



General Kujat in the “World War III” Series: War, Diplomacy, and the Risks of Escalation

General Harald Kujat, former Chief of the Bundeswehr and ex-Chairman of NATO’s Military Committee, warns against Western missteps and the growing risks of escalation in Ukraine.

Claudio Grass

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Few voices in the European debate on the war in Ukraine can claim to combine actual military experience with sound arguments for diplomatic pragmatism and persistent calls for an end to the conflict. General Harald Kujat stands out even among those precious few. He is a retired four-star general of the German Air Force, he served as Inspector General of the Bundeswehr from 2000 to 2002, the highest-ranking military position held by a commissioned officer on active duty in

the German armed forces. He then served as Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, acting as the senior military spokesperson of the 32-nation alliance and principal advisor to the Secretary General. His direct experience and credentials alone mean that his insights hold more weight than the opinions of the average EU bureaucrat or any other human cog in the war propaganda machine, because he can actually understand the true cost of conflict, but also how to end it, realistically and effectively.

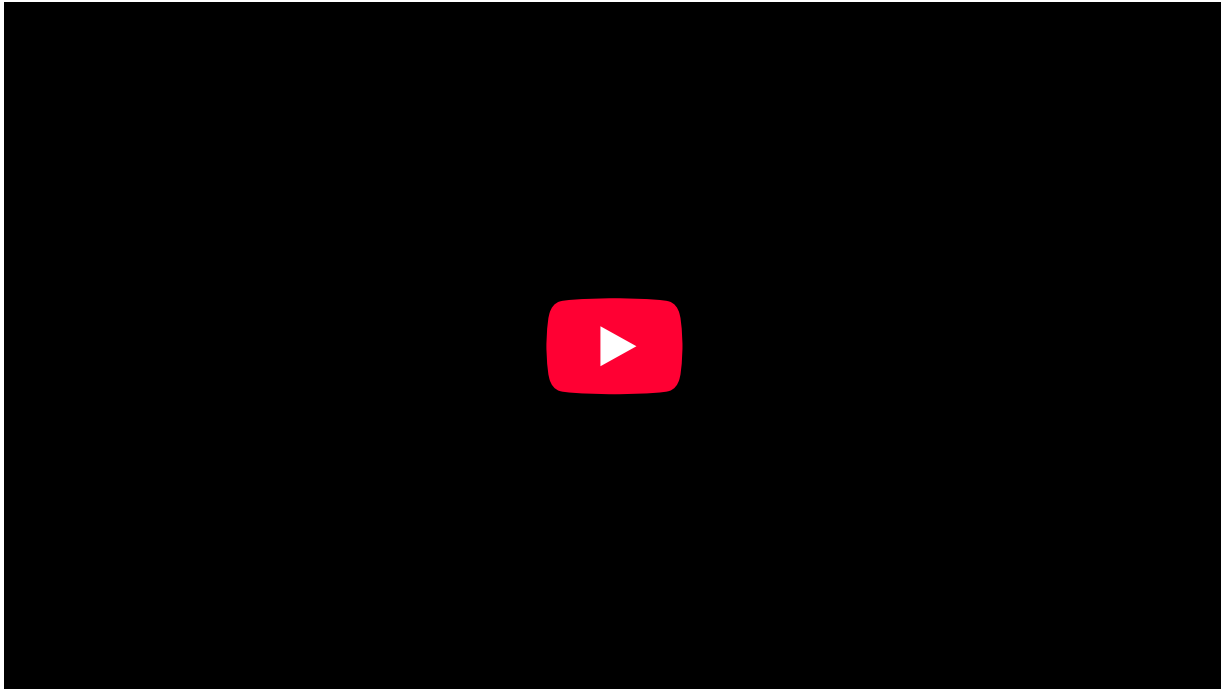
General Kujat's positions and insights are also noteworthy because of how balanced and objective they are. Without denying Russian responsibility for the war, he is also challenging all the strategic assumptions underpinning Western policy since 2022. In the interview that follows, he doesn't mince words when it comes to the West's, and especially Europe's, role in the ongoing conflict. As he highlights: "The Europeans never tried for peace, but only nourished the conflict".

This is supported by Europe's track record: from hijacking and sabotaging the Istanbul Negotiations of 2022, that took place mere weeks after the invasion of Ukraine and that could have prevented the loss of countless lives, to the political posturing ever since, that ensures any attempts at mediation, such as those by Hungary, are met with sharp criticism - essentially accusing anyone who is anti-war of being "pro-Putin".

The underlying "strategy" and the reason behind consistently dismissing opportunities for peace is not to protect and defend Ukraine's long term interests, but to weaken Russia through prolonged conflict; even at the cost of mounting Ukrainian losses. Whether this has been achieved and to what extent is up for debate, but what is certain is that the General was correct about the growing risks of escalation. Based on his extensive experience at the highest levels of military planning, he warns that the greatest danger of this war lies in the incremental blurring of the line between Ukrainian and NATO involvement.

In the interview, the four-star general also addresses big-picture shifts, like the transition from a unipolar to a multipolar world order and everything this entails. In this context, the solution he envisions for an end to this catastrophic war makes even more sense. In his view, negotiated peace still remains possible, but only if political leaders abandon maximalist (and largely unrealistic) goals and directly acknowledge and factor in the legitimate security interests of *all* parties involved. Sustainable peace and security for Europe simply cannot be achieved by excluding Russia from the equation, but only by inviting the country to the negotiating table,

honestly and in good faith. This will not be without its challenges, especially given the extremely fraught relationship with the West over the past decades, but Europe owes it to its own citizens and to innocent civilians of its neighbors, to at least try.



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