

Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC)

**Objectives, principles and recent
developments of Swiss Foreign Policy
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H.E. Dr. Bernardino Regazzoni was born in 1957 in Lugano, his place of origin is Balerna (Canton of Ticino).

He obtained a Ph.D. in Philosophy and after joining the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in 1988, he completed his training in Berne at the Integration Office (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs/ Federal Department of the Economy) and at the Embassy of Switzerland in Abidjan. In 1990 he was posted as Deputy Head of Mission to the Embassy of Switzerland in Kinshasa. On his return to Berne in 1993, he was appointed Head of the Francophonie Service at the Political Division I and in 1996 he was nominated Deputy Chief of the Political Division I, responsible for the bilateral political relations with European and North American countries.

In mid-1999 he became Diplomatic Affairs Advisor of the Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. From September 2002 to July 2006 he was appointed Ambassador of Switzerland to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and Republic of Maldives, based in Colombo. In July 2006 he took up the post of Ambassador of Switzerland to the Republic of Indonesia and to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, and from July 2009 he was also the Ambassador of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), based in Jakarta.

H.E. Dr. Bernardino Regazzoni is currently Swiss Ambassador to Italy, Malta and San Marino, based in Rome. On 25th February 2010, Amb. Regazzoni presented his Letters of Credence to Hon Dr. George Abela, President of Malta, as the non-resident ambassador to Malta.

Ambassador Regazzoni is married with two children.

Objectives, principles and recent developments of Swiss Foreign Policy

by **H.E. Dr. Bernardino Regazzoni**

Ambassador of Switzerland to Malta

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*Dear Director, Professor Stephen Calleya,
Members of the Academic and administrative staff,
Dear students,*

It is a pleasure and an honor to be given the opportunity to make a presentation at MEDAC and to meet you this morning.

Indeed, Switzerland and MEDAC share a more than two decades long history, the Swiss Government having been, along with the Government of Malta, co-founder of MEDAC in 1990, and supporting it ever since.

In addressing you today, my memories go to an outstanding Maltese and European personality, late President Guido de Marco, Chairman of MEDAC, whom I had the honor to meet here at MEDAC in 2010, and whose vision contributed to the consolidation of this institution, a tangible mark of friendship between Switzerland and Malta.

I will first portray the objectives and principles of Swiss Foreign Policy. Then mention some recent developments, with an accent on Peace-building and the Arab Springs. For the second half of our time, I am confident that your comments and questions will allow us to exchange interesting views on relevant topics.

o. Introduction. Switzerland: a very globalized country

As an introduction, let me immediately stress that Switzerland is a **very much Aglobalized** country. Landlocked in the heart of Europe, with no commodities but water and stone, Switzerland became a high industrialized country and flourished only through the interaction with other countries and peoples.

Out of 8 million inhabitants, the proportion of **foreigners** living in Switzerland is today more than **22%**. Among them, the largest group are Italian, half a million,

followed by nationals of Germany and Portugal. The large majority are European, while around 15% of the foreigners are non-European.

Today, Switzerland has one of the highest GDP per capita. It is important to know that **half of the wealth** of Switzerland is generated through our interaction in the global economy. Just compare Switzerland's 2011 GDP (USD 523 billion) with the export in the same year (USD 308 billion) to understand why free-trade is so important to us. Swiss economy is not only made by watches, chocolate and banks. We mainly export machines, pharmaceuticals and chemicals, and of course watches. Swiss machines can be found all over the world: weaving, milling grain, measuring, regulating, pumping or producing energy. The finance sector is just less than 11% of GDP and agriculture around 1%.

1. Objectives and Principles of Swiss Foreign Policy

After this short introduction, whose aim is to understand the nature of the object itself, Switzerland, let's now move to the **objectives and principles** of Swiss Foreign Policy.

The Swiss Constitution (in its Articles 2, 54 and 101) clearly states the **fundamental objectives of our Foreign Policy**. They are five:

1. the independence, prosperity and security of the country
2. the respect for human rights and democracy
3. the peaceful coexistence of nations
4. the fight against human misery and poverty
5. and the protection of the environment

As one can easily find out, this policy aims not only at, obviously, **defending the interests** of Switzerland – take the first objective - but it also seeks to **promote abroad essential values** of our country.

