

NATO General & EU Officials Submit Peace Proposal. EU Silent. | Schulenburg

After 4 years of all-out war in Europe it is high time for peace. A German alliance of thinkers, journalists and a former Ex-NATO General have submitted a proposal to finally end the bloody Ukraine war. But the EU is still immovable. I'm joined again by Michael von der Schulenburg, Member of the European Parliament and longtime UN/OSCE peace negotiator. We talk on the fourth anniversary of the full-scale Russia-Ukraine war and the uncomfortable gap between public war rhetoric and the hard limits of real diplomacy. Michael explains the peace proposal his group drafted, the letters sent to EU leaders, and the political climate that treats negotiation itself like a taboo. We also dig into collapsed arms control, the fading "red lines" of nuclear risk, and the way Ukraine's future gets discussed in rooms far from the front. Links: Europe Needs Peace: <https://michael-von-der-schulenburg.com/europa-braucht-jetzt-den-mut-zum-frieden/> Open Letters to Kaja Kallas and Roberta Metsola: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com/p/open-letter-to-kaja-kallas-and-roberta> Michael von der Schulenburg (website): <https://michael-von-der-schulenburg.com/> Michael von der Schulenburg (European Parliament profile): https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/256966/MICHAEL_VON%20DER%20SCHULENBURG/home Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> (Opt in for Academic Section from your profile settings: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com/s/academic>) Merch & Donations: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Anniversary setting and opening stakes 00:01:40 Letters to EU leaders and peace proposal 00:06:38 OSCE vision, Paris Charter, ignored security 00:12:20 Deadlock mindset and endings in past wars 00:19:41 US-Russia track and Europe as spoiler 00:26:20 Military realism and silencing peace voices 00:33:22 Propaganda lock-in and breaking the frame 00:37:10 Backchannel attempts and Ukraine collapse risk 00:45:21 Where the letters will be published and close

#Pascal

Hello everybody, and welcome back to Neutrality Studies. My name is Pascal Lottaz. I'm an associate professor at Kyoto University, and I'm joined today again by Michael von der Schulenburg, a European member of parliament and one of Europe's most ardent voices for peace with Russia and peace with the world. He's someone who has been working for decades in the United Nations system, promoting peace initiatives between various parties. He's here today on the very sad occasion of the fourth anniversary of the full-scale war between Russia, Ukraine, and NATO. Michael, welcome back.

#Schulenburg

Yeah, thank you very much. It's actually almost unbelievable as we speak today. You know, last night we had a lot of snow here—more snow than I've seen in probably the last ten years. I'm here in Austria, and it's a beautiful country with all this snow. Everything is white; we have about twenty centimeters of it. And it's very peaceful. You know, snow makes everything feel peaceful. It appears very calm. And yet we have all these wars going on around us. It's actually a bit unreal, talking now about the anniversary—the sad anniversary, we have to say—of the Ukraine war. Yeah, what do you think, Pascal?

#Pascal

I mean, war is all around us. The war with Iran is around us. But the war—the four-year war with Ukraine—has been going on, and the slaughter is unimaginable. We still don't have the numbers; we still don't actually know how many people have really died. But the only thing that's sure is that it's in the hundreds of thousands, likely in the millions. And you just wrote—or, as this video will be released, you will have published—letters to Kaja Kallas and the president of the EU Parliament, I believe. Can you tell us what you're telling them and what you've been doing over the last couple of days?

#Schulenburg

Because of the fourth anniversary, a group of Germans and I sat together and wrote a proposal for how Europe could negotiate peace with Russia. The argument we make is that the situation in Europe is really bad now—especially in the European Union, economically. From a geopolitical point of view, we have no influence anymore. We have all these wars around us. It's not only the war with Iran; it's also the wars involving Israel and those in West Africa. We have problems within the transatlantic alliance. So I think Europe is in a really, really different situation. And the argument we make is that if we want to get out of this...

#Pascal

The first thing we have to do is bring peace back to the European continent.

#Schulenburg

And that's, of course, the Ukraine war. The Ukraine war has an enormous influence on us and on our future generations. It will determine how we're going to live in it. And I think if we want to have peace on the continent, we have to start talking with Russia. So what we prepared—and very interesting people participated in it—includes General Kujat. He used to be the highest-ranking German general at one time, also in NATO. He was chairperson of the Russia-NATO Council and the Russia-Ukraine Council. So he's very much aware of this, and I do a lot of work with him.

