

The EU must change course on Ukraine, or risk breaking itself apart

by Michael von der Schulenburg* and Ruth Firmenich**



Michael von der Schulenburg. (Picture ma)

The EU seems convinced to not only continue, but to increase its effort to escalate the war in Ukraine. No one seems to be able to understand the consequences.



Ruth Firmenich. (Picture EU/Wikipedia)

On 1 September, we commemorated the beginning of the Second World War 85 years ago with Nazi Germany's attack on Poland. It developed into the cruellest and bloodiest war in modern history, costing the lives of around 75 million people and causing immeasurable suffering and unimaginable destruction. Like the First World War, this

war also started on European soil and gradually spread to the whole world. One would hope that we Europeans – and we Germans in particular – would, given this backdrop, pursue a strict peace policy in line with the UN Charter, established after the two world wars, out of a sense of responsibility arising from this. Unfortunately, this is not the case!

There is now another war on European soil – in Ukraine. It is by far the most dangerous war since the two world wars, and it too could escalate into a world war – this time even into a nuclear war. The consequences for humanity could be even more devastating. And yet the EU continues to focus exclusively on a military 'solution' to

the war in Ukraine, disregarding all the dangers this poses for not only for Ukrainians, but also for us Europeans and for humanity. It is a policy that risks the international isolation of the EU.

The EU is focusing exclusively on war

A resolution 'in support of Ukraine' adopted by a large majority in the EU Parliament in July of this year sets out the EU's uncompromising orientation towards a continuation of the war. In some respects, this resolution even reads like a call for 'all-out war'. In view of the deteriorating military situation in Ukraine, all resources are to be mobilised once again in order to enable Ukraine to achieve a military victory over Russia.

This resolution demands that all EU member states provide 'unwavering' support to Ukraine until victory over Russia is achieved. Accordingly, all EU and NATO states are called upon to make 0.25% of their respective GDP available to Ukraine for military purposes. According to a calculation by the conservative EPP group, this would add up to 127 billion euros a year – more than double this year's German defence budget, and far exceeding previous military support extended to Ukraine. The use of Western weapons against military targets on Russian territory is expressly encouraged, and Ukraine's NATO membership path is described as 'irreversible'. The resolution also calls for the establishment of a special international court for Russian war crimes and the confiscation of all frozen Russian assets.

However, there is not a single reference to negotiations or other diplomatic efforts in the three-and-a-half-page resolution. Talks should only take place if Russia capitulates and uncon-

* Michael von der Schulenburg, former Assistant Secretary-General (ASG), worked for 34 years for the United Nations and briefly for the OSCE in leading positions in development and peace missions in many crisis regions of the world, including Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Haiti, Somalia, Syria and Sierra Leone (see www.michael-von-der-schulenburg.com). He has published extensively on issues of war and peace, non-state armed actors and UN reform. He is now a member

of the European Parliament for the Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht.

**Ruth Firmenich is a political scientist. She was Sahra Wagenknecht's office manager for 20 years and is a founding member of the new party Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht. She has been a Member of the European Parliament since 2024, where she works together with Michael von der Schulenburg on issues relating to European foreign and security policy.

ditionally withdraws from all occupied territories. In this context, the resolution strongly criticises the efforts of Hungarian Prime Minister *Orbán* to broker talks between Ukraine and Russia.

Back in June, the European Council nominated former Estonian Prime Minister *Kaja Kallas* for the post of High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The EU is thus entrusting this important diplomatic office to one of the most extreme and controversial anti-Russian politicians in Europe. Only a short time ago, she said that breaking up Russia into several small states 'would not be a bad thing' and called for those who support Ukraine to not be intimidated by Russia's nuclear weapons capacity. She is now expected to promote – diplomatically – the war aims called for in the resolution.

Can the EU even afford such a policy or is it not succumbing to dangerous hubris here?

The EU is losing touch with reality

The fundamental problem with the European Parliament's Ukraine resolution is that the EU has neither the power nor the influence to enforce even one of the war objectives it contains. Its call for an uncompromising continuation of the war until Ukraine achieves military victory over Russia comes at a time when Ukraine is no longer in a position to win this war by military means. Political analysts in the USA have been warning for some time that Ukraine could collapse both militarily and politically if the war continues. Thus, this is a resolution that is badly out of touch with reality. Politics is still the art of the possible and the EU cannot escape this.

To achieve a turnaround in this war, the EU and its Member States would have to intervene militarily on a massive scale in the war in Ukraine. However, they have neither the military resources nor the political will to do so. If at all, this could only be achieved through close military co-operation between France and Germany. However, there are already considerable political differences between the two countries and such a risky Franco-German military endeavour in direct confrontation with nuclear-armed Russia therefore seems fortunately out of the question. Of course, both countries are in a position to escalate the war in Ukraine by supplying Taurus missiles or deploying western forces. However, this would not help Ukraine to win, it would only risk destroying the whole of Europe in a nuclear

backlash. There is no feasible military option for the Europeans.

