Switzerland

NATO-turbos at the ETH Zurich

The "Center for Security Studies" is calling for Switzerland to become more involved in NATO. Concerns about neutrality? None whatsoever.

by Michael Straumann*

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(Picture ma)

Every year, the *Center for Security Studies* (CSS) at ETH Zurich [Federal Institute of Technology Zurich] publishes a bulletin dealing with Swiss security policy and the current challenges it faces. The security policy research centre was founded in 2002.[1] Since 2004, it has maintained a "strategic partnership" with the *Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sports* (DDPS). It is therefore a think tank that is very close to the Swiss government.

In this context, its studies and research reports are very informative for understanding the current zeitgeist in Swiss security policy. For more than three decades, the Department of Defence has been pursuing a decidedly pro-transatlantic course – since Switzerland joined the "Partnership for Peace",[2] the NATO cooperation programme. In other words: more NATO, less neutrality, less sovereignty.

The *Center for Security Studies* also repeatedly reveals the transatlantic zeitgeist. A current example is the "Bulletin on Swiss Security Policy 2024" published at the end of November.[3] The tenor of the publication: Due to the intensified international security situation, Switzerland must deepen its cooperation with NATO. Concerns about neutrality? None whatsoever.

The bulletin covers, among other things, Switzerland's current security strategy, its arms policy and its role as a new member of the UN Security Council. Current security policy challenges such as the war in Ukraine, the Gaza conflict and "hybrid threats" such as cyber-attacks

and disinformation campaigns are also discussed. The mantra-like appeal for increased cooperation with the West runs like a red thread through the pages. All roads lead to Washington and Brussels. Already in the preface ("Impulse for Security Policy in the Context of the Turn of an Era") a black and white picture is drawn, and it is made clear who the "good guys" are and who the "aggressor" is.

It is only the Russians' fault

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and Moscow's braking with the West are among the factors responsible for Switzerland's deteriorating security situation. Noble values such as "freedom" and "democracy" are being defended in Ukraine. Russia, on the other hand, is said to have a "neo-imperial self-image" and a "revisionist foreign policy". The return of war marks the "disintegration of the liberal pan-European security order", the preface continues.

The fact that war has already returned to Europe with the NATO attack on Yugoslavia in violation of international law,[4] of course, is ignored here. The Bulletin does not critically reflect on Western foreign and security policy. Not a word about NATO's eastward expansion[5] or the West-orchestrated Maidan coup[6] in February 2014. Not a word about the fact that the West has permanently ignored Russia's security needs and has deliberately escalated the situation. Russia may bear some of the blame for the war in Ukraine. However, to act as if Moscow were the sole aggressor in this conflict is to ignore the facts. It was a war of aggression, yes – but a provoked war of aggression.[7] However, such nuances are not to be found here.

Do Switzerland and NATO share common values?

In the article "The work of strategy creation is like security policy itself: a joint task", *Markus Mäder,* State Secretary for Security Policy, is inter-

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viewed. "Switzerland is still perceived as a reliable partner – also because it has taken a clear position against Russian aggression in violation of international law and supports the sanctions," says Mäder. In other words, Mäder welcomes Switzerland's loyalty to its Western partners. Should this be the primary consideration? Should not the preservation of its own sovereignty and neutrality be the focus?

Mäder is a strong supporter of "Partnership for Peace". In his opinion, Switzerland and NATO countries share common values, which is why closer cooperation is an obvious step, he said in another interview with *Swissinfo*.[8] Culturally, this may be true, because Switzerland is deeply embedded in Western culture. But in terms of security policy?

Is it really in Switzerland's national interest to move closer to a military alliance that has continuously launched wars of aggression and illegal coups in violation of international law for the past three decades? Would Switzerland's integration into NATO not rather harm its foreign policy prestige and humanitarian tradition? Wouldn't it rather damage important institutions such as the *International Committee of the Red Cross* (ICRC), which depends on Switzerland's reputation as a reliable neutral state? Such questions are neither asked by the *Center for Security Studies* nor answered by Markus Mäder.

Maintaining the rules-based order

The analysis by CSS research director *Andreas Wagner* of Switzerland's planned security policy strategy takes the same line. In June 2024, the Swiss government decided to develop such a strategy. Among other things, Wagner recommends "focusing on intensifying international security cooperation to maintain a rules-based order in Europe and worldwide". Which "rules-based order" is meant here? An international order that gives the West a clean conscience when it violates the sovereignty of other countries, but criticises states like Russia for doing the same?

Conclusion

With this year's bulletin on Swiss security policy, the *Center for Security Studies* once again reveals its pro-transatlantic orientation. Emancipating itself from NATO and the EU in terms of security policy and refocusing on sovereign national defence seems to be unthinkable for both the DDPS and the CSS.

Quelle: https://www.straumedia.ch/p/nato-turbos-an-der-eth, 11 December 2024

(Translation "Swiss Standpoint")

[1] *https://css.ethz.ch/ueber-uns.html?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email*

[2] *https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/aussenpolitik/internationale-organisationen/nato-partnerschaftfuerdenfrieden.html?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email*

[3] *https://css.ethz.ch/ueber-uns/CSS-news/2024/11/bulletin-2023-on-swiss-security-policy.html?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email*

[4] *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZtkQYRlXMNU&list=PLikqwQMt7PZ--Pa0ko4ZhvMzYC0U0BKS9&index=10*

[5] *https://deutsche-wirtschafts-nachrichten.de/516654/nato-osterweiterung-ein-gebrochenes-muendliches-versprechen-mit-folgen-fuer-europa?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email*

[6] *https://www.manova.news/artikel/die-andere-seite-der-wahrheit?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email*

[7] *https://scotthorton.org/product/provoked/?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email*

[8] *https://www.swissinfo.ch/ger/aussenpolitik/markus-mäder-es-besteht-ein-natürliches-interesse-an-einer-zusammenarbeit-zwischen-der-nato-und-der-schweiz/72721490?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email*