

Michael von der Schulenburg: Europe's Self-Defeating Iran War Policy

Michael von der Schulenburg is a German member of the EU Parliament who was previously a UN diplomat for 34 years in positions that included Assistant Secretary General of the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. Schulenburg also lived and worked for 9 years in Iran for the UN, and explains why this war is yet another disaster for Europe. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennDiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glennDiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glennDiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. We are joined today by Michael von der Schulenburg, a member of the European Parliament who also worked for 34 years with the United Nations, holding positions such as Assistant Secretary-General in the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. So, Michael, you didn't just travel back and forth—you actually lived in these conflict zones around the world for decades. Of special relevance to today's discussion, you worked for the United Nations for nine years in Iran, living there during that time, and then for three years in Iraq with the UN. Unlike most of our political class, who often rely on slogans and catchphrases about a struggle between good and evil, it seems you actually have the knowledge and experience to understand what's happening in this region. Because the way I often see Iran described, it's almost cartoonish, I think. So I appreciate you taking the time to speak with me.

#Michael von der Schulenburg

Yeah, it is an experience. For half the knowledge, I always run that, you know, of course. But the thing is, if you work for the UN, you have all these different sides of it—from UNICEF to the World Food Programme to the refugee agencies—and about 80% of your staff are always national staff. The UN has its program officers, and they're all professional staff from those countries. So you get an insight no embassy would ever, ever have. And you live outside the compounds, those diplomatic compounds, and you travel a lot in the country.

I traveled a lot with high government officials—very high officials—which even took me to their homes. I was the only Westerner they had ever invited in that way during those times. That's why I stayed so long. I was there three times, altogether nine years. I feel very strongly about Iran. This war hurts me too. I had many good experiences. I was everywhere—many times in Qom. I also met

Ayatollah Khomeini twice. I was in his compound, where he was later killed. So... yes, this war is something very personal to me, you know?

#Glenn

Well, that's also really why I wanted to talk to you—because I wanted to get your perspective on how the Iran war will impact Europe and the West, but also international law and the international system. This isn't just limited to the U.S., Israel, and Iran, as we can see. I'd also like to hear your thoughts on how Europe has positioned itself in this war, because it's strange, given the costs it's imposing on itself by supporting it. But first, you wrote an article about this war titled *A Gateway to Hell*, which is not an optimistic start, of course.

#Michael von der Schulenburg

I actually took the title from Mr. Trump, because he said in a Truth Social post that he would “put them all to hell.” So I thought I should use it as my title, because it really is a war that will have a much greater impact on all of us in the future than even the Ukraine war. I mean, we have to realize what's happening there. And I'd like to talk to you about this a little bit, because, you know, I know a lot about war. In war, when you're there to negotiate, to speak to all the parties—and sometimes, like in Iran, you speak to only one party, because Ukraine is on one side, Iraq is on the other—all you really have is international law. You have to say, “Okay, we all agreed that we would discuss things.”

We all agreed that we needed to—there's nothing else. And if this is gone, it's a way to hell. I mean, we can all kill ourselves with the weapons we have nowadays. We have no arms reduction programs anymore, no confidence-building measures. You know, the last agreement on nuclear weapons ended months ago, and things like that. And we don't seem to have international law anymore. I think the West, in this war more than any other, is in the process of destroying itself. The whole idea that you need the rule of law in your country to keep peace—because that's why you have laws, you know, things like that—is so strong in Europe, and it has to be independent of the government.

There should be a set of rules that apply to everyone, whether it's a king, a government, or a citizen. We all have to play by rules we all agree on—either indirectly through parliaments or, you know, by general consent. And we exported this idea to international law. I mean, there was always some sort of agreement within a country, but to deliberately say we have a set of laws—that really only started with the adoption of the UN Charter. And we shouldn't forget, the UN Charter was a gift from the United States, especially from Roosevelt. Without Roosevelt, we wouldn't have had this. It was far ahead of its time.