As for the principles, traditionally, the implementation of Swiss foreign policy is governed by three essential principles which are the **rule of law**, **universality**, and **neutrality**, to which the fundamental notions of **solidarity** and **responsibility** should be added.

Based on the **rule of law**, Switzerland is very keen that international relations be governed **by law and not by force**. Disputes have to be settled by peaceful means.

Universality means that Switzerland maintains as far as possible good relations with all nations of the world. The country is indeed one of the most interconnected worldwide, as witnessed for instance by the large extension of its diplomatic network.

Neutrality has been imposing for five centuries the duty not to participate in international conflicts. Today's neutrality policy, while implying the maintenance of a degree of impartiality and objectivity in adopting a position, does not prevent Switzerland for instance from offering its contribution to peace by **facilitating contacts** between conflicting parties or to fully implement the UN sanctions regime.

As a country which benefits from globalization, Switzerland has a moral duty to be committed to the notions of **solidarity** and **responsibility**, acting as a **constructive** actor within the international community. Therefore, our efforts in the fields of **international cooperation** and **humanitarian aid**, but also in strengthening **human security** assume great importance.

Let me elaborate with some examples on some of the objectives and principles I just mentioned.

The tool of Foreign Policy is of course the Diplomatic Service. In addition to the headquarters in Berne, the network encompasses **140 diplomatic and consular representations** abroad, ten of them being multilateral. As for the financial resources, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs is provided in 2012 with a budget of **2.5 billion** euro. Roughly **two-thirds of this budget** are allocated to **development cooperation and humanitarian aid**, while the remaining third is devoted to conventional diplomatic activities.

The Swiss Parliament recently allocated to development cooperation and humanitarian aid a budget of **almost 10 billion euro for the period 2013-2016**. This is based on a decision by the Parliament itself to increase official development assistance to 0.5% of GDP by 2015. Through bilateral or multilateral channels, Swiss development cooperation is focused on the poorest regions of the world and on supporting the efforts of those countries and populations to overcome poverty. It is active in the following countries and regions: Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, Mozambique, Tanzania, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Cuba, Bangladesh, Nepal, Mongolia, Laos, West Bank and Gaza, Hind Kush, Mekong, Central America, Great Lakes and Southern Africa.

Special programs for cooperation also exist with the countries of the Balkans, like Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia, as well as Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union: Ukraine, Moldova, South Caucasus and Central Asia.

Humanitarian aid is concentrated on Sudan and South Sudan, Horn of Africa, Zimbabwe, West Africa, Near East, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Colombia and Haiti. In recent times, Switzerland has provided or is providing humanitarian assistance also to the population affected by the conflicts in Libya and Syria.

To ensure the greatest possible effectiveness of its work, the Swiss Development Cooperation concentrates on selected thematic domains that are particularly crucial for development processes and in which Switzerland has particular expertise, such as Rural development, climate change, water, health, education, migration, employment as well as rule of law and democracy.

Besides Development Cooperation, Switzerland supports Economic Cooperation programs in Egypt, Tunisia, Ghana, South Africa, Indonesia, Vietnam, Colombia and Peru.

I will further elaborate on objectives and principles later, as well as on the Mediterranean area. Let me now move to recent developments in Swiss Foreign Policy.

2. Recent developments of Swiss Foreign Policy

2.1. The four strategic axes decided by the Swiss Government

Last March, the Federal Council – the Swiss Government – has published its *Report on the strategic axes of Swiss Foreign Policy 2012-2015*. **Four strategic axes** have been defined for the next legislative period. In particular, the focus will be on:

1. Our relations with the **neighboring States**
2. Our relations with the **European Union**
3. Our contribution to enhance **stability in Europe and in the world**
4. Our efforts to consolidate as well as diversify our **strategic partnerships and multilateral commitment**.

Regarding our **neighboring countries** – 3 of which belong to the G8 – Switzerland wants to maintain and develop harmonious and balanced relations, with a special emphasis on cross-border regions and rapid settlement of disputes. In fact, we are closely interconnected with our neighbors: just think that more than 700'000 vehicles cross the Swiss border every day, with 260'000 people employed in Switzerland while living in a neighboring country.