We have Mr. Teltschik, who was the advisor to Kohl at the time of unification—a foreign policy advisor. We have Peter Brandt, the son of Willy Brandt, who is now a political scientist. We have Hajo Kwiatk, a very important political scientist who used to be in the Green Party, though not anymore for about a year. And, of course, Mr. Lottaz is a journalist, and I myself worked for 34 years in war zones. So I think there's a lot of knowledge, and we prepared this. Just to say—you prepared a peace proposal. Now you're talking about the peace proposal.

#Pascal

You sent it to all parties.

#Schulenburg

Well, it's been published. We released it in January, ahead of the fourth anniversary. We thought, you know, the fourth anniversary should remind us that we can't just sit back and do nothing—we have to act. So we came up with this proposal. It's the only one of its kind in Europe. Don't forget, we had never made a peace proposal before. And it's very professionally written because, I mean, we're quite experienced in these kinds of things. We talk a lot about territory, about security guarantees, about the strength of the army, and about future relations—both in Ukraine and in Europe. So it's something that should be taken seriously.

But the important thing we emphasize—the key argument—is that when we start talking to Russia, we should take a positive approach, because there's so much hatred, so much bad language, and things like that. So we suggest appealing to Russia on the basis that the European Union and Russia, as two European political entities, share a joint responsibility for Ukraine and for what happens in Europe. We argue that we should do this—very differently from what the Americans do—by setting clear objectives for why we sit together. And I think these objectives are relatively easy to agree on, like asking: what is the future of Ukraine as an independent, sovereign state in Europe?

And, of course, another question is: what will the peace and security arrangements for Europe look like? These are European issues on which both sides could at least agree that this is the objective of the negotiations. That's how you do it in negotiations, you know. And then, of course, both sides will disagree on the details—they'll disagree on what it means. But at least we have a positive footing to go back to, and we don't have this kind of language. We don't have negotiations between losers and winners; we have negotiations between European parties who say, "Things have gone terribly wrong, and we have to think—what is the future now for Ukraine? What is the future for Europe?"

#Pascal

Hey, very brief intermission because I was recently banned from YouTube. And although I'm back, this could happen again at any time. So please consider subscribing not only here, but also to my mailing list on Substack—that's pascallottaz.substack.com. The link's in the description below. And

now, back to the video. For four years, we didn't have a positive vision of what Europe could work toward. The Russians, I must say, have been saying the whole time that what they demand is a security structure—some sort of security arrangement for the continent. The Europeans haven't said no to it; they've just ignored it. Why do you think it is that this obviously positive proposal from Russia—to have a joint security structure—is something the Europeans are silent on? In your dealings with your colleagues in Parliament, why don't they react to something that could be used to create progress?

#Schulenburg

You know, Pascal, it's even more astonishing if you think that in 1990, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, we all agreed on an international treaty called the Paris Charter for a New Europe. And in this charter, we agreed that we would not have military blocs dividing us. If you have a joint structure, security cannot be divided. It even went so far as to say that we are all obliged, in our security arrangements, to do nothing that would threaten the other side. And then we did exactly the opposite in 1992, when the Soviet Union broke apart.

We didn't follow this anymore. Now, if you read the Charter of Paris—an OSCE document—it's international law. I mean, these things are international law because they're deposited with the UN Security Council, so they still apply. And if we followed this, we'd basically have a sketch of what Europe could look like after this war. But we ignore it. We ignore these kinds of things. And why we do this, I don't know, because it's basically against our own interests. I mean, our economy is doing badly, we have the highest energy costs in the world, and we're losing industry.

Europe has virtually no foreign policy influence anymore—what happens in Iran or in other parts of the world—and I think that's the result of it. So I don't even understand why we behave the way we do. I just don't understand it. And if I look at the language in the parliament, where regularly between 500 and 600 deputies out of 720 vote for resolutions that want to continue the war, de facto, the language is one of hatred. And, you know, for someone like me—I've seen wars all my life—I haven't even seen such language during the Iran-Iraq war. I mean, I've never seen a war in which both parties had no contact at all. Usually, you have some, even if not directly.

I mean, in the Iran-Iraq war, about a million people died. It was a huge war, but it was handled through the United Nations. I was on the Iranian side, at the UN, and there was always something to discuss. This time, we don't have that. It's unbelievable. We're seeing, at the same time, a breakdown of international law. You know, basically, Trump thinks he's not bound by treaties anymore, by international law—and we're kind of saying almost the same thing now. So we don't really have international law that applies anymore, and we have no agreements left on restricting arms.