When you look at when the Charter was adopted—universally, I mean—none of the P5 would really adhere to it. According to the UN Charter, the United States was still half an apartheid regime, not to speak of France and England. They were colonial powers, and right after the Second World War,

they went back to war to keep what they saw as their colonial possessions. They felt those were theirs. I mean, that idea already goes against the Charter. So the Charter was far ahead of its time. At that point, we said “no more war” because of the experience of the two world wars—seventy or eighty million people killed within a very short time. But now we can kill all of humanity. So I think the Charter’s message of “no more war” should be even more important today.

And now we have a war started by a president of the United States—the very country that gave us the Charter—who doesn’t apply the Charter at all, doesn’t follow international law, and goes to war from one day to the next. This is a terrible thing, and it will have a huge effect. And since the Europeans start to applaud it because they feel it has something to do with freedom or something like that, it’s utterly, utterly, utterly hypocritical. I mean, we applaud this, and we applaud a system—a breakdown of a system—that ends up being a rule of the strongest. I mean, why do we have law when we have disputes between countries? You know, it’s because disputes often create emotions, so we give it to a judge to decide according to the law.

I mean, if we didn’t have it—if it were only the rule of the strongest—we’d have a lot of people killed in divorce cases. And it’s the same thing at the international level. You know, I just don’t understand the Europeans. We will never be the strongest, so why do we adopt a system that isn’t good for us? It’s not good for us. We will always... we see we’ll never have a foreign policy of 27 countries. We see it just collapsing, no? The whole idea of a foreign policy for the EU. So why do we adopt such a system? I mean, one of the countries most in favor of this, clapping for what happened, is the Netherlands—a tiny country. I mean, does it really want to go by the rule of the strongest?

I hope not. I mean, it’s such a headless, not-thought-through thing. And for someone like me—I’ve been in really all parts of the world—you see how easily wars develop. I just can’t understand Europe at all. And the other thing is, of course, we now have, for Europe, a war in Ukraine. It’s the largest war we’ve had on the European continent since the Second World War. We’re losing this war, if we haven’t already lost it in a way. And then we go into the next war, thinking it’s a great thing. You know, we have to understand what always happens: the United States is a great power, and they go back over the Atlantic. But Trump was absolutely right—our security is not Zelensky.

Our security is the Atlantic. And we have the debris and the cost of all these things—it’s on Europe. When I say Europe, I mean the European Union, not all of Europe. I mean, we will have to pay for Ukraine. We will have to pay for what happens in Iran. We will have the refugees and so on. And we will have all this insecurity that comes with it, which might not only be in Iran—it might affect other countries and things like that. So how can we uphold this? The European Union was today in Parliament, where a lady called von der Leyen—she always says the same thing—could not bring herself to say that this was an illegal war. I mean, what is it then?

And then, Glenn, I’m sorry for talking so much. The issue of decapitation—you know, the idea that you can decapitate the leadership of a country by tricking it, by engaging in a peace ruse, because they had a very good peace thing only two days before. The day before, President Trump says, “Oh,

I prefer diplomacy.” By that time, he must already have given the order to attack. And, I mean, this mischievous thing—to trick another country—we have to go back to the Middle Ages to say that this was a method of war. And we are in a war where people have nuclear weapons. I mean, what do we expect? What do we expect from this whole thing now? Now the war is going wrong. I mean, it's going terribly wrong.

As I said already in my article, it's going wrong. I mean, the strategy—the U.S.—and I think the only nice thing I can say about Trump is that he was tricked by the Israelis. He was tricked into believing that, you know, the moment we kill the leader, Ali Khamenei—you know, I met him—there would be an uprising. The people would all rise up. And today in Parliament, we spoke only about people uprising and, you know, that we have to support them, forgetting that regime change is not allowed under the UN Charter. But it didn't happen. You see, it didn't happen. And with every day, it's even less likely to happen. That means their strategy is in tatters.

