

**KAJA
KALLAS**

A RULES-BASED GLOBAL ORDER IN AN ERA OF POWER POLITICS

**We stand before an opportunity.
Europe can step onto the global stage
united and strong, or resign ourselves
to the sidelines.**

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Verlag: EIZ Publishing (eizpublishing.ch), Bellerivestrasse 49, 8008 Zürich,
eizpublishing@europa-institut.ch

Speech: Kaja Kallas

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36862/6GTK-4CHQ>

Version: 1.00 – 20260722

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05/03/2026, Zurich, University of Zürich, Churchill Europe Lectures, Kaja Kallas – Vice-President of the European Commission

A Rules-Based Global Order in an Era of Power Politics

Kaja Kallas*

Eighty years ago on this very stage, Winston Churchill called for a new, peaceful, and united European structure, “a kind of United States of Europe.”

The backdrop of the speech was the opposite of his proposal: Europe was devastated, wrecked by famine, fractured politically. The Second World War had destroyed our cities, scattered our people, and sown deep mistrust among nations, including former wartime allies. In Eastern Europe and beyond, the Soviet Union was occupying and annexing some countries – including my own – while tightening its grip over others. New fears of tyranny and instability were taking hold. The Cold War had begun, as Churchill made clear exactly 80 years ago when he coined the term: “Iron Curtain.” What would follow was not yet known. As Churchill spoke from this stage, the world was in a geopolitical Twilight Zone. And we find ourselves here again.

It is fashionable these days to speak of the postwar international order crumbling before our eyes. I am guilty of this myself. But what we truly seek is change. This is why I propose we follow the advice of psychotherapists and proponents of ‘12-step groups.’ They say the starting point for change is to identify and name the problem: Europe is collectively addicted to the way the world was, when there was understanding on the primacy of international law and the UN Charter. These did not work perfectly of course. But they were a foundation.

Today, the chaos we see around us in the Middle East is a direct consequence of the erosion of international law. It started when Russia, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, invaded its neighbour, with impunity and a good measure of cynicism. This has not gone unnoticed. Instead, it has sent a signal around the world that there is no accountability for one’s actions; that the rulebook has been thrown out the window. Without restoring international law, together with accountability, we are doomed to see repeated violations of the law, disruption and chaos. I will elaborate on this challenge.

* Kaja Kallas is the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission. Her task is to lead a more strategic and assertive foreign and security policy that better enables the EU to pursue its strategic interests and shape the global system. She also strengthens Europe’s capacity to act, deepens our mutually beneficial partnerships and promotes our values and interests around the world.

We in Europe have an existential threat on our doorstep. Russia's military campaign began with Georgia in 2008, then Crimea in 2014, Syria as a testing ground in 2015, followed by a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. But the Donbas is not Russia's endgame.

Europe is already fending off:

- Russian cyberattacks on our economy,
- Russian sabotage against our undersea infrastructure,
- and Russia's attempts to fracture our alliances and undermine our societal cohesion.

Beyond that, Russia is weaponizing oil and gas, engaging in military intimidation and even brandishing its nuclear arsenal. Make no mistake: Russia is not the emerging superpower it was 80 years ago, when the post-war global order was defined:

- Russia's economy is in shreds, disconnected from Europe's energy markets.
- And after more than a decade of conflict, including 4 years of full-scale war in Ukraine, Russia has barely advanced beyond the 2014 lines, at a cost of 1.2 million casualties. This is the very opposite of blitzkrieg.

But Russia will remain a major threat to any international order as it was in 1946. Why?

- Because Russia is executing the most outrageous breeches of international law in United Nations history. And doing so with impunity.
- Because Russia has turned its back on its international duty as a Permanent Member of UN Security Council and primary guarantor of the United Nations and its credibility.
- Because Russia backs this up with the world's biggest nuclear arsenal.

