

# Swiss neutrality

## Leaders on the wrong track

by Thomas Scherr

*How did it come about that the Federal Council and with it the National Council lost their heads within a few days and pushed aside the country's centuries-old neutrality? What interests were at work in the background? What could a way back to neutrality look like?*

End of February 2022: in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the EU called for tough sanctions against Russia on an unimagined scale. Weapons were also to be supplied to Ukraine. The decision came about under the strong influence of the USA on the individual EU states and the EU Commission. It was clear that the consequences of this decision would ultimately directly affect all of Europe – but not the USA.

### What the Federal Council should have done

Intuitively, at the end of February 2022, the Swiss Federal Council should have adhered to the line it has taken for 150 years: a clear and indignant statement on the human suffering caused by the Ukraine conflict, a condemnation of Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, which is contrary to international law, combined with a call on all parties to come to the negotiating table. Then it would have withdrawn its request to sit on the UN Security Council and confirmed the validity of Switzerland's perpetual armed neutrality.

### What the Federal Council failed to do

The Federal Council should have reacted to the expected pressure from Washington, Brussels, Berlin or Moscow to align itself with their position by referring to the country's neutrality. At the same time, it should have offered Switzerland as a negotiating venue and its good offices with a clear conscience. This is what the government should have done to avert the damage now expected to the Swiss people. Furthermore, the government should have ordered or made necessary provisions for the country, since December 2021 at the latest.

As has often been the case in the country's history, the population would have stood behind

the Federal Council and rejected attempts to apply pressure from abroad. In terms of foreign policy, the Federal Council should have endeavoured to maintain appropriate diplomatic and economic contacts with all sides in the spirit of neutrality.

But the reality was different in February 2022. How did the Federal Council's failure come about?

### How neutrality was forfeited

For decades and with perseverance, the Swiss government and the population were influenced into believing that joining international organisations would be compatible with Swiss neutrality without any problems: EEA, EU, NATO, Pfp, OECD, Pesco, etc. In the country, it was increasingly said that one had to participate and could not always stand on the side lines. More on this below.

After the Federal Council had joined the EU sanctions on 28 February, some leading Swiss politicians expressed shortly afterwards that a Swiss participation in future possible war missions, which could result from the Ukraine conflict, alongside the EU or even NATO could make sense for the country. At the same time, it would be possible to remain neutral. The fact that this is not the case is not explained here, because it is obvious.

### Undermined over the years

How did it come about that some Swiss politicians, military leaders and publishers are now so unanimous in wanting to join a Western military alliance – logically under the command of the USA? Is it for reasons of prestige? Naivety? Claims to power? Corruption? Corruptibility? Carelessness?

A few milestones from the past years:

- In the 1990s, the Federal Council pushed for accession to the EEA. The people rejected it in a referendum.
- In 1996, the Federal Council decided to join the NATO organisation "Partnership for Peace" (Pfp). It succeeds in presenting the organisa-

tion as completely harmless and compatible with neutrality.

- From 2003 onwards, the Swiss army is re-equipped to NATO standards (*Army XXI*). In addition, the army is reduced in size and its defence capability is covertly abandoned. Further disastrous army reforms such as the “Further Development of the Armed Forces” (WEA 2013-2017) follow. The result is that the country can no longer fulfil its duty as a neutral state to be able to credibly defend its own territory.
- Extensive courses for army cadres in the USA. Increased participation in NATO exercises.
- Training of NATO soldiers in Switzerland (German Air Force, courses for NATO mountain troops).
- Procurement of the new US F-35 fighter jet, which fits more into a NATO combat unit than it could serve to defend a small neutral state.
- Attempts by the Federal Council to bring Switzerland closer to the EU bit by bit (e.g. framework agreement, Cassis de Dijon principle, Schengen Agreement, EU arbitration court, cohesion billions, etc.).
- Neglected border protection.
- Filling many important board positions in Swiss companies with German, British or US managers. Their influence on shaping Swiss policy is increasing.
- State responsibilities for strategically important economic institutions, for example for vaccine production or for an independent energy supply, have been neglected or abandoned altogether.
- Due to massive threats from the USA, Switzerland lifts its bank client confidentiality. The USA is getting the customer data supplied.
- Debate about relativising Switzerland’s role in the Second World War and Swiss neutrality: “looted gold debate”, Bergier Report, etc.

### **Not voluntary participation, but implementation**

These milestones can be used to trace the systematic dismantling of Swiss independence and thus of its independent and neutral position. The country fell into various dependencies. It was not a matter of cooperation or voluntary participation, but of quietly implementing international guidelines.

