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Mustafa Atici



He is the first cantonal councillor with a migration background in the canton of Basel-Stadt. Born in Türkiye in 1969, Mustafa Atici came to Switzerland as a 23-year-old student. The Turkish Kurd found a new home in Basel, started a family and set up as a culinary entrepreneur after completing his business studies. His kebab shops are known throughout the city, including at the St. Jakob football stadium, where the staunch FC Basel fan can be found on match days. Atici joined the Swiss Social Democratic Party (SP) in 2001 and entered the cantonal parliament three years later, where he remained a member for almost 14 years. In 2019, he transferred to the National Council but he was not re-elected in 2023. This spring saw Atici gain a government mandate in his home canton. Atici referred to his election as “a success for diversity”. “People shouldn’t see a Mustafa in Basel as being somehow different anymore.” There is admittedly a particularly high number of people with a migration background in the city canton. Atici was never in any doubt about becoming naturalised. He encourages others to do the same: “We live here, we work here, we can play our part.” As director of education, he wants to do still more for integration. As a member of parliament, he also worked hard to ensure the children of migrants learned the national language before starting school. Atici speaks High German with an audible accent. He responds to criticism of his level of German with equanimity. He is more concerned with the hostility about his background that he encountered during the election. It was the first time he had encountered so much hate during 20 years in politics, he said when interviewed. It affected him, as he feels patriotic about his country: “I love Basel and Switzerland.”

THEODORA PETER

Ukraine conference in Switzerland concludes with an underwhelming outcome

The Ukraine conference of 15 and 16 June 2024, in the Bürgenstock luxury resort high above Lake Lucerne, is considered the largest diplomatic event ever hosted in Switzerland. At Switzerland’s invitation, delegations from over 90 countries, including the heads of state of Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Canada, Spain and the vice president of the United States, Kamala Harris, convened at the location. In the run-up to the conference, President of the Swiss Confederation Viola Amherd and Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis sought, in their role of conference hosts, to manage expectations, changing the name of the event from “Peace Summit” to “Summit on Peace in Ukraine”. The closing declaration at least adopted a clear position by referring to “Russia’s war against Ukraine”, thus expressly naming Russia as the aggressor. The final document also demanded the observance of Ukraine’s sovereignty and the securing of the war-damaged Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. It further stated that attacks on Ukrainian wheat exports are not acceptable, as food security “must not be weaponised in any way”. President of the Swiss Confederation Viola Amherd concluded: “We have achieved what could be achieved.” In the immediate aftermath, political commentators claimed Switzerland suffered something of a setback as a host and diplomatic actor, as not all delegations were prepared to sign the final document. Twelve of the participating countries withheld their signature. Notable non-signatories included India, Indonesia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia and South Africa. Some of these countries may be able to assume the role of intermediary, given their intact ties to Russia. In fact, there was speculation just before the meeting that Saudi Arabia might host a follow-up conference – and include Russia. The closing declarations and the official final Bürgenstock document, however, did not include any reference to this.

(MUL)

The final document from the Bürgenstock conference (available only in English): www.revue.link/summit

Switzerland increases its defence expenditure

Mindful of Russia’s attack on Ukraine, the Federal Council decided in favour of increasing the budget of the armed forces. In February, it presented a package totalling in excess of 30 billion francs for the next four years. In June, the Council of States declared its intention to increase the budget more quickly and by more, to the tune of about four billion francs. In addition, it wants to commit more funds to expedite the purchase of air defence systems. A majority of the Council of States wants a large part of the extra expenditure to come from cuts in development aid. However, nothing has been decided as yet, as the matter still has to be submitted to the National Council.

(MUL)