And now they talk about other things—boots on the ground, the Kurds to attack. It will not happen. Glenn, I was also in Iraq. You know, for the 400,000 soldiers to be mobilized before they attacked Iraq—400,000—they needed eight months, eight months to be there in order to be ready to attack. And Iraq at the time had 30 million inhabitants, of which half Saddam Hussein didn't even control. He didn't control the north, and he didn't control the south. So we were actually having, with 400,000 troops, a war against a population of about 15 million Iraqis. Of course, they weren't all pro-Saddam or anything like that, but still, a very small country. Now, Iran is still one country. It's 90 million.

And then where do you want to mobilize the army? There are hills all around it. Do you think they can use Azerbaijan to attack them? That would be suicide for Azerbaijan. Pakistan would not allow it. Afghanistan surely would not allow it. And Iraq neither. So their neighbors will not allow American troops to be assembled there for an attack. Then you have the Kurds. I mean, the Kurds—I know they have two opposition parties on the Iranian side, but they haven't played any role in the last 50 years. In the beginning of the revolution, there was a movement and things like that, but it was very brutally put down. These things are often, unfortunately, extremely brutal.

But it hasn't happened since then. So you can't suddenly have a resistance organized—and the Kurds, anyway, because America doesn't stick with its allies. I mean, they drop them whenever it suits them. And there would be—I mean, the Iranians have a huge army, but now they don't even need it because it's all fought with missiles. So, I mean... No, I laugh a bit, but really I could cry, because it's a war that shouldn't have happened. I think the Ukraine war shouldn't have happened either. We could have prevented it. And we've killed a lot of people. And now Trump, I think, is ready to negotiate. Already on the second day he talked about negotiations, and then there was a report that the Iranians asked for negotiations.

Of course, it's utter rubbish. They would never ask this, and so on. I think Iran is quite—quite together. And I think if there was ever any feeling, there's a lot of this unhappiness and all these

kinds of things. But, you know, after the bombing now—because the campaign now is about destruction, because they can't have this—and now they destroy cities, hospitals, all these things. You know, these girls they killed—sure, it was by mistake—but they haven't even apologized for it. And, yeah, you must admit, I mean, you have a small town, and there's a whole school of girls killed. A whole school. A hundred sixty or a hundred eighty, I don't know exactly, maybe even more.

And, I mean, the desperation. Do you believe any Iranian would take up a gun to fight their government after this? I told the Israelis I met yesterday, I said, you know, when you were hoping for an uprising, you killed it with your bombing campaign. You killed it with the commonwealth. And there's one more thing—well, I'm not going to talk too much. I want to talk about nuclear arms, because it's a big issue. We don't have an agreement on nuclear arms anymore. You know, yesterday I had a meeting with some Israelis, and they said, you know, we want to make sure it doesn't expand—nuclear arms, I mean.

It was a nice meeting, by the way—a really nice meeting. I always try to respect everybody and be kind, and they were very nice to me too. And I said, you know, you have to realize that with your attack—by killing Ali Khamenei—you've killed the one person in Iran who was against arming the country with nuclear weapons. Glenn, did you know that? It was him personally, I know, because I was in one of those meetings when nuclear arms were already an issue. He said it was against Islam. He even issued a fatwa. We might laugh about a fatwa, because maybe most of our people aren't religious anymore.

But it meant—the fatwa meant—that he also obliged people with a strong Muslim background in the government and in the forces, the Revolutionary Guards and so on, to obey that nuclear arms cannot exist in Islam. And, you know, I've discussed this many times, and Khamenei always had these discussions. These people are very educated, by the way. No, it's not what we think. And he was against it. I mean, we killed the man who was against Iran having nuclear arms. What is coming now? I mean, if countries around the world see this, they realize that with this ruthless, lawless way of attacking another country, the United States doesn't even have a reason for war, I think.

Israel has always won, but not the U.S. They have to realize that the only way to protect yourself against it is nuclear arms. So I think the non-proliferation treaty is coming to an end too. I mean, Turkey talks a lot about how they might be the next one under attack, and whether that's true or not is another thing. But, you know, we suddenly have so many countries with nuclear arms, and we Europeans don't say a thing. We might have Egypt, maybe Turkey, maybe Saudi Arabia—I'm just saying maybe, maybe. But, you know, even Libya almost had a nuclear weapon. So it can also be small countries. And we don't, we just go along with it. How do you live like that? Mr. Macron explained to me that we are all under the French nuclear umbrella.