China, too, is taking advantage of this erosion of rules. China has been preparing the ground for decades to assume its place as a great power. It is expanding its nuclear stockpile faster than anyone else. With impressive strategic patience, China has been creating dependencies around the world, threatening countries in the East and South China seas, bankrolling Russia's war against Ukraine and reimagining the world order in its own image. This is not only posing a risk to Europe's economic model, but more broadly undermines the multilateral system that has ensured that rules actually rule.

And then there is the fundamental reorientation across the Atlantic, which goes by a variety of names from "realignment," to "new dynamic" and even

“rupture.” The shift in U.S. foreign policy has already rocked the transatlantic relationship to its foundation, with aftershocks in other parts of the world. But the impact on the international order is seismic.

Cumulatively, these trends point to a paradigm shift. The current direction is a new world order characterised by competition and coercive power politics; a world order dominated by a handful of military powers who aim to establish and secure spheres of influence. We can already see the weakening of existing international norms, rules and institutions that we have built over 80 years. How we respond to this moment says less about the new dispensation than it does about us. Because we have been here before.

The current fragmentation bears similarities to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, now somewhat mistakenly seen by some politicians as a period of stability, interdependence and peace in Europe. Nationalism and populism were also seen as attractive alternatives to the globalism that many found wanting.

Robert Kagen recently wrote of the downside to the multipolarity that emerged back then, which many still advocate for today. The so-called “*long peace*” in Europe from 1815 to 1914 was far from it. To bring just a few examples, France invaded Spain, Prussia and Austria fought Denmark, then Prussia and Austria fought each other, and in the Crimean War pretty much every European power took part until half a million people were killed. Multipolarity was neither peaceful, stable nor particularly conducive to economic development. Ultimately it ended in global devastation.

In the aftermath of the First World War, in the heady days of Wilson’s Fourteen Points, the world community decided to try something different: multilateralism instead of multipolarity. And a League of Nations was born.

But this idea was nascent, and countries were perhaps not yet ready. In the United States, for example, partisan politics meant that Congress never ratified the Treaty of Versailles to join the League. From the start, the League was shackled by a lack of economic weight, military credibility, and diplomatic authority with the absence of the emerging superpower. It also lacked legitimacy in Germany and beyond because it was seen as a product of Versailles and therefore punitive in nature.

Still, as Churchill reminded us here in 1946, “*The League did not fail because of its principles or conceptions. It failed because those principles were deserted by those states which brought it into being.*”

The multilateral system established after the Second World War was therefore a natural evolution. It, too, had its downsides, not least because it reflected the wartime power landscape of the victors. But there were three positive differences, three signs of collective growth.

First, it evolved as the world community evolved. The defeated were soon brought in and the system also benefitted from a general sense that punishing the defeated may well cause another round of war. This evolution also meant embracing the many nations that emerged from under colonial rule and including a big chunk of Europe that had been occupied by the Soviet Union.

Second, it had the buy-in from the United States, protected from other great powers as it was by virtue of strength as well as geographic distance.

Third, and even more astonishing, was the willingness of other great powers and emerging powers to buy in, at least at the time and at least partially. They opted to legitimise this system at their own expense, giving up ambitions, lands and influence for the sake of peace and the collective good.

And that is the essence of any functional international order. It is also what connects the three disruptors I referred to at the start. In their own way, at varying degrees, each is now pursuing foreign policy mainly for their own interests. Much of it is at the expense of others. They are players in a zero-sum game. But that has never been Europe's game. In fact, the history of the European Union has followed a similar trajectory to the development of the international order. It, too, has not been a smooth, linear arc. Rather our realising the necessity, as crisis after crisis exposed the limits of national solutions and pushed our Member States toward deeper cooperation.

From the devastation of the Second World War to the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, each shock revealed structural vulnerabilities—whether economic, geopolitical, or institutional—that individual governments could not resolve alone. The response was always the same: pool sovereignty in a new domain, create a new institution, or strengthen existing ones. This dynamic produced:

- The European Coal and Steel Community after the Second World War;
- The European Economic Community after the failure of early defence plans;
- The Single Market after the economic turmoil of the 1970s;
- And the European Union itself after the geopolitical upheaval of 1989.

