

How Switzerland Stayed Neutral (by Johny Harris)

This is a giant map of Switzerland.

And one thing I have learned about Switzerland is that the Swiss like to be

_____ . This country does not like conflict.

They avoid it **at all costs**, which is strange because they're really good at _____.

Other European countries used to hire Swiss men to fight their wars for them. But back home in Switzerland, they don't fight. They don't **take sides**.

*That's partly because they lost a few wars of _____ and just decided it was probably better to **stay put**. But it's also because back when Europe was full of empires, the big European powers thought it would be a good idea to have a mountainous small buffer country in between some of the big _____.*

*And so Switzerland was **deemed** this neutral power, but the result is that today Switzerland doesn't take sides. They don't send their **troops** to fight other wars. They _____ alliances. I mean, they're not a part of the EU. They're not a part of NATO. And they **reluctantly** barely joined the UN as recently as 2002, a decade after North Korea.*

When you're right here, right at the crossroads of people trying to take over Europe, staying out of conflict has _____ for your country and its economy. But it also means staying neutral is really hard, but the Swiss have done it.

Using their mountains, some **exceptional engineering, obsessive commitment**, and a healthy amount of _____. The Swiss have kept empires out of their country, sticking to their guns and staying neutral even when Europe was **tearing** itself **apart**.

So you're Switzerland in the 1940s.

Here's your situation.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YeAxxMzf1O4&ab_channel=JohnnyHarris

2:20 You're _____ by Nazi Germany to your North and Fascist Italy to your South and quickly are becoming **engulfed with** all the countries that are now in the sphere of influence of these countries.

You're surrounded and Hitler is winning everywhere, but you're Switzerland.

We'll just keep trading with whoever wants to trade with us, but we're not going to fight or _____.

The fact is that even with this commitment to neutrality, an invasion from their next door neighbor, the Third Reich, was a very real _____.

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So Switzerland **devised**, what I argue is just the most Swiss plan ever **to stay neutral during World War II and future global conflicts**. It's a plan that still lives on today.

First step, they looked around their country, at any linkages to the outside. They chose _____ around the country that would give invading armies access to the country like roads, bridges, tunnels, any access point.

And then they packed it full of explosives. Dynamite, TNT, whatever. Anything that would just _____ that linkage. Sometimes they would wire a bridge with dynamite, but they also would put secret **canons** in mountains that would **pop out** and point at a major road and **demolish** it if needed, making it **unusable**.

Or sometimes they would go to their long tunnels like this ten-kilometer tunnel down here _____ with Italy. And they would **rig** it with TNT so that they could quickly **seal off** this part of their mountainous Southern border. Up on mountain passes, they even rigged the sides of mountains with explosives to create _____ **landslides** to block the road.

Destroying all the ways to get into the country made it a lot harder to invade and gave them time to retreat to the mountains.

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4:30 The Swiss are really good at _____ . The trains are **immaculate** and efficient and go up crazy mountains and are always on time.

Roam around the country and you'll see this.

These are the little doors in the streets where they would pack explosives. So it's kind of ironic that all of this _____ was packed with explosives, but I guess that makes it even more functional because now it's a defense mechanism.

There's this one bridge that connects Switzerland to Germany that was built in 2006. And when it was built, it was _____ explosives.

This bridge was built in conjunction with Germany. Germany paved half of the bridge, and yet they didn't even know that it was rigged with explosives.

Blowing up their borders and sealing themselves off was one _____ for aggressively staying neutral. Zoom into the lower half of Switzerland. And you'll be struck by one massive thing that Switzerland has. **Mountains.** Big, giant mountains that **flank across** the South part of the country.

Another thing Swiss has is an unmatched ability to drill _____ mountains. The country has over a thousand tunnels. One of which is 57 kilometers long.

Most of the population lives here, meaning not in the mountains. And so there wasn't much of a _____ between these population centers and Nazi Germany.

After the Swiss saw Hitler march into Paris and **take over** huge portions of France, they got serious about figuring out what they would do if Hitler invaded.

6:33 So they had their plan to blow up the borders and _____ an invasion.

But where could they retreat to that would allow them to stay neutral and stay alive during the fighting?

In the mountains, they were

building giant fortresses and bunkers and tunnels that work _____ of the Alps.

They built thousands of these things in the side of mountains, and they rigged them with guns, and cannons, as well as full on bases that were _____ supplies and beds and living space.

All over the Alps, the Swiss built these secret bunkers mainly during World War II in preparation for any sort of invasion.

Once the war ended, the idea of putting bunkers in the mountains for defense and neutrality became pretty **embedded in** the Swiss _____ doctrine, as well as just Swiss culture.

So I did a call out on Instagram stories to see if this bunker culture was still a thing. And I caught a lot of _____ that showed me that it's not just World War II in the mountains. Swiss bunkers are all over the country.

After World War II, the new threat was the Soviet Union and the Cold War and _____. Bunkers were now built into homes, apartment buildings, hospitals, public infrastructure of all kind had bunkers underneath it.

By the 1960s, Switzerland _____ (to build) enough underground bunkers and shelters to protect the _____ population and with a healthy **surplus.**

So let's talk about the last step here, which is kind of the dark side of Swiss neutrality.

So let me **reiterate** here that staying neutral and _____ when this is your situation is a very difficult thing.

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8:41 World War II was an incredible tragedy where millions of people lost their lives. During World War II, Switzerland had an official _____ of neutrality. This meant that they would **trade with whomever**.

But in reality, Switzerland traded a lot more **with Germany**, providing them _____ guns and other military supplies and **ammunition** that was used in the war.

In addition, Switzerland allowed the Nazi regime to store lots of gold and art and other **valuables** that were looted from _____ of the war. And specifically the Holocaust.

Neutrality does not mean holding hands and singing kumbaya. Neutrality in the Swiss foreign policy doctrine means deterrence and _____.

*There's a Swiss military saying that says, **"In order to remain in peace, you have to have cannons."***

Hitler had a pretty developed plan to take over Switzerland, but in the end it didn't make _____. It was too **costly** and **implausible** for them to take over their neighbor to the South. Even though he had taken over the majority of the European continent at that point.

So what do you do with all these bunkers?

It turns out that the military slowly started to **dismantle** all of this a few years ago. And by 2014, the military says that all of the mines and bombs and TNT have been _____ public infrastructure. No more bombs at bridges.

So for the household bunkers that were built during the Cold War, those are still there. And my friends on Instagram tell me that they're just used for like **storage rooms** or sometimes like as a _____.

Extra space, I guess, with really fortified doors that will **withstand** the radioactivity of a nuclear weapon.

11:55 But what I'm really interested in is all of the mountain fortresses and tunnels, and like bunkers that were in the Swiss Alps.

What happened to those?

Those were really expensive to build and were expensive to _____. And the military is honestly **eager to** get rid of them.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YeAxxMZf1O4&ab_channel=JohnnyHarris

Some of them have been sold off and turned into like fancy hotels in the side of a mountain. Others are used as cheese sellers to make delicious Swiss cheese.

And then you've got this one, which was _____ like a tech security company that specializes in keeping your data safe. So you can store your Bitcoin or whatever else you need on these super secure servers in the side of a Swiss mountain. They _____ these servers are **so protected** that they are **impervious** even to an electromagnetic shock from an atom bomb.

But the majority of these mountain bunkers and fortresses lie completely _____.