I mean, the last treaty on controlling nuclear weapons—the New START agreement—expired at the beginning of this month, and we have none at all anymore. At a time when these weapons have

become far more advanced since the 1960s, we don't have any deals on arms, and this is very, very dangerous. I mean, there's no red telephone, no confidence-building measures—nothing anymore. But now we have rockets that, in the old days, in the 1960s, would have taken six hours to deliver a nuclear bomb to Russia or vice versa, and now it's just a few minutes. That's a very dangerous thing indeed. And we have meetings like the one in Munich, the security conference, and there's no agreement on this at all.

We do it, and this is never really the problem. It's completely irrational behavior. I'd say it's the behavior of people who realize they're losing. We always say, when we negotiate with people, that the side using hate language is usually the losing side. It's just human—and that's how we behave. So I think what we're suggesting here is a way out. We have to find a way out of this one. And that's also why we wrote the letter to Kallas, to Maia Kallas, because it's her responsibility. We copied it to all the EU ambassadors in Brussels, and we also wrote a letter to Mrs. Metsola, the president of the European Parliament.

And we copied it to the EU committees for foreign relations and security, and also to the heads of all the political parties. We'll see what the reaction is. I fear there will be no reaction whatsoever, but at least we want to do something. We want to use this anniversary and say we can't— I mean, how can Europe accept that we're going into the fifth year of one of the most dangerous wars on European soil, and we don't do anything to try to stop it? It's unbelievable. It's really unbelievable.

#Pascal

It's irresponsibility of unbelievable proportions. The people you're addressing these letters to—and the peace proposal on the European side—are the ones who would tell you they want to finish the war yesterday, but that the only one who can do so is Vladimir Putin, who has to leave Ukraine, including Crimea, and then be willing to face a trial in The Hague. They're still, even today, saying that. I just can't believe the level of inability or unwillingness to actually engage in something like a proper process to work out of this situation. In the wars that you've seen, is there a point, a moment, when this kind of deadlock mindset breaks and opens up space for an actual process to begin?

#Schulenburg

Yeah, I think the Iran–Iraq War, which was the largest war I've ever been involved in—actually, the negotiations for the ceasefire took place in my house—and they were almost all killed for that. I mean, it's an interesting thing, how these things work. Making peace is a very dangerous thing, because many people don't want peace. And that's usually the people who have the arms and are prepared to use violence. And that's, of course, in Ukraine, the same thing now, I would assume. So Zelensky is in a very difficult situation. I wouldn't want to be in his skin. So, no, I think, you know, the thing is, for us in Europe, when you look at the newspapers, when you look at the debates, they're full of moral judgment. You know—he started the war, they rape women, they steal children, they

shoot people, they destroy the cities. We do this, of course, with our weapons too, but that's how it is.

Typical talk in wars—and I'm sure in Russia they say the same thing: the others started it, they're the imperialists. We say they're the imperialists, whatever. This is typical war talk. I mean, if you're used to this in negotiations, you usually just ignore it. We shouldn't forget that wars are immoral, but they're not about morality; they're about interests. You have a war, in the old Clausewitz sense, when you can't solve your conflicting interests through negotiations—either because you don't negotiate, as we did in the Ukraine case, or because you can't reach a solution. Then war becomes the solution. It's like in a bar: you start a fistfight because you can't agree on who's winning the football game or whatever, and then that's what decides it.

And in the case of the war in Ukraine, we had always assumed that we would win it very easily, and that's why we went into it. Now it looks like Russia is winning. If Russia had lost, Ukraine would now be in NATO, Russia would have lost access to the Black Sea, and probably a large portion of the pro-Russian population would have left Ukraine. Now it looks like there's a situation where nobody wins—and that's when you usually have a ceasefire—but we don't, because Russia seems to be winning. So Russia will determine the agenda of the peace negotiations. We have to accept that. There's nothing we can do. If we can't change it militarily, we have to accept the outcome of the war. It's like all wars. I mean, there are no negotiations that ignore what happens in a war. And that's what we do—we disagree, we don't want to accept the reality created by four years of war.

#Pascal

But the problem is that on the losing side, you always have a faction that wants to continue. I mean, in Japan, the militarists in 1945, in the final days in August—they said they wanted a hundred million martyrs. Japan only had sixty million inhabitants, but they added forty million from Korea, saying, "We will all collectively fight to the last drop." And it was actually the tie-breaking vote of the emperor who said, "No, we're going to side with the others. We will suffer the insufferable." That's literally what he recorded and broadcast to the Japanese people: "Suffer the insufferable. We will give up in order to save the nation from complete destruction." But there were those who wanted to continue. And it seems to me that in Europe, that faction has the upper hand.