In the 21st century, this pattern has only intensified:

- The eurozone crisis forced the creation of fiscal and banking mechanisms unthinkable a decade earlier;

- The migration crisis expanded EU-level border and asylum tools;
- The COVID-19 pandemic triggered the first large-scale issuance of joint EU debt;
- And Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine accelerated defence coordination, energy diversification, and opened another window for enlargement.

The EU's evolution was never a grand masterplan. It was a series of pragmatic responses to moments when the status quo could no longer hold. It was possible because of the guiding principle of mutually beneficial cooperation.

The same is true of Europe today as it is of the international order we all belong to. When it comes to Europe, we will find our European way, as we always have.

For a start, Europe does not and cannot choose between our values and our interests because our values are our interests. For Europeans who have lived under occupation like myself or those who have had their rights taken away by autocratic leaders, Europe truly is the land of the free. Our point of departure is not bad:

- We have achieved the conditions to lead an excellent quality of life;
- In health care, culture, education, infrastructure and stability Europe is among the best in the world;
- Europeans are safe, healthy, happy and breathing clean air;
- There's social cohesion;
- And our fundamental freedoms are protected, including media freedom.

But we also need to make some improvements. We have to even out performance among the 27 and better our competitiveness, boost our growth and deepen integration. And all of this is necessary for us to be able to also fulfil our global calling.

One of our key challenges in Europe today is to define our goals when it comes to security. In my eyes, security has a wide definition – from our goal of being an economic powerhouse, and the challenges we face here, to our aim of becoming a hard power force. At the height of the financial crisis, Mario Draghi said we would do *“whatever it takes to save the euro.”* That worked because he meant it. My goal is to get to the same stage when it comes to our own security. Europeans have always grown through crises by:

- Working together;
- Creating new ways to cooperate;
- And finding solutions to challenges that serve the collective interest.

And that is why, when it comes to the international order, Europe can be part of the solution.

There is a famous three-word phrase from philosopher Thomas Hobbes in his 1651 book *Leviathan*. Hobbes describes the state of anarchy in a world without order. You all know it. But few recall the full quote as an appeal to working with others, lest life be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.” Coming as it did just three years after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which set the framework for sovereign states – including Switzerland –, Hobbes’s call is a ringing endorsement from way back in the 17th century for cooperation. And cooperation is what Europe does best.

And that is why today, when states search for someone to lead the effort to bolster alliances and defend international law, more and more they turn to the EU. I hear this every single time I meet with foreign leaders in Brussels or abroad. Because the European Union is a reliable partner.

This is today’s paradox: the decline in multilateralism has in fact put it back on the table. Even if the biggest military powers are not interested, everyone else is. The question is how to cater for this vast majority?

Pundits near and far have been speaking of Europe’s reaction to the state of the world in terms of bereavement. The Economist refers to the late psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross—who was born right here in Zürich—describing how Europe has worked its way through the five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, arriving at acceptance.

But acceptance is not the same as agreeing on how to adapt.

Considering how much of my time goes to seeking a common position among the 27 EU Member States, I cannot but agree. The time of acceptance is over; the time for action is at hand. Action means transforming the multilateral system into one that meets the expectations of participating states. It must be shown to deliver, it must work for all.

This brings me back to Churchill’s observation that failures stem not from wrong principles but because the current principles need further development. The events of the last days in the Middle East underline this observation. The people of Iran now stand before the chance for a different future. But I am concerned about how we got to this point, specifically because it is only international law that stands between us and full-blown chaos. So what can we do?

For starters, it is time to speak seriously about reform of the international system. In these discussions, we must recognise that our current system – including the United Nations, its Charter, and the international legal environment –

exists above all to prevent wars from starting – including by curbing poverty, championing equality, and tackling climate change. Any revision or replacement is doomed to fail if it leaves this part out.

The EU has its own long experience reviewing, adjusting and transforming itself. We know that doing so is not a one-shot project. It involves listening, negotiation, political compromises and a healthy dose of humility.