I mean, the French would never save Berlin at the risk of having Paris destroyed. You know, I mean, it's just out of sense. And this parliamentary discussion today—I left in the end. I just couldn't listen anymore. I just couldn't hear people who have never been in Iran, who don't know anything about

this, people who have never been in a war like Amir and I have, and how they speak. It's just... I think the only word I have for it is disgusting. It is simply disgusting. And they all package it in moral considerations. The moral terms, you know, it's like stale grease that goes through the room when they speak about morality in the European Parliament. So I find it very, very hard to sit there.

#Glenn

Well, it could also be Poland that acquires them, because we heard from Donald Tusk that maybe they should get nuclear weapons too.

#Michael von der Schulenburg

Of course, Germany is a neighbor. Maybe it's not such a bad idea. I mean, there's Mr. Merz, who wants to have the largest army in Europe.

#Glenn

Macron also said that France has to be feared if it's to have security. And this was in a speech about acquiring more nuclear weapons. So the proliferation might not just come from the Middle East. But this whole idea—because I listened to Kaja Kallas and von der Leyen—I don't know why I listened to them. But the narrative that's now dominant in the European Union, you know, that this is about helping protesters, freedom, democracy, liberating women... I mean, it's so detached from reality. The Americans are quite open about it.

They want to knock out a regional power that balances it and Israel. The Americans are, you know, on TV saying that this oil should—well, they'll make a ton of money, Lindsey Graham said, when this oil is in America's hands. Trump said that after America is done with Iran, as a nation it will be unable to ever rebuild. This is not the language of spreading freedom and democracy. No. I just find it strange. I mean, it's not okay that grown adults—no, it's the language of hell. It's the language of hell. We are the gateways of hell.

#Michael von der Schulenburg

When you look at the Iraq War—again, it wasn't the Iraq War—and there was a lot of discussion with the Americans. I think they generally tried... It was a failure because they didn't understand the country, but they did try to reestablish something afterward. This time it's only a bombing campaign. A bombing campaign. I mean, you won't have a new government with this, and you won't create democracy with this kind of thing. You won't have rule of law, of course. I mean, you're the worst in rule of law now when you do this war. So I think it's a war that will stick to all of us—all of us. Also on Israel. Also on Israel. Because if this war is not won by the United States, which I think they cannot, or by Israel, then Israel will be in great, great trouble in the region. Great trouble. And that's not only from Iran, but because of what's happening there.

And they have all these unfinished wars or conflicts in Gaza and the West Bank. I told them this yesterday too. You know, Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen—these are unfinished wars. They haven't won any of them. And if this one goes bad, it's very bad for them. So they've taken enormous risks—if not Trump, then someone else—coming out of this war. Because, you see, lately he keeps saying on Truth Social that they've already won the war. It's difficult to read sometimes, but when you do, you see he's preparing the way, saying, "We won, and we're leaving now." He wants to get out of this war, I'm sure. You know, he has midterm elections, so it's not very popular. The longer the war lasts, the more money it needs, the less popular it will be. He could only have one.

In one week, we would have a change of government. He has signed correctly. The Iranians came out in millions—for the funeral of Khomeini. Because Khomeini, we shouldn't forget, I was in his compound. They killed him—it's an extremely modest compound, not like the Shah's. It's a model. I mean, it's not my world, but one has to see these things. Very, very modest. This guy—there's nothing there that smells of corruption. You know, when you go to see the houses in Ukraine, it's a different thing. But there's nothing of the sort. And, you know, he has a family still living there. It's a two-story building, if I remember well, and it's in the old city.