#Schulenburg

Yeah, and the sad thing is, those people who argue for continuing the war—it's not their blood that's being spilled. It's not the blood of their sons and daughters. I mean, in Britain at least, you know, their sons were in the war. They were pilots and soldiers and things like that. But here they do something extremely immoral. People who argue for a continuation of the war don't have the burden of the war. And this is something we shouldn't accept. Now, we have the historical experience. We

know that when you don't accept negotiations to end a war—what happened in Japan was that two nuclear bombs were dropped on Japan, and that, in the end, broke the stalemate. They said, "We have to negotiate peace."

#Pascal

And there's a good argument that it was Russia's entry into the war that broke the military calculation. But anyway, the point is, to decide you have a nuclear war is insane—we shouldn't be doing that.

#Schulenburg

I think these new weapons are really stunning for them. And, you know, I'm sure that whatever happens, they decided they couldn't win anymore. We shouldn't forget, this is a good example in another sense, because look what happened to Japan. I mean, they negotiated out of the war—it was total destruction. And now Japan is again a very prosperous country. I think the same thing could happen to Ukraine. Ukraine has to think about its own interests, and its own interest is not to follow the interests of Western Europe or NATO Europe, so to speak. They have to see that this continuation of the war just means killing people. A lot of people are also leaving the country because of the conditions.

I mean, they are in a deadly peril, the population. They keep going down and down. This country is not going to survive if they continue like this. And I think the Ukrainians should not go to a point where the army collapses, because if an army collapses, usually the political system collapses too. Then it will be very difficult for Ukraine to remain a functioning state. A loss could be devastating for Ukraine—something our press tends to cover up—but it could be disastrous if Ukraine starts to lose the war completely. So it's better to negotiate now, and we should support them in negotiating, the Europeans too, instead of encouraging them to continue the war.

#Pascal

In your assessment, I mean, we've seen a change in the dynamic that started about a year ago, when the Trump administration came in and, for the first time, actually showed willingness to negotiate with the Russians. However, these negotiations remained, on the one hand, very high-level between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin, with phone calls and one actual meeting in Anchorage. And then they remained somewhat on the lower level, but they never went further into concrete negotiations—into a concrete proposal for a solution. What we've recently seen now, just this week in Geneva, is the latest iteration of what is still, in my view, a shallow political process and not a technical one. Would it change the dynamic if the Europeans actually picked up the phone and said, "Russia, Vladimir, and Sergey, let's actually have a real discussion"? Do you think this could change the dynamics?

#Schulenburg

I think the Europeans have very little influence on the war, except that they're the spoilers for peace. You know, when Europe keeps repeating that Ukraine should become a member of NATO, that Russia has to leave all the territories in the Crimean Peninsula, that the Russian leadership should be tried in a special court, and that Russia should pay trillions of dollars in reparations—things like that—they're basically demanding, after four years of war, that Russia capitulate. And Russia will not capitulate, because the war is going very well for it.

If the war had gone differently, it might be another story. But by doing this, we've created a situation where Russia can't trust any agreement. I mean, it's already hard to trust the Americans with any deal—they have a tendency to break them when it suits them. But the Europeans, basically... I mean, say they stop the war and Europe says, "We'll bring you into NATO." What would Russia do then? They'd just start the war again. So I think, before that—if we don't forget—in the beginning of the war, when we had the negotiations in Istanbul, there were no territorial demands from Russia. None.

The only agreement was about the Crimean Peninsula, which said that for 15 years it would stay under Russian administration, but that we would find a diplomatic solution for Crimea—maybe a joint administration or something like that, but not through war. But that didn't happen. Russia only started to act when this agreement failed, and they realized they would never get an agreement on NATO or anything like that unless they destroyed parts of Ukraine. So I think we bear deep responsibility for the continuation of the war, at least since Istanbul, because we boycotted those talks. We said we wouldn't sign it, and then there was a NATO meeting on the 24th of March and similar things, which said we shouldn't negotiate with Russia. And then, you know, the Ukrainians gave in.

