

“сила есть—ума не надо,” which means “power is available, so there is no need for brains.” This is exactly how the West is behaving today. The West’s armed forces need to be adapted to the West’s declining political and economic importance. Otherwise they will only become the helpless expression of a highly militarized foreign policy that replaces strength of argument with weapons effectiveness.

Of course, the politicians of the West know about it—I hope they know about it—but resist the recognition that the power of their countries is shrinking. They all say to themselves “not on my watch,” and try

to postpone the point in time when the next military disaster occurs. And they are all prepared to use military force to prevent that. If the West does not come to its senses, it will become a danger spot in the world itself. The West’s self-righteousness is becoming a problem.

This is all a brief summary of the reasons why I think that a new system of global security is required. We can elaborate on individual elements of this or on the basic features of such a system a wee bit more in detail later in the discussion.

So, thanks a lot, and hope to be hearing from you.

Michael von der Schulenburg

The Absolute Importance of the UN Charter

This is the edited transcript of the presentation of Michael von der Schulenburg to Panel 1, “The Growing Danger of World War III Underlines the Necessity for a New Security Architecture,” of the Schiller Institute’s April 15-16 Conference, “Without the Development of All Nations, There Can Be No Lasting Peace for the Planet.” Mr. Schulenburg is a former UN/OSCE diplomat. Watch the entire conference [here](#).

A subhead has been added.



UN/Rick Bajornas

Michael von der Schulenburg

The war in Ukraine and our obligation to seek peace: The war in Ukraine is now entering its second year without any attempt being made to find a peaceful solution. Instead of initiating peace talks, the warring parties have become further entangled in a dangerous spiral of military escalation by deploying ever more powerful weapon systems. As if still stuck in the belligerent thinking of the first half of the 20th century, they hope that large-scale military offensives and a military victory could bring them the sought-for peace. In the process, this will only further destroy Ukraine.

But an even more dangerous consequence, is that the prestige of the world’s two largest nuclear powers hangs on the outcome of such military offensives. This

increases the risk of a direct confrontation between the nuclear powers—U.S.A. and Russia—the two countries that possess about 90% of all nuclear weapons in the world.

The Preamble of the UN Charter states that: “We the peoples of the United Nations are determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind.” Unfortunately, this appeal of the UN Charter seems forgotten today. Especially, the original founding members, and hence supposed protectors, of the UN Charter—the U.S., UK, France and now also Russia—have repeatedly eroded its principles for their own political aims or, indeed, ignored it altogether.

As permanent members of the UN Security Council with a veto power, they were in a position to do this. In the Ukraine war, these four veto powers have now become direct adversaries, making a mockery of the UN Charter meant to prevent such wars. They thus bear primary responsibility for this war and its consequences vis-à-vis humanity.

The seriousness of the escalating conflict over the expansion of NATO to Russia’s borders, which has now led to war, has been evident to all parties since at least 1994. Russia has warned time and again that

admitting Ukraine and Georgia to NATO would violate its elementary security interests and cross a red line. This would be a classic conflict that should—and probably could—have been resolved diplomatically in accordance with the UN Charter. But this did not happen, neither to prevent a war nor to achieve a peaceful outcome to the war once it had begun. This, too, is a breach of the UN Charter.

A Gross Violation of Sovereignty

Ignoring Russia's concerns, Ukraine's accession to NATO was systematically pursued. This occurred alongside repeated provocations. The West did not even shy away from supporting the violent overthrow of a legitimately elected—[attested by] OSCE—Ukrainian President in 2014 in order to install a government favorable to NATO accession. According to Victoria Nuland, now U.S. Under Secretary of State, the U.S. had funded this overthrow to the tune of \$5 billion. In reality, this may have been a much higher amount. Also, this is a gross violation of the sovereignty of a UN member and thus a breach of the UN Charter.

After the recent statements by Angela Merkel and François Hollande about the Minsk I and Minsk II agreements, the question arises whether these were negotiated in “good faith,” or served only the purpose of gaining the time necessary for the military buildup of Ukraine. Since these agreements became legally binding through the decision of the UN Security Council, this would be a shocking travesty of international law.

Even after the war broke out, NATO—especially the U.S.A. and UK—torpedoed all peace efforts. Already in the first week of March 2022, the then Prime Minister of Israel, Naftali Bennett, tried to mediate a

ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine. According to a recent interview, Russia and Ukraine showed great interest in ending the war quickly and a ceasefire was, in Bennett's words, “within reach.” But it did not come about, because, as Bennett explained, “they, the U.S. and UK, blocked a ceasefire, and I thought they were wrong.”

The decision to continue the war has now led to a widespread destruction of Ukraine, immeasurable suffering of the people there, and the loss of large parts of Ukrainian territory. Today, Ukraine's negotiating position would be much worse than it was in March 2022. This may explain Zelensky's current stance of betting everything on a total victory over Russia.

But even if this were at all possible, such a victory would come at enormous human costs and could entail the complete destruction of Ukraine. President Zelensky and most of his comrades-in-arms must have realized by now that they should not have listened to their new friends from the West in March and April. By rejecting a negotiated solution back in March 2022, Ukrainians are now paying with their blood for a war that pursues the strategic interest of NATO. It may not be the last time that Ukrainians could feel betrayed.

The war in Ukraine has brought the world closer to a nuclear catastrophe than any other conflict since the end of the Cold War—perhaps even since the end of World War II. This should have made us all painfully aware of how important, indeed irreplaceable, the UN Charter is, still today, for regulating peaceful relations among its member states. To maintain world peace, the only way left to mankind is through a voluntary agreement between states to resolve their conflicts peacefully.