Nor would such military action be supported by the European population. For while the European Parliament has just committed itself to a pro-war policy, public opinion in all European states is shifting against further arms deliveries and in favour of negotiated solutions.

Even in Ukraine, war-weariness has spread and there are reports of more and more Ukrainian deserters. There are also warnings from Western diplomats that a further 10 million Ukrainians could leave the country. In the course of this war, Ukraine is being drastically depopulated, with only old and impoverished people remaining. However, no war can be won in this way – not even with the 127 billion euros in annual military aid that is being demanded by the European Parliament.

Furthermore, there are indications from Ukrainian politicians and even from President Zelensky that this war cannot be sustained for much longer and that there must be a negotiated solution. The attack by Ukrainian military units on Russian territory a few days ago will do nothing to change this, notwithstanding its PR value in the Western press.

So, what does the EU want to achieve with such a war resolution?

The EU is isolating itself in foreign policy

With the Ukraine resolution and the nomination of Ms. Kallas as the EU's chief diplomat, the European Union now appears to be replacing the USA as the dominant pro-war bloc in the Ukraine war. However, this will further isolate the EU in terms of foreign policy.

Under President *Biden*, the USA had already begun to withdraw from the war in Ukraine and increasingly shift responsibility for it onto us Europeans. The decisions at the NATO summit in Washington and the newly established co-ordination centre for military support for Ukraine in Wiesbaden are signs of this (as is the planned deployment of medium-range missiles in Germany). Should the *Trump-Vance* ticket win the US presidential election in November, we already know that they would reach an agreement with Putin over the heads of the Europeans to end this war. But even with a *Harris-Walz* presidency, the US will increasingly focus on internal problems and have less interest in continuing the war in Ukraine, also in order to be able to concentrate

more on the conflict in the Middle East and the confrontation with China. Above all, the USA will try to pass on the enormous costs of this war – and peace could become even more expensive – to Europe.

In addition, the required European cohesion in the confrontation with Russia is increasingly cracking and this will make a common foreign policy on the issue of the war in Ukraine increasingly impossible. The reason lies not only in the dissenting stance of Hungary, Slovakia and, to some extent, Italy, but also in the fact that political parties in favour of a negotiated peace are becoming increasingly popular in many EU countries. Following the presidential elections in the USA, this trend in favour of peaceful resolution of the conflict could become even stronger. In the background, widespread mistrust of Germany's increasing military and political leadership could also play a role here.

But by far the greatest foreign policy challenge for the EU's war policy comes from the so-called Global South. This manifests itself most strongly in the rapid development of the BRICS+ countries, which already today, with 45% of the world's population and 37% of global economic output, far outstrip the EU, which has 5.5% of the world's population and 14.5% of global economic output. Now 30 more countries are seeking to become members of the BRICS+, including even NATO member Turkey. The BRICS+ countries do not share the EU's war stance, and rather see their security interests jeopardised by Western attempts to expand NATO into Ukraine and the Black Sea. They are therefore all in favour of a negotiated solution. It is of great symbolic importance that the next summit of the BRICS+ states will take place under the Russian presidency in Kazan, Russia, in October of this year.

In Kazan, we could witness a truly epochal turning point, a turning point that the EU, in its own arrogance, is largely ignoring. Despite all the great power fantasies of Commission President *Ursula von der Leyen*, it should be clear to us that Europe has long since ceased to be the centre of the world and that we are falling behind demographically, economically and to some extent technologically. No militarisation of the EU will help. A more peaceful foreign policy would be a better option. But Ms. Kallas, with her



The BRICS summit is taking place in Kazan at the end of October. The capital of the Russian Republic of Tatarstan is a city caught between East and West. Europe could benefit from the peaceful dynamism of the BRICS countries, instead of getting bogged down in war. (Image KEYSTONE/TASS/Yegor Aleyev)

extreme anti-Russia and pro-war stance, is probably the least favourable choice for such an approach.

The EU is only harming itself

With the decision to continue to focus exclusively on war, and with this policy having been confirmed by the European Parliament, the European Union has drastically restricted its political room for manoeuvre and has put itself on the sidelines geopolitically. And as a result, although the war in Ukraine is of existential importance for the future of Europe as a whole, the EU will probably play no role in resolving this conflict. Therefore, the EU will also lose influence over what a future peace settlement in Europe might look like. Regardless of how one assesses the question of guilt in the Ukraine war, this is unspeakable political stupidity, and will have disastrous consequences not only for the people in Ukraine, but also for the people in the EU.

The fact that even after two-and-a-half years, after one of the most brutal wars on European soil, and hundreds of thousands of deaths, the European Union is still not in a position to emancipate itself from the USA and formulate an independent alternative peace policy for Europe will completely destroy the European idea, which is based on peace in Europe. The European Union could break apart as a result of its militarist Ukraine policy.

Source: <https://braveneweuropa.com/michael-von-der-schulenburg-ruth-firmenich-the-eu-must-change-course-on-ukraine-or-risk-breaking-itself-apart>