#Pascal

It's just hard for me to wrap my head around the fact that the people who say you cannot—who still, to this day, use the language of "we cannot reward the Russians for their aggression"—are framing it as if having a peace agreement and accepting realities would be some kind of gift from Europe to Russia. And the people who say we must never reward aggression are the same ones who, you know, when the last Iran war happened last summer, called it "dirty work." They're also the ones who are completely fine with and, of course, support what happened in Kosovo—the changing of the borders.

#Schulenburg

You know, Pascal, there's a statistic from the U.S. Congress covering the 30 years since the Wolfowitz Doctrine was issued in 1992. It said there's only one superpower, and that the U.S. would decide what the world is going to do for the next 30 years, until 2022. During that time, the U.S.

intervened militarily 251 times in other countries. And all of those interventions were against international law, because the U.S. never asked the Security Council for approval for any of them. The sad thing—and we see this now with Ukraine too—is that not a single intervention has resulted in more democracy. Not one has led to a better rule of law or improved economic conditions. The opposite happened. All these wars—Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, just to name the ones we know best—ended in chaos, anarchy, and terrible human suffering.

And we still do it now. I can't understand that we don't realize—even if it was illegal to do this—that people are not in a better position. Nowhere are they better off. I think these wars have also not put the West in a better position, because, you know, look what happened in Afghanistan: we have a Taliban regime there again. In Syria, we have the head of the al-Nusra Front now becoming president. It's almost unbelievable—there was a \$20 million reward on his head before, and now we make him president. This is not a world we're creating with all this violence and military superiority that's in any way getting better. We have to think differently about it.

#Pascal

Of course we do. But the most interesting thing to me is that part of your proposal—or one of the people who wrote the proposal—is General Harald Kujat. Again, the highest military officer in Germany and also the highest military officer in NATO in the past. He, as a military man, from the very beginning understood the power dynamics, and from the start he said, no, if we want peace, we need to change. But what happened to people like him? Why are people like him no longer present in the military establishment? Or if they are, why are they silent? I mean, wouldn't it also be up to the military of Europe to say, "God damn it, we need to stop. We need to empower the diplomats."

#Schulenburg

I mean, if you look at this document—you know, there were enormous problems publishing it in Germany. Virtually none of the major outlets wanted it. NachDenkSeiten didn't, not even the Berliner Zeitung. In the end, it was Die Weltwoche that published it. And you talk about these things, but, you know, we in this group are all conservative people. We're not radicals or anything like that. We all have various experiences with wars and how to end them. So it's a professional document about how to end the war. It's not anti-Ukraine, it's not taking the Russian side. We're trying to argue that this is in the European interest—and in the EU's interest—to have peace. That's what we have to pursue. But we've been treated like traitors. I mean, it's unbelievable. It's unbelievable.

Yeah. I mean, you know, if I'm in the European Parliament, I'm being shouted down when I speak. And, you know, I don't even accuse people. I mean, these letters to Kallers and Metzeler are extremely polite. I always write very politely. But of course, I have this conviction that we have to end this war. And I think we should all be ashamed—all Europeans, including the Russians. We should all be ashamed that after two world wars, we again have a war on European soil that is so

dangerous, so devastating. And after four years, now in the fifth year, we're still not even talking about it. In Europe—I'm not talking about the Americans—we're not even trying to somehow solve the war. And we all know from history that all wars, in the end, have to be ended politically.

That means they have to be negotiated if you want to have even a ceasefire. But in this case, we probably need a peace agreement, not only a ceasefire. So they should be very happy with what we're suggesting. And we're saying that we shouldn't have these negotiations between losers and winners in the war. We should rather appeal to our joint responsibility for the future of Europe—our joint responsibility for Ukraine, our neighbor. It's a European state between Russia and the EU, and we have a responsibility to work something out. This joint responsibility should bring us together at the table. So it's a very mild, very positive sort of approach to the whole peace issue. And even that one, I mean, we don't get published.

#Pascal

You know, I'm in Switzerland right now, right? And I gave a couple of talks in support of Swiss neutrality. I gave one talk where I didn't use the word "Russia" even once—I think I didn't use it at all. I just talked about the destructiveness and the negative consequences and effects of sanctions, and how they're an instrument of war. And I had one person walk out, saying he didn't want to listen to this "Russian propaganda" or a "pro-Putin speech." He said that if we applied the same standards to Hitler, then Hitler would still rule Europe today. To me, this shows the mindset in Europe—that Hitler, even 80 years after his death, still manages to ruin peace with the idea that you need to keep fighting against him. It's this long shadow of Hitler that encourages Central Europe to say, "No, this needs to be fought out, and we need to defeat Hitler." I mean, they still think in those terms. I don't know how to break that up, how to make it clear that the Russians are not the Nazis.