That means it's where it's hot, and where it's, you know, not where the rich Iranians live on the mountaintops—because you can live very nicely high up. And then he's said to have declared that he would not leave this compound during the bombing. Because all the people around him also had no chance to leave their houses and go to shelter, he didn't want to go either. Can you imagine what that means when Iranians hear this? Iranians, being under constant threat of nuclear attack, say, "This guy stayed with us." They've made a hero out of him—a martyr and a hero. And this is in a war, very dangerous, if the other side has a hero. I mean, it's just like the regime change we saw in Iraq.

It's this lack of real understanding of another society—not just misunderstanding, but the kind of conceit you have toward other people, this disrespect for those who live differently. That's why we lose these wars. That's why we lost the war in Afghanistan, why we couldn't win in Iraq, and why we couldn't win in Libya. We just couldn't, because we didn't understand them. All we did was destroy things. So the democracy we want to export is seen, outside our own world, as something that comes with the military—to destroy, not to build. It has a huge impact. Don't forget, NATO represents about 11% of the world's population, and that share is declining. What about the other 90%? They think differently.

#Glenn

This is the problem, I think. A common criticism—and a good one—is that the West has been consumed a bit too much by ideology. In the past, you had diplomats like yourself who understood the other side, who had the knowledge. These days, it appears that ideology has replaced that. One doesn't need the experience or the knowledge; one only has these ideological talking points. And it

ends up deluding people. Again, if those in the EU Parliament believe that the U.S. attacked Iran to liberate women, or that NATO's role in Ukraine is to defend freedom and sovereignty, or that NATO occupied Afghanistan for 20 years so little girls could go to school, or that Libya or Syria was destroyed to protect human rights—well, that's the problem.

When they make these statements, it sounds as if they actually believe in it. And I think these ideological slogans have taken over—common sense, empathy, the ability to appreciate the concerns of the other side, the complexity of their societies. All of that is gone. It's just ideology. Just say "human rights," "freedom," "democracy," and we'll deliver it with bombs. It's shocking to me that we have grown adults who just repeat this and buy into it. But is there any opposition in the EU Parliament, or is it an overwhelming consensus that we'll destroy Iran to liberate its people?

#Michael von der Schulenburg

There wasn't any resolution today, but I think roughly five or six hundred out of the seven hundred believe that. The rest are very mixed. I mean, especially on the ranking—also, the right wing is clapping for doing this. And sometimes, interestingly enough, the Social Democrats spoke out very strongly. But, you know, she's there with a Spaniard, and she came out very strongly, which we also clapped for. But usually, when they all jump up, I stay sitting and look around—there are maybe ten others. I mean, this is what it is. It's also this opportunism. People fear that somehow, even if they think differently, they still have to go along with it, things like that.

You know, it's not an atmosphere of debate, of respecting others and things like that. And, you know, we wanted, for instance, to have a debate on Zelensky's threat against Orbán. I mean, he's an elected head of state, and still they talk about sending soldiers to his house. I mean, this is decapitation à la Ukrainian. And now, I mean, we go immediately for the head of a government, hoping to change political opinion. It's also this illusion that everything depends on one person. And, I mean, we fall victim to our own propaganda. You know, again, when I look at all this—and, you know, I've seen probably much more than most people in this Parliament—nobody wants to ask me anything.

I didn't even get—oh, I requested this meeting. I was one of them, at least. I didn't even get a one-minute speech time allocated. And so, you know, Glenn, there's a saying in wars: when you start not accepting realities anymore, you're on the losing side. You have to accept what happens in order to react. If you tell yourself that you're still winning—well, when the Red Army was on the Oder near Berlin, the propaganda was still telling the Germans they were winning, showing examples that they were just beating something back, and so on. You know, the loss of a sense of reality is a very, very dangerous thing in life. Very dangerous, especially for governments. And that's what's happening.

#Glenn

But what do you see, besides Iran of course, in terms of internal developments among the key actors in this war—be it the Gulf states, the United States, or Israel? Because it's not just about the material, the weapons, or the economy. It also has a huge impact on, I guess, domestic stability and their own political systems.