### **Switzerland, an “unfriendly state”**

In the end, it took only a few words from a Federal Councillor oblivious to history to overturn

centuries of Swiss neutrality policy. With moist eyes, Federal Councillors *Viola Amherd* and *Ignazio Cassis* cheer to the actor and President of Ukraine in Bern. Hardly any Federal Councillor had behaved in such an un-Swiss manner in the past 150 years. Not even *Marcel Pilet-Golaz* managed that in his clumsy speech in 1940. Our Federal Councillors did not cheer as private individuals but as Federal Councillors. The outcome is shameful: together with some NATO and EU states, Switzerland is now on a Russian list of “unfriendly states”. Mind you, not even all NATO and EU states are on this list!

### **Swiss F-35 fighter jets for NATO?**

Many of our National Councillors also seem to be afflicted by profound historical amnesia. Thus, *Mitte* (former CVP) President *Gerhard Pfister* called in lockstep with his party colleague and Federal Councillor *Viola Amherd* for Swiss participation in a possible (defence) war against Russia with the new Swiss F-35 fighter jets.

Both know very well that this would only be possible within the NATO command structures. This would totally block Switzerland’s way back to neutrality. It would become a party to the war, with all the consequences that this would entail. Switzerland will certainly not sit on the NATO general staff and be able to decide on the individual war missions. It will have to follow the orders of the military leadership over which it has no influence. And, for 75 years – behind every military structure in Western Europe has been Washington.

Possible consequences of a war for the civilian population can currently be studied in Ukraine – but one can also take a look at Libya, Iraq, Yemen or Syria.

### **Battlefield Europe?**

If it comes to a nuclear strike, Europe would be the battlefield. Neither Swiss F-35 fighter jets nor a “European defence alliance” could prevent this. Due to the unspeakable behaviour of the Federal Council, Switzerland has become entangled in the international power network and is no longer in control of its own situation.

Switzerland’s political leadership has neglected the welfare of its own people. It has lost its compass. Now the population itself is being subjected to mass psychological attacks in order to weaken its traditional self-image.

The concept of neutrality is to be dissolved and reinterpreted. A typical assignment of spin

doctoring. Black becomes white, and white becomes black. Neutrality becomes partisanship and peace becomes war.

It can be assumed that today mass psychological editing is carried out by international PR agencies – similar to *Ruder Finn* or *Saatchi&Saatchi* during the Yugoslav conflict. On the other hand, the domestic media groups offer prime examples of media processing, for example the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*”, the *Ringier publishing house* or *AZ Medien*. For them, the case seems clear: Switzerland redefines neutrality and moves “with the West” against Russia. This is then called “European solidarity” or “neutrality in the service of international law”.

From NATO’s point of view, neutral states must not exist. There must be no one today who says: I will not join any party! In this way, also Austria and Sweden are put under pressure to give up their neutral position.

### **The way back to neutrality**

Switzerland has had its fair share of wars and war operations at home and abroad in its history. For good reasons, our forefathers skilfully kept the country out of the wars of the great powers – “sitting quietly”. Forgotten are *Niklaus von Flüe*, *Hans Rudolf Wettstein*, *Charles Pictet de Rochemont* or *Guillaume-Henri Dufour*, who sought ways out of international entanglements and out of war and misery for the good of the whole country and made efforts to reduce human suffering. The humanitarian works of *Henry Dunant* or *Carl Lutz*, who saved the lives of thousands, would have been unthinkable without a truly neutral Switzerland.

Until now, one could rely on the country’s proven neutrality over centuries with its discreet diplomacy. Switzerland’s credible neutrality is indispensable for locating the International Committee of the Red Cross and many other international organisations.

### **Paying the price**

The road back is clear, but hard. Hard because one has to make oneself unpopular and because one can expect measures from the EU and the USA – perhaps even economic and military pressure. Would our army be in a position to create a defence system with its greatly reduced personnel? Would our economy be prepared to forego certain business in favour of peaceful neutrality? Would our politicians be prepared to give up a possible seat on the UN Security Council or the EU Commission? What about the population? They will already have to pay a high price for the policies of the Federal Council and the ruling elites. Higher energy costs, inflation, supply bottlenecks ... are already consequences of the sanctions policy of the EU and the USA, not to mention possible consequences of war.

What should be done to regain neutrality?

1. Switzerland leaves the EU sanctions pact (which not even Hungary and Romania – nota bene – two NATO and EU states – fully implement).
2. It returns to perpetual and armed neutrality.
3. It withdraws its application for participation in the UN Security Council and distances itself from the EU.

Which courageous men and women will stand up for a free and neutral Switzerland?