#Schulenburg

The sad thing is, you see the long shadow of Hitler. If we bring up this argument, unfortunately, we're sitting in that shadow. We do. So how do we get out of the shadow? You know, if a German chancellor compares Putin to Hitler—a German chancellor, being the successor of a chancellor called Hitler, who killed maybe 27 million Soviets, the great majority of them Russians—27 million, far more than Jews or anyone else... And, you know, my parents were Russians. We came back from Russia. We were not Aryans in Germany. I mean, we shouldn't forget all these things. And then he tells the Russians that the other one is Hitler. I mean, there's a tastelessness in this whole thing.

And also, it's the language—like when the French foreign minister says Russia will disappear from history if they don't accept our peace proposal, which basically means capitulation and things like that. Or when Kallas says we have to win over Russia in order to break Russia up. It's even part of a resolution of the European Parliament—it's in one of those resolutions. I mean, how can we ever talk peace? Ever talk peace? We Europeans should know better. I mean, this whole thing about diplomacy was so much developed in Europe because we had many states that were always

somehow at war with each other. We have this experience, and yet we seem to throw it all out the window and not remember anymore who killed whom in the Second World War, or whether Hitler was a Russian or rather an Austrian who became a German. I mean... what do you say?

I don't know what to say. And that's also so strong. You see, my position is that I'm not here to defend China or Russia or anything like that—they can do that themselves. The argument I try to make is to tell people in the parliament that it's in our own interest to seek a peace agreement. Because in this war, we—the European Union—are the losers. And we have to act. It's in our interest to do that, and we're obliged to, because we've signed the UN Charter. In many countries, like Germany, it's even a constitutional requirement to seek peace and things like that. And we're not doing it.

#Pascal

That's why my question is really how to convince our own side—how to convince our compatriots of the need to rethink the entire framework of how this tragedy is being approached. This is, of course, where we enter the realm of propaganda, of narrative framing, of cognitive warfare—not against the other side, but against our own. It's just... I want a way out of this.

#Schulenburg

I want a way out. You can't talk to Putin because he's so bad. But the thing is, peace negotiations are always between enemies—otherwise, there wouldn't be any peace negotiations. That's just how it is. So I think there's no justification not to do it. They say Russia doesn't want to negotiate, but Russia talks to the Russians. They've received an envoy from Macron, they answered the phone when Scholz tried to call Putin. They just have a different position on the whole thing—of course they do, they see it differently. But that's what peace negotiations are about.

So the argument we make is basically that peace negotiations are not useful—we want to win the war and just tell them afterwards what it is. But you see, even when you win a war, it's difficult to end it. Look at the First World War and the Versailles Treaty, where Germany signed that they were guilty for the war. Twenty-one years later, the Germans were in Paris. I mean, peace is a difficult thing, and it has to be negotiated. It shouldn't be dictated like the Versailles Treaty. We have to talk to the Russians, we have to try to make sense of things, and that takes time. It takes patience, and especially a change of language. If you call somebody Hitler, you cannot negotiate with that person.

#Pascal

Is there a way to do that? Because actually, in conflict theory—interpersonal conflict theory—one of the major steps is to start with metacommunication, communication about communication. Could

that be a way to say, like, let's have a meeting with the Russians just to discuss language—not the war, just language—or to create a process to discuss language with the Russians? When you look at our peace proposal...

#Schulenburg

What I just said before—that's exactly a precondition. That's not a negotiation or a peace negotiation. It's just that we agree on what our common ground is, what we want to talk about. This is relatively easy to agree on because it allows for huge differences in how we implement the whole thing. But it's like you said: we need something in advance, an agreement that we have a joint responsibility for Ukraine, a joint responsibility for the future of Europe. I mean, we've just discovered after four years that Russia is also a European country—it always was. But this is something we have to do, and we're not prepared to do it. I think it would also be easier for us if we stepped out of our old war propaganda. All countries have war propaganda—the Russians have it, we have it—it's just how it is. But I think when we start talking about peace or finding a solution, we have to establish such preconditions first.

#Pascal

I think otherwise it wouldn't be possible.

#Schulenburg

Whatever you call it in your theory, I'm not a theorist. I'm a practical person. But I can tell you, I know a little bit about these negotiations. It's extremely important to find some common ground before you really start negotiating. Okay, could we do that?

