passive, almost like an accessory: something that belongs to us and allows us to stay out of conflicts – and that is that. It has become part of our identity.

However, I believe we must go further. I am opposed to a neutrality that is open to varying interpretations. Neutrality must remain neutrality. It is only credible if it is consistent and unchanging. That is the first point.

The second point is: neutrality is not something intended merely to satisfy ourselves. It must serve others – and that is crucial. When the major European powers of the time granted us neutrality in 1815, this came with an obligation: to protect our territory from being used by foreign powers. This gave rise to the concept of armed neutrality. It is therefore not merely a



Pascal Lottaz and Jacques Baud (right) giving his statement. (Screenshot)

political stance – we were also obliged to defend our territory and prevent it from being used by others.

At that time, Switzerland was strategically important, primarily because of the Alpine passes, and this remained the case until around the middle of the 20th century. Today, our territory as such has largely lost this strategic significance. Yet the underlying idea remains: our neutrality should also benefit others. For the great powers at the time, it was advantageous that our territory could not be used for military purposes.

In other words: our neutrality – regardless of “good offices” or mediation roles – was of benefit to our neighbours. Today, we must translate this principle into a more modern, rather political form: our neutrality must continue to be of benefit to others.

Today, it is less about territorial neutrality, even though our territory must remain sovereign, independent and, of course, neutral. Looking at the conflicts of recent years – in Ukraine, Palestine or Iran – what the parties to the conflict lack above all is a way out, a neutral venue where they can talk to one another.

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Confederation before joining the UN and NATO. He is the author of numerous specialist books.

Since 15 December 2025, he has been confined to his home in Brussels, is not permitted to leave Belgium, and his bank accounts have been frozen. The Council of the European Union has placed him on a sanctions list without charge and without a fair hearing (Cf. www.free-baud.org).

Such a place no longer exists anywhere today. Meetings are occasionally held in the United Arab Emirates or Turkey, but that platform which existed during the Cold War – where people knew they could speak freely about anything in Switzerland – has disappeared.

As a reminder: on 25 February 2022, one day after the start of the Russian offensive in Ukraine, Zelenskyy approached Switzerland to organise a peace conference. This ultimately did not materialise; negotiations followed in Gornyy and later in Istanbul. However, in subsequent peace initiatives, Zelenskyy no longer turned to Switzerland, but to Turkey – because Switzerland had lost credibility in the eyes of one of the parties to the conflict.

It is irrelevant whether one likes the actors involved or not, or whether one agrees with their actions. Neutrality must offer a space to all

those involved – our neighbours as well as the parties to the conflict. We must not forget that.

Neutrality is not a mere ornament, not a decorative element like geraniums in the windows. It must benefit others. Neutrality must serve humanity. And that is precisely why we must commit ourselves to preserving it.

Source: <https://bene.swiss/neutralitaet-als-dienst-nicht-nur-als-schutz/>, 27 April 2026

(Translation Swiss Standpoint)

¹ *bene.swiss.ch*, the “Movement for Neutrality” was founded on 9 March 2025. *bene.swiss.ch* sees itself as an umbrella organisation supporting local groups and activists who campaign for neutrality as the foundation of peace, direct democracy and a Switzerland that acts as a good-neighbourly mediator. The umbrella organisation encourages the formation of autonomous local groups and supports them in their activities. Membership is not required to form local groups, nor is it a prerequisite for receiving support.