#Michael von der Schulenburg

Yeah, I mean, it's difficult for me to judge from here, but I think in Germany we have a lot of discussion. Oh, they made the big mistake of attacking the Arab states, the Gulf states, and things like that. I don't think they did. You know, the Kalas went there to meet the GCC, and they issued a press release—or a joint statement, or something like that. There was nothing in it, absolutely nothing. They didn't ask the Europeans to come for help or anything like that, really nothing like that. But they called Putin. You know, we know that a number of states called Putin. Of course, they're very concerned.

And they realize now that the United States can't defend them. I mean, the illusion that they're a zone of stability in the world has gone up in smoke with this one. And they realize, you know, every country has some kind of American military base. It wasn't that they particularly liked it, but it was the guarantee that they wouldn't be attacked. And now they are attacked, and the United States couldn't defend them. They didn't have enough missiles to shoot them down—those missiles went through. Now we also know that the missiles go through in Israel, not from our press or anything like that, but, for instance, from the *Jerusalem Post*. It's an interesting thing.

I mean, in Israel, the press is more open than in Europe. Of course they get through, and even more will get through. Now, if—and I warned about this yesterday—if the war now takes the shape of destruction through missile attacks, if that's really what it becomes, I mean, if I were on the Israeli side, I'd be very, very unhappy about it. Simply because Israel is such a small country. And, you know, it's even half desert. But the population is concentrated in a very small area. I don't think it's much larger than Manhattan Island or something like that—maybe a bit more, but not much. So Iran is a huge country.

It's larger even than Ukraine. So, of course, you can destroy a lot, but I think what ten missiles can do in Israel, if they get through, is much worse. And I hope it's not, because I wouldn't like to see Israel destroyed. But the other way around—how do you go into such a war? For now, they've attacked mostly the Arab states, but I think it will turn now. And what we also see, it seems to me—I'm not a military man—but how cleverly the Iranians have planned their response this time. You know, after the attack last summer, they really thought about strategy. It turns out they know more about strategy than all the rest together, including Israel.

#Glenn

I heard this comment too, that Iran made a big mistake by attacking the Arab states. But that's not really correct, because they're essentially showing the frontline states that helping the U.S. with attacks on Iran—this is a main threat to Iran, an existential threat—and they're imposing a cost. To the extent that the Gulf states might actually start distancing themselves from the United States. And I often think about that, that the Gulf states have some similar lessons to the Europeans.

That is, during the '90s, when America was all-powerful—the only superpower in the world—either you aligned with it and had security, or you stayed outside and didn't have security. Again, America monopolized security. But when you have a declining hegemon that's more desperate to restore its power, those frontline states can be used to weaken an adversary and strengthen itself. And that's what you see now. All those Gulf states that bet everything on America protecting them—it was America that started this war. It was America that essentially invited the retaliations from Iran.

#Michael von der Schulenburg

They didn't ask the Arab states about it, even if you pretend now that they did. I don't think they did. But we should think about this in Europe as well. Saudi Arabia, I'm sure—well, I see—America will be seen as a global power that can't impose its will like this anymore. And I tell you, whether people like Islamic regimes or governments—we shouldn't always say "regimes," because there are elections. I mean, if I see some elections, I'll recognize them anyway. It's a government. And, you know, most people in the world will hope for them, not for Israel and not for the United States. There's a huge, huge reputational cost—and by extension, also for the Europeans. Do you really think people will have any respect for Mr. Macron, for what he says about the nuclear bomb, that they have to fear me?

And then he goggles around like, you know, we should talk to his wife, that she should take him back home. I mean, this is terrible, what he's doing. It's almost like a joke. It's a joke. It's a joke when Great Britain, Starmer, and Macron sign in the Élysée Palace in front of all the cameras, saying they have a "coalition of the willing" to interfere now in Ukraine. We know they can't do it. They're no longer the global colonial powers they once were—not for the last 50, 80 years. Yet they still behave as if they were when they hold these signing ceremonies. But actually, all they prove to the world—at least to anyone who wants to see it—is just how weak they are, and how detached from, you know, reality.