The **relation to the EU** deserves a special emphasis. Despite not being a Member State, Switzerland has close and fundamental economic, political, and social ties to the EU. We have common languages and cultures. We share values and history. One million citizens from the EU live in Switzerland. In the economic field, the **two-way trade volume** between Switzerland and the EU is **one billion Swiss francs per working day**. 60% of worldwide Swiss exports go to the EU, and 80% of Swiss imports come from the EU. But Swiss exports are 9% of overall imports of the EU and Swiss imports from the EU represent 8% of overall EU exports. The trade balance has a surplus of 30 billion euro in favor of the EU. These figures show that, after the United States, Switzerland is the EU's most important economic partner, ahead of China and Russia.

Thanks to numerous **bilateral agreements**, Switzerland and the EU sustain very close relations. With no other third country has the Union concluded more agreements: e.g. free trade agreement, free movement of persons agreement, mutual recognition of professional qualifications, Schengen/Dublin agreements, overland transport and civil aviation agreements, taxation of savings and fight against fraud agreements. Switzerland remains strongly committed to the bilateral way with the EU.

An important aspect of Switzerland's relation to the EU is the **Swiss contribution to EU enlargement**. Since 2008, Switzerland has been participating in various projects designed to reduce the economic and social disparities in an enlarged EU. Switzerland's commitment to EU enlargement is an expression of solidarity. At the same time, Switzerland is laying the foundation for solid economic and political ties with the new EU member states. The CHF 1.25 billion credit decided by the Swiss Parliament has been allocated to the following priority areas in the 12 new EU-member States:

- Security and stability, and support for reforms;
- Environment and infrastructure;
- Promotion of the private sector;
- Human and social development

In this framework, Switzerland provides its support to MEDAC, as well as technical support to Mater Dei Hospital here in Malta.

Let me say something more about the axes number 3 and 4, “**stability in Europe and beyond**”, and “**strategic partnerships and multilateral commitment**”, which are certainly the most relevant for MEDAC students.

The Swiss Foreign Policy attaches key importance to **fostering stability** in Europe, in the regions bordering on it, and in the rest of the world. Our efforts are based in particular on international cooperation and on activities to **promote peace, respect for human rights, the rule of law, and international security**. As already mentioned, an important share of Swiss financial and human resources is devoted to achieving this aim. I will elaborate on this in a few minutes. In 2014 Switzerland will hold the **chair of OSCE** and this will offer a great opportunity to further strengthen our engagement to this goal.

The strategic axe n. 4 is based on the fact that rapid economic and social development is taking place in the world. **New powers** are emerging in Latin America, in Africa and especially in the Asia-Pacific region. In the multilateral sphere, the emerging powers are claiming a political and decision-making role commensurate with their economic weight and growing populations. At the bilateral level, they make use of their rising power to gain in influence and access to resources.

In this context, Switzerland has to actively **redefine its position**, in order to strengthen and **diversify** its strategic partnerships. Early in November, Switzerland will join the ASEM Asia-Europe Meeting as a new member State and will open an Embassy in Myanmar. Asia represents today around 13 % of Swiss foreign trade.

But based on the objectives and principles of our Foreign Policy, we are also committed to help redefining international architecture and **improving global governance** in favor of a just, peaceful, secure and stable international community.

In a consistent way, Switzerland will therefore continue to advocate for the **United Nations** to be able to act with greater efficiency and effectiveness. The objectives of the UN, the values and principles entrenched in the UN Charter, correspond indeed on the whole with those of Swiss foreign policy.

For instance, with a few other likeminded counties (Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein and Singapore) we have put forth recommendations for Security Council reform, mainly on its Working Methods (e.g. greater transparency and communication between SC and GA, greater participation of “country-specific configurations” within the SC, permanent members of the SC providing explanations as to why they are using the veto and refraining from using it in cases of genocide, crimes against humanity, and “grave breaches” of international humanitarian law).