#Pascal

You know, what we need is to sidestep the warmongers. We need to sidestep those who want to keep this going. So, like, how about an interparliamentary process between you and a handful of members, reaching out to parliamentarians in Russia—not to discuss peace itself, but to discuss the language of peace and the language of interest? No negotiations, really, just the vocabulary, just to set that up. Because these other people, they don't move. They're immovable ideologues. So how do we get around that?

#Schulenburg

You know, I went with a group of parliamentarians in May last year for the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, to Russia. We had very interesting talks, and that's where it all got stuck, because the idea was that I would also go to Kyiv. But it wasn't possible. I mean, I keep talking to the Ukrainians. I'll also write another letter to them now, because we should be concerned

about what happens to Ukraine. I think their future doesn't lie in continuing the war. They should cut their losses and consider how they can improve their living standards and, you know, what the situation is between the BRICS countries and the European Union. I mean, they have a lot of options there, I think. But this hasn't happened, and I think it's because we really had a fallback.

I mean, it's almost now, when I've been in Parliament—how much I'm in Parliament—what I get from all these things is that the positions have hardened. Actually, they haven't softened; they've hardened. And, you know, I do a lot about these sanctions against individuals now, because I think this sort of sanctioning people who say the "wrong" thing is, well... And now the German Foreign Ministry even threatened a journalist when he asked a question about the sanctions. I mean, really—like a totalitarian regime. A Foreign Ministry official! So I think we're seeing a hardening, and the danger is that we get into a very nasty phase of the war toward the end. And I fear that when we talk about a million Russian dead, or whatever these numbers are—we don't really know.

But I think the experience in wars—and we do have some experience with wars—is that the losing side loses most of the people. It's simply because when you lose, your discipline starts to falter. You have to move out of well-defended positions into less-defended ones, and that's when that side usually loses far more people than the other. And I fear—and I don't know, but I fear—that this is happening now to Ukraine, and that's a very sad thing, a very, very sad thing. You know, Ukraine has one of the lowest population growth rates. Most families have maybe one child, and that child doesn't come back, or it comes back without legs, or it comes back so traumatized by the war that they'll never have children again.

I've seen people traumatized. I've seen a lot of war things in my life, and the impact of war. And I sit in this European Parliament, and they make these resolutions—people who just had a cup of coffee, took their warm shower, came to the office, have something nice for the evening, and a pleasant talk. And in the meantime, they decide that the war has to continue. And I sit up in this Parliament and think—I mean, I feel... I feel sometimes more disillusioned than in all the times I was actually in real wars. Because in real wars, whether it's Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, or Sierra Leone—all these places I've been—you can talk to people. But I have a feeling that in Europe, you can't talk to anybody. You can't talk to anybody. Yeah.

#Pascal

Yeah, and you know, the sad part of the sociology of war is that the people who are the most removed—the farthest removed—are usually the ones who are the most ardent supporters of it. Usually, when you ask people in the war-torn areas, the people who did lose relatives and friends, they're the ones who say, "No, it needs to stop. Whatever happens, it needs to stop." And it's the people who never lost who say, "No." But then, when you realize that you can't win it anymore...

#Schulenburg

I mean, why do you continue a war? We always say, "Turn around, Russia is going to lose it." But for now, in all these four years, when you look—the first year was different—but from that time onward, after the summer offensive of 2022–2023, it's very clear that with every month, Ukraine is in a worse military position, and therefore its standing for negotiation also declines. It's just what it is. It's the same in the Ukraine war as in all the other wars. And we basically ask them to continue. I mean, what for? If they had negotiated a year ago, they would have been in a better position.

If they had followed the Istanbul agreements, hardly anyone would have been killed. And, you know, this is—so we bear a huge responsibility. I mean, these Merz, these Macron, these Damas—you know, they have a huge responsibility for all this killing that's happening now in Ukraine. A huge responsibility. And they shouldn't tell me that they're on the morally better side and call it "support." They call it support; I call it assistance to kill people, because it's a war that doesn't make sense anymore.

#Pascal

Former U.S. Ambassador Chas Freeman is the one who coined the expression, at the very beginning of the war, that NATO would be willing to fight to the last Ukrainian. And they haven't changed that strategy. The last Ukrainian hasn't fallen yet. But, you know, I don't know—the Ukrainians are being betrayed by us.