It's a little bit like those old noble families when they have their events—you know, they still call themselves by their titles, not realizing that for the last hundred years it doesn't really mean much anymore, right? So they're acting out something from a bygone world. And I think what we're seeing now is also a bygone world for the United States, and so on. I'm not anti-American at all, but I think most of the criticism is coming from within the United States, not from Europe. I mean, just listen to

what they say in the Senate. I mean, Crosby—the deputy president, or “war minister,” as they call it now—couldn’t answer a single question. Why are you going to war? What do you want to achieve with war?

What is it going to cost, this war? How long is it going to last? He couldn’t answer a single one of these questions. I mean, the largest, most powerful government—its deputy minister of war, in a war—and he really can’t? He always referred it to Trump to answer. I mean, this is really... they’ve gone back to an imperial regime. You know, you have to ask the imperial crown what to do—it’s not my thing. Yeah, it is our democracy. You know, what I said in the beginning about this war: by giving up on what is really the achievement of the West, we are destroying ourselves from within. And this is what you see. This is what you see. We are destroying ourselves.

#Glenn

No, well, that’s also one of the costs of war. It’s not just destroying armies, economies, and cities—it also has a tendency to destroy, well, I guess essentially the soul of nations: its values, culture, civility, moral codes, trust—all these things that unite people. And once that’s gone, solidarity becomes reliant on fear and conflict. I agree. I think we’re destroying ourselves as well with these perpetual wars, to the point that, you know, trust... I mean, when you listen to von der Leyen and Kallas, it’s shocking that people still believe what’s being said—that this is about freedom, that now they finally have the opportunity to be free. I mean, that’s what this war is about. That’s why the Americans are bombing and destroying and essentially incinerating the capital.

#Michael von der Schulenburg

I mean, this is just... Yeah, but first of all, they still think they’re winning. They think they’re winning. They’re not winning. They don’t win any of these wars. And they think that the world’s population—like in Iran—they all look to us, that we’re still the people they want to orient toward. It’s not the case. It is not the case. And, yeah, I mean, today in this session—well, in the later session—the Armenian president came, or maybe it was the prime minister, I think, to speak in parliament. I mean, a very sad show, I must say. But Mrs. Kallas was never there. She didn’t come. Mrs. von der Leyen came, but she was not accompanied by Mrs. Kallas, which says a lot about what’s happening inside the Commission, because these women don’t like each other.

Not that they have different policies, but they just don’t like each other. And so there’s a complete palace intrigue, which is dominated by Mrs. von der Leyen. But she’s the head of the Commission—the European Commission—which is actually an operational, administrative job. Yet she behaves like the President of the United States, or of Europe, in these moments. And where’s Mr. Costa, for instance? You know, foreign policy belongs to the Council, and therefore Mrs. Kallas is the coordinator of that. So already, when you see the Commission coming, you realize that even within the Commission, it’s all falling apart.

#Glenn

My last question is about how this affects solidarity within the EU, because we always hear it being chanted in the European Parliament—that we need solidarity, we have to stand together, more Europe. But when Chancellor Merz was sitting next to Trump, Trump was essentially lashing out against Spain, threatening to punish it, to cut off its economy. And you had Merz sitting next to him, very openly positioning himself now as number one among Trump's fanboys, not wanting to spoil that relationship.

And of course, wanting to show his undying loyalty on Iran, hoping that this would win him some points with the U.S. committing itself more deeply to Ukraine. But this also has some similarities to what's happening, as you suggested before, in Central Europe. That is, Orbán—Zelenskyy threatened his life—and you hear nothing from the EU. Or Slovakia, which wants to put an end to the war in Ukraine, is also being sidelined. I mean, European solidarity seems to be premised only on, you know, if you follow the war drums of Wonderland. But we don't look after our own member states if they get in the way of these policies, it seems.