But today, we have no choice. Knowing that others are also looking to counter entropy, understanding our strengths but also what we have learned from our failures, the EU is ready to lead in these efforts to transform the multilateral system. Because we believe that adjustment will lend us the stability we seek.

Moving forward on reform is a process that is neither easy nor simple. It means recognising the problem, which we have. It means mustering the political willingness to go forward, which we are working on. And it means engaging in the tough discussions it will require: taking a seat at the table instead of leaving an empty chair. It means making decisions stick, for everyone, through perseverance and follow through.

While we consider these big questions, we can take another page from the EU playbook. Whether you call it Hegelian or Schumanian, the EU learned that focusing on practical, incremental steps eventually leads to qualitative change. Take international law for example. The UN Charter is an excellent basis, but it was written in analog times. We need an international legal foundation for the digital era where our rights in the digital space are protected. We need to rethink the rules governing the maritime space now our seabeds are full of cables carrying data across the globe. From cyberspace to outer space, Artificial Intelligence to the Arctic, there are so many areas where we can and should move forward together. But if we do this, we need to strengthen accountability too. Because international law is only as effective as we are willing to make it. Enforcement is essential, no one should be above the law. And whether we speak of...

- bilateral partnerships,
- or alliances,
- regional organisations,
- or coalitions of the willing,
- or minilateral,
- plurilateral,
- or variable geometry arrangements...

...all of these are all complementary to the multilateral, rules-based order that most states want. And in fact, doing more of this, cross regionally and with a

critical mass, could strengthen the system as a whole. The idea is to incubate ideas in smaller formats that could then be taken before the rest of the world to ripen.

We stand before an opportunity. Europe can step onto the global stage united and strong, or resign ourselves to the sidelines. Our illusions are gone. But as Estonia's first post-Cold War President Lennart Meri said, "*where illusions are shattered, hope is born.*"

Paraphrasing Winston Churchill in June 1940, during the period of the Battle of France, this may not be Europe's finest hour. But it is Europe's Hour of Decision. Do we allow the ongoing downward spiral to firm up and cement into place, with predictable consequences for Europe and the world? Or do we heed the clarion call to lead, in defence of values, the law, together with others?

My fellow Europeans, we may feel disheartened and disempowered by much of what is happening around us. But now is our time to decide.

Thank you



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Q&A with Prof. Dr. Andreas Kellerhals, Director, EIZ

Andreas Kellerhals:

Sometimes I get the impression that the only “positive” outcome of the war in Ukraine is that it has brought the European Union closer together than before. Do you think we are likely to see a truly common foreign and security policy of the European Union in the foreseeable future?

Kaja Kallas:

Well, we are working on this every single day. Today, for example, we had a meeting with European foreign ministers and the ministers of the Gulf countries regarding Iran, and we even managed to get a common position with all 27 of them. So we are definitely working on it. But it's never easy because we have 27 member states. They are all democracies, and of course, they also have their own interests around the world in different countries.

Coming from a small country, things are very clear to me – although I like this quote by Paul-Henri Spaak, who said that there are only two types of countries in Europe: the countries that are small and those countries who haven't realized that they are small. And this is true. When I travel around the world countries tell me that they are small, I check and find that they are over 100 million people – bigger than most, or all, of the European countries.

My point being that coming from a small country, it is very clear that we are only equal powers in this geopolitical game if we are together, because even the biggest country in Europe is still a small country in the bigger picture. And if you see how all our adversaries – but now also our allies – actually want to divide us and deal with countries bilaterally: why? Because then we are not equal powers. That is why it is in the interest of everybody else, but not Europe.

And my question is always: why do some countries so often not see that having only bilateral relations, instead of acting together with all the others, makes us all weaker? Because it gives others the opportunity to play one against the other. It's hard, because the interests of member states differ towards different countries – but clearly, this is the time where we really need to act together.

