

On Swiss neutrality

The new wars and neutrality

by Guy Mettan,* Geneva



Guy Mettan
(Picture ma)

Neutrality has always been a source of debate in Switzerland, and that's a good thing. Two centuries after it was formalised by the Congress of Vienna, neutrality served us well during the two world wars and the Cold War. In the last three decades, which have been characterised by

US hegemony, it has simply no longer served us, as Switzerland has adopted American views without any problems, as there was no alternative.

Based on this observation, the liberal left and the liberal right gradually became convinced that neutrality was just an old hat, a relic from the past that could be thrown away because it would complicate our relations with a European Union that is itself integrated into NATO and suspicious of neutral countries.

That has changed since two wars broke out on our doorstep, in Ukraine and Palestine. In the last twenty months, the situation has suddenly become more complicated.

In the case of Ukraine, most of our country, apart from the SVP, has sided with the Atlanticists and backed Ukraine and Russia like one man, under the dubious pretext that so-called co-operative neutrality allows such partisanship. If this opportunist majority is to be believed, Switzerland can content itself with one-sided humanitarian aid (which is also in blatant contradiction to the spirit of Henry Dunant) and

a ban on supplying weapons to warring parties. In the same spirit, it believes it has the right to impose unilateral sanctions against Russia, even though these are not compatible with international law as they were not decided by the United Nations.

But suddenly the events in Palestine upset this beautiful order. The left, which was unanimously pro-Ukrainian, now finds itself torn between its condemnation of anti-Semitism and its pro-Palestinian sympathies. The liberal right, which is also completely aligned with Ukraine, has come out in favour of Israel, even though this country is pursuing the same policy as Russia in the Donbass and Crimea, illegally occupying the Golan Heights and practising a quasi-annexation of the West Bank and de facto ethnic cleansing in Gaza. Similarly, it does not find harsh enough words to castigate *Putin*, but has nothing against *Netanyahu*, who is accused of corruption and of being the gravedigger of Israeli democracy. Much of the SVP, which is in favour of a strict application of neutrality, has abandoned this in the Palestinian conflict and sided with Israel.

The result: moral weaknesses and opportunistic attitudes are coming to the fore. Who cares about the hundreds of thousands of people who have died in Ukraine for nothing because Kiev is losing the conflict? Who cares about the fate of the Israeli hostages kidnapped by Hamas? Who cares about the attacks – deplorably! – committed by Israeli troops, which, according to the UN-HCR, have killed more innocent civilians and children in 30 days than the war in Ukraine has killed in 550 days!

Where are the morals? Where is the logic? Where is respect for the law and the protection of the innocent? Everything has disappeared in the emotional storm of events.

To avoid these miserable moral and political defeats, which divide our country and render it powerless on the international stage – and which

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also discredit the ICRC, humanitarian law, and the spirit of the Red Cross, which are part of our national DNA – it is more urgent than ever to remain neutral.

Courage, modernity, and the future lie in remaining neutral and promoting peace. On all fronts.

(Translation "Swiss Standpoint")

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