Geneva, **the international Geneva**, the city of peace and human rights, is also an important part of our commitment in the field of global governance. Geneva is the host city of a large number of international organizations which are active in humanitarian aid, human rights, trade, environment and sustainable development, training and education, peace-keeping and security, meteorology, intellectual property, nuclear research, health, telecommunications, labour etc. The United Nations Office at Geneva is **the most active centre for multilateral diplomacy in the world** and

has been the setting of many historic negotiations. We are proud of this: Switzerland is host to **36** international organizations, about **250** non-governmental organizations have their seat in Geneva, **170** foreign States are represented in Geneva and realize its universal vocation.

Promoting the International Geneva as **an effective tool serving the international community** is an inherent element of our Foreign Policy, and we are investing important resources to this purpose.

2.2. Peace-Building as a key objective of Swiss Foreign Policy

Switzerland is especially well placed to act in the field of peace-building and human security. As a neutral State, with no colonial past – committed to dialogue as a way of resolving conflicts and with a long tradition of providing good offices and mediation, it also has a **long and solid experience of direct democracy, federalism, and respect for diversity**.

Traditionally, **good offices** can simply be a matter of Switzerland offering its territory as a negotiating venue. But the types of conflict prevailing today tend to need a much more active engagement in peace policy. Again and again, Switzerland therefore makes contact with conflict parties on the ground and may function as a mediator. Acting as a neutral third party, in this way, it can also bring in its own experts and propose negotiating methods or solutions.

Moreover, Switzerland is currently exercising the following six **diplomatic mandates** in representing the interests of:

1. the US in Cuba
2. Cuba in the US
3. Iran in Egypt
4. the US in Iran
5. the Russian Federation in Georgia
6. Georgia in the Russian Federation

We are keen to play an active role in peace processes. Many Swiss diplomats and experts are involved in peace processes around the world. Very often this has to happen behind the scene, to increase the chances of a successful work; sometimes, publicity and exposure can on the contrary become useful, at least at a certain stage of the process.

The creation of the UN Human Rights Council, the Geneva Middle East Initiative, and contributions towards peace processes in Colombia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Southern Sudan and Uganda are a few examples of processes where Switzerland is or has been actively involved.

The Swiss Parliament recently approved the proposal of our Government regarding the continuation of **peace promotion and human security measures** for the period 2012–2016. With a budget of **310 million Swiss francs**, the activities over the next few years will be focused on six priority themes:

- Peace and security;

- Democracy, elections, and power-sharing;
- Dealing with the past and prevention of atrocities;
- Increased promotion and protection of human rights;
- Protection of civilians in armed conflicts;
- Migration and combating human trafficking.

Part of the new framework credit will also be devoted to initiatives in the field of **disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation** – an area in which Switzerland intends to place greater emphasis during the next few years to strengthen international stability and security.

Also, Switzerland plans to extend its commitment in the field of **military peacekeeping** over the next few years, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The commitment to the **Partnership for Peace (PfP)** and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) will remain important.

As mentioned before, a commitment to developing and strengthening **public international law** is a constant aspect of Swiss foreign policy and this is also a way to serve peace. We are proud to be the depository State of the Geneva Conventions and the seat of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). We have a moral obligation in particular to promote and strengthen respect for **international humanitarian law**.

As to international criminal justice (a field of growing importance), Switzerland is committed to combating impunity and to an **International Criminal Court (ICC)** capable of fulfilling its vital mandate.

Before concluding let me say something more specific about the Mediterranean region.

3. Mediterranean Region & Arab Springs

Switzerland fully supports Arab countries' transition towards greater political and economic freedoms.

You all know much better than me, that the Mediterranean region demands a special attention and commitment on the European side, including Switzerland.

Switzerland will **chair the OSCE in 2014**. Before that, my country will assume in January 2013 the chairmanship of the **OSCE informal contact group of Mediterranean partners for cooperation** (including Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Tunisia and Israel). We strongly believe that both OSCE participating States and Mediterranean partners can mutually benefit from a strong and effective cooperation.

Switzerland is committed to contributing to broadening this dialogue, intensifying political consultations, strengthening practical co-operation and further sharing best practices. Considering the traditional OSCE focus and expertise, in the context of the informal contact group, we can imagine to work on the following issues during our chairmanship:

- **security sector reforms**, including the democratic control of armed forces and the

- control of small arms and light weapons;
- **electoral reforms** and observation;
- **migration**, with a focus on human trafficking and the economic integration of women.

