

Preserving neutrality: No arms exports from Switzerland

by Daniel Funk*



The relaxation of the War Material Act jeopardises Swiss neutrality. That is why the people must decide – in favour of consistent rules that apply equally to all states.

Daniel Funk. (Picture ma)

Switzerland faces a landmark referendum: should the export of war material be relaxed, or should the country remain true to its tried-and-tested course?¹ After Parliament watered down the provisions in favour of the arms industry, a referendum has been called thanks to over 62,000 signatures collected.²

The revision of the War Material Act aims to significantly facilitate the export of weapons to a group of 25 states. In the future, these countries are to be granted virtually unrestricted access to armaments produced in Switzerland – even if they are involved in armed conflicts. Furthermore, re-exports would be permitted without prior authorisation. Critics warn that this opens a dangerous door.

Neutrality is at the heart of the matter, even if this is not stated everywhere. It is a cornerstone of Swiss identity and its international credibility. Those who supply weapons are indirectly participating in conflicts and risk losing their role as impartial mediators. And those who supply war material to one side in a conflict are violating the law of neutrality. Credible neutrality therefore requires clear and consistent rules – without exceptions and without political expediency.

It is precisely the selective application of export regulations that raises questions. If arms deliveries are assessed differently depending on

* Daniel Funk is a member of the board of the Movement for neutrality «bene.swiss».



the geopolitical situation, neutrality loses its reliability. It can only endure if it is applied equally to all states – regardless of alliances, economic interests or political sympathies.

Proponents of the relaxation argue that it is necessary to protect jobs and the competitiveness of the Swiss arms industry. Yet economic interests must not be placed above principles of international law and humanitarian responsibility. Switzerland has made a name for itself internationally as a promoter of peace and a guardian of international humanitarian law – a reputation that must not be recklessly jeopardised.

The broad alliance of civil society organisations, development agencies and political parties demonstrates the depth of concern for these values. With the referendum, the population now has the final say. They can decide whether short-term economic benefits should be prioritised over long-term credibility and responsibility for peace policy.

The vote is therefore more than a technical legal matter. It is a commitment to Switzerland's fundamental principles. Anyone who takes neutrality seriously says no to arms exports – and yes to a consistent policy that applies equally to all.

Source: <https://bene.swiss/neutralitaet-bewahren-keine-waffenexporte-aus-der-schweiz/>, 10 April 2026

(Translation "Swiss Standpoint")

¹ <https://www.watson.ch/schweiz/armee/914669538-aus-fuhr-von-kriegsmaterial-jetzt-muss-das-volk-entscheiden>

² <https://kriegsmaterial-referendum.ch/>