#Michael von der Schulenburg

No. Mrs. von der Leyen has assumed a lot of competencies she doesn't actually have according to the treaties, because it's a treaty organization. We don't have a constitution—it wasn't possible—so there are these treaties instead. Now, she's been criticized at lunch lately, at least that's how we were informed. I mean, that's how I got the information. I have to say this carefully, with the EU ambassadors. And she was criticized for not turning up to that one; she sent one of her German collaborators instead. At the lunch, she was—well, indirectly told, or the Commission was told—that Mrs. von der Leyen's plan for a rapid accession of Ukraine, without any of the usual conditions, will not happen. So it seems that among the member states—though they don't say it openly—they're now saying, sorry, but Ukraine's membership will not happen, at least not quickly.

So I think my view will never happen. But now she's been reminded that she cannot give Zelensky such promises—she has no authority for that. She's not a head of state or a head of government. And now, for the second time, she's been attacked by some deputies from Macron's party, I mean in the parliament, with some strong words. I wasn't in the room, but I was told they said, "We've had enough of you. You always make decisions," referring to certain statements she made on the war in Iran, and saying, "You can't do that. That's not your business." Foreign and security policy is still national policy, and all the EU has—with Mrs. Kallas—is a coordinating function. But it's not for Mrs. von der Leyen to decide on policies without the 27 member states.

Now, what it means, of course, is that, first of all, they're starting to cut down on the line—that she's gone too far. It's becoming too dangerous now. In the Ukraine war, it was still sort of acceptable, but not anymore. I think we'll hear these voices not only from the Hungarians and Slovaks and others, but also from Western countries. I mean, these are Western countries. And then the other

conclusion for me is that you can't have foreign and security policies made by 27 states—you'll never agree on them. We couldn't agree on Gaza, we couldn't agree on the West Bank, we couldn't agree on this war. The Ukraine war, for a short time, sort of put a lid on us all because it was a war in our neighborhood. But I think that will all fall apart.

#Glenn

I agree. And I think it could actually be quite dangerous to push for a common foreign policy, because how do you get 27 countries to agree on something? The only way is if it's framed in an extremely Manichean way—pure evil versus goodness. You know, like the "unprovoked invasion." We make up these narratives because if you call it unprovoked, then it becomes impossible not to fall in line, unless you want to be accused of legitimizing or taking Putin's side. So you end up with this oversimplification and a dumbing down of the debate. I think that's the only way to force 27 countries to take the same position. But then you also end up with a policy where you can't make any necessary course corrections. Actually, that's my last question. Let me ask—Kallas and von der Leyen, do you see them being on the way out? Yeah? Should we expect anything in the foreseeable future?

#Michael von der Schulenburg

Don't rely on Michael Schoenberg. But I see more and more signs that they might not stay the whole time. There must be some course corrections. Don't forget, we're having two wars at the same time—one of them a war of choice by Trump, who's detested in the parliament. I mean, I hear accusations against Trump more often than against Putin now. There has to be a change. There has to be a change because the European Union is the loser in these two wars. And they'll be the losers in a big way. We're losing our economy, our industry, our trade relationships, our technology, our population—we're losing in virtually everything. And we have no influence over what happens around us.

The only chance, which I always argue in my paper, is that if the EU—all 27 countries—wants to take the initiative, because right now it has none, then it has to talk to Russia. The first objective of the European Union and its members should be to re-establish peace on the European continent. We won't be able to influence anything in the Middle East, so let's concentrate on our own continent. And if we want to solve issues here, we'll have to talk to Russia. If we want to save Ukraine from total destruction, we'll also have to talk to Russia. These are the two objectives we should really focus on: bringing peace back to Europe and making sure that one of the largest countries, Ukraine, doesn't collapse. Thank you very much.

#Michael von der Schulenburg

They're sitting between BRICS and the European Union, and they should use that BRICS element, which they rejected when they carried out the coup in 2014. They should go back to it—it would be a better option for Ukraine.

#Glenn

Well, thank you for taking the time. As we see the European Union facing more and more security challenges, the economy declining, and its geopolitical relevance in free fall, I'm a little bit reassured knowing there are people like you in the EU Parliament—at least someone is speaking common sense. Thank you very much. Thank you.