#Schulenburg

If I look at the pictures from the Élysée Palace when they agreed on the coalition of the willing, you know, you saw everybody trying to kiss President Zelensky and squeeze him and all the rest of it. And afterwards, we had this huge ceremony where the ex-colonial powers, like Great Britain, acted as if we were still in the 18th century. Anyway, then afterwards, Scholz comes and says there won't be any soldiers in Ukraine unless Russia agrees to it. So it was gone. So why do we squeeze Zelensky? We betray him all the time. There won't be a coalition of the willing in Ukraine. There won't. There will not be these security guarantees of Article 5. Security guarantees in the world don't exist anymore. France will not engage a nuclear bomb to defend Kharkiv if the risk is losing Paris. Never, never. It's an illusion. And it's also an illusion to think that the Americans would start a nuclear war with Russia just to defend our borders.

#Pascal

No way.

#Schulenburg

No way. And so we keep giving the Ukrainians this illusion that there's something around the corner that will save them, change the world, and all that. But what we really do is betray them. I think it's

a huge betrayal of the Ukrainians. You know, when you look at my papers, I never write anything negative about the Ukrainians or their internal affairs because, in my view—including the government—they are a betrayed people, betrayed by governments, my government too, and governments in Europe. So I'm not saying anything bad about them.

I think we have a responsibility to end the war—the Europeans—and they should come to their senses. So if you can help us, for instance, with the letters we sent out in the European Parliament, people can see that these letters are very reasonable. They're not hateful, there's no Russian propaganda or anything like that. But people should see that, on this anniversary, we're trying to use my membership in the European Parliament to do something within this central institution, to do something for peace. Of course, I'm not very optimistic about it, but doing nothing would be even worse, no?

#Pascal

That's the point. Doing nothing would be even worse. And I congratulate you, Michael. I mean, there is a peace faction in Europe—there is—and you're at the vanguard of it. You really are the vanguard of it.

#Schulenburg

There's a reason, you know. When I get in the elevator, people turn around—they don't say hello to me. You know, I think that.

#Pascal

I mean, that's not sad. It is sad, but it's not because you did something wrong—it's because you're doing things right. And the letters you're talking about will be published on my Substack on Sunday, so by the time this episode... Also, the article—you know, the one where we say we need courage now to make peace.

#Schulenburg

Europe has to change. And change in direction, politically, needs not only knowledge and skills—it needs, above all, courage. I wish that our leadership in the EU—and you'll see these letters are very positive in that sense—would take the courage to make a change. Let's have peace, and people will be grateful to you. Let's say that.

#Pascal

Yeah, they will. They will. And I can only congratulate you, Michael. And please, please do continue and keep us updated on what's going on. We also need to create the mental space for peace,

because right now war is crowding out the peace space. That's it. We need to get out of that—we need to get out of the war mentality and get back to a peace mentality.

#Schulenburg

At least, you know, we should not—it's courage. You know, in wars there are things that are very important, which we often can't define—like courage, like trust. Trust. I mean, you can't make agreements if you don't create trust. But what is trust, you know? This is all very, very important. And people who negotiate peace agreements, who know how to deal with things, they know a little bit how to do this. It's a pity that in the German government, you know, nobody talks to us. I mean, I think those people who wrote those things—there's a lot of knowledge there.

I mean, these are not, you know, schoolteachers or university students or whatever. No, I think we bring a lot of knowledge there, and I think we should be taken seriously. And, you know, I think the proposal is, in its structure, better written than what the Americans do, actually. Not that I think they shouldn't do it, but I think it's a far more professional thing. And, yeah, we could be proud, because we have this knowledge in Europe to do this—but people don't want to know. No, the people who sit there don't want to know.

#Pascal

They still prefer war over negotiations. Look, Michael, I'm very grateful for all you do in the European Parliament. You're really a lighthouse in very dark times. I think we'll leave it here. And please keep informing us, everybody. You can find this on Substack, and you can find these things on Apple.

#Schulenburg

Help us get the message out—not only through the interviews, but also on your website—so people see it, because we have no other way. The big media will ignore us. They wouldn't even write about us, not even negatively. I mean, that would already be a kind of success, but they just ignore us. And with this one, I fear they're ignoring peace, unfortunately.

#Pascal

They do. It's the escalation of things: first they ignore you, then they fight you, and then you win. We're still in stage one. So, in a sense, more is to come, but we need to get to the real, the real social, societal debate, right? With the elders. Yeah. Okay, thank you very much, Michael. Thank you very much, real time. It was really kind of you. Thank you.