But it will be **extremely interesting for me** to listen to you and **learn** about what you consider to be a priority with relation to the transitions after the Arab Springs.

Immediately after the first Arab Springs, in March 2011, the Swiss Government decided to increase and **better focus its support to the transition to democracy, economic development, and cooperation in the field of migration**. But material support is just one aspect. Actually, the ongoing changes provide an opportunity to further engage, between both shores of the Mediterranean, the Northern and the Southern, in the dialogue of civilization, I am deeply convinced being a most crucial global issue.

The call for democracy, human dignity, and a better future took on deafening proportions and in many places caused the existing political structures to tremble and even collapse. With this regard, Switzerland has undertaken to **implement various measures**. I would like to mention two of them in particular:

Freeze on assets: The Federal Council immediately ordered a freeze on the financial assets of numerous politically exposed persons such as heads of State, ministers, high-level civil servants, along with their respective entourage. Switzerland actively supports the new governments in their efforts to recover the frozen assets.

Humanitarian aid: In connection with the crisis in Libya and Syria, Switzerland dispatched consistent humanitarian aid to assist those persons who had fled the countries, but also to the particularly exposed population groups in the countries themselves. Switzerland is also providing support to long-standing partner organizations such as the ICRC, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and FAO, to protect and support the civil population.

The Mediterranean region is currently witnessing deep transformations. There is no absolute guarantee that these transformations will be fully successful in all countries. Also an academic institution like MEDAC, which is an excellent promoter of dialogue on Mediterranean issues, can make an important contribution in this fragile but crucial process, which is far from being accomplished.

This is one more reason why I am glad to be here today at MEDAC and I appreciate a lot the chance to exchange views with you on these challenges.

Thank you for your attention.





H.E. Ambassador Bernardino Regazzoni and Mr. Tiziano Balmelli having talks at MEDAC (R to L)



Professor Stephen Calleya, H.E. Ambassador Bernardino Regazzoni, Dr. Joe Borg, Dr. Derek Lutterbeck and Ambassador Alfred Zarb (R to L)



The Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC) is an institution of higher learning offering advanced degrees in diplomacy with a focus on Mediterranean issues. The programme consists of courses in International Law, International Economics, International Relations, Diplomatic History and the practice of diplomacy.

MEDAC was established in 1990 pursuant to an agreement between the governments of Malta and Switzerland. The Geneva Graduate Institute of International Studies (HEI) was among its first foreign partners.

With Malta's membership in the European Union and with the financial support of the Arab League MEDAC, more than ever, is emphasizing the Euro-Mediterranean dimension by building bridges between Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

MEDAC is a member of the International Forum on Diplomatic Training (IFDT), of the European Diplomatic Training Initiative (EDTI), a group of EU diplomatic academies training EU personnel, and a member of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN). Our institution is also part of the Advisory Board of the journal Europe's World.

MEDAC has established close strategic relationships with a large number of prestigious international diplomatic institutions including the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, the Institute for Diplomatic Studies in Cairo, the Institute for Diplomatic Studies, Tunisia, Centre for European Integration Studies (ZEI) of the University in Bonn, Germany as well as Wilton Park – UK, Spanish Diplomatic School, Madrid, Spain, and Department of Mediterranean Studies, University of the Aegean, Rhodes, Greece.

Academy Courses

- Master of Arts in Diplomatic Studies (M. A.)
- Master of Diplomacy (M. Dip.)
- **NEW** Joint M.A. with George Mason University (Virginia, USA) on Conflict Resolution and Mediterranean Security
- Diploma in Diplomacy (DDS)

The programme of Master of Diplomacy (M. Dip.) course is designed for junior diplomats with some field experience. They are instructed in the same core disciplines as the M.A. students (Diplomatic History, International Relations, International Economics, International Law as well as selected lectures in diplomacy) but with a special emphasis on diplomatic practice, languages, public speaking and on-line skills.

The course covers two semesters, from October to June, and includes field trips to Switzerland and to Germany. (See details of all courses on the website: www.um.edu.mt/medac)