Because as I also said, when I travel around the world, I see that the majority of countries want a world based on some kind of rules. And if you look at the superpowers and ask who still believes in international law and a rules-based

order – it's Europe. So they all turn to us and say that if we come with initiatives, they will come with us, because they want a world based on some kind of rules.

The reason we have so many wars around the world right now is because the international order has been damaged. Some say it has never really worked – but I think it has worked better than it's working now.

Andreas Kellerhals:

I was recently in Armenia teaching students about European integration, and I asked them what they expect from Europe. The answer was clear: nothing. We only care about security – that's the only thing we care about. And we can't get security only from Russia or from the US. Russia betrayed us. So we are only waiting for the U.S, not from the EU. The EU has only money, but no weapons. What would you answer to that student?

Kaja Kallas:

First, my first answer is: look at Venezuela – did Russia go to help their biggest friend? No. Look at Iran – does Russia help their allies? No. Syria, the Assad regime – they totally left them alone. So I wouldn't really put my bets on Russia, because they are truly failing their friends. That's my first point.

Second: we are a reliable partner. And third: yes, we are not an equal military power to the United States, but we are working on this. We really are working on it – to boost our own defense and our own defense industry, to become an equal military power. But we are already an economic power, and you can't overlook that either.

And even with Armenia – we are helping them a lot, because they are fighting foreign malign influence and manipulation coming from outside. So when they are in need, they actually turn to Europe, and we are always the “good guys” helping – even those who haven't helped us.

Audience 1:

You mentioned three pillars of the European values. But after all these crises, don't you think you must add one or two more pillars to make the whole thing more attractive? One pillar may be security and another may be deep bureaucratization. Isn't that what we read in all the papers? That people are worried about exactly that? Why not add new pillars instead of always talking about climate and the things we have talked about so much already.

Kaja Kallas:

Well, we are working on the security part – to become a military power. And when it comes to bureaucracy, yes, we are also cutting that. But at the same time, I must also say that this bureaucracy also brings our people clean air. Let me give one example of what Europe has to offer.

There was a telling case in Serbia. The Chinese came to to invest in a copper factory. What they did was remove all the air filters, because it's more cost-effective to produce that way. They brought their own people to build the factory, extracted as much as they could, and then left. And the people around the factory started dying of lung cancer, because they simply didn't really care.

That is the difference. If we want this quality of life, it is also due to the rules that we have – rules regarding freedom of the press, rules about the quality of life. So I wouldn't really put bureaucracy down as a purely negative thing.

I've been to a lot of countries where you can't really breathe anything. And on climate change – when I was at a conference in Singapore, with representatives from many countries, one of them said: “We don't come here to preach you about climate change.” But later, in my individual meetings with those same countries, they were saying that climate change is their biggest worry – because they are literally losing their ground, and their people can't live there anymore.

So if you publicly say “we don't preach you about climate change,” what you're really saying is: we don't care. And I think that is the difference between Europe and some other major powers – we actually care. We have also learned from our history, and that has value right now, especially at a time when the dominant way of operating is competition and coercive power politics.

So I would say: you cannot always overcome your weaknesses, but you can focus on your strengths and become even stronger there. And that is what we should do – and are doing.

Andreas Kellerhals:

This terrible war in Ukraine has now been lasting for four years. But now we have a second war in our neighborhood – we have Iran. And it's getting a lot on your plate. How do you think Europeans can deal with that conflict, which has the potential to become bigger and produce refugees? And how are you prepared to deal with that?

Kaja Kallas:

I always get into trouble when I make jokes, but wars are actually very easy to start and quite hard to stop – and nobody knows what the outcome will be. And that is also what is happening now.

Of course, we have plans ready for waves of migration and everything that comes with it, because people don't want to leave their homes unless they really have to. And they have to if there's a war, or if climate change leaves them no other possibility.

There are more wars in the world right now than ever before. The war in Sudan is still ongoing. You have Congo, Rwanda. You have, of course, the war in Ukraine. And now the broader Middle East – every day we hear of new countries under attack. So of course we are also working on the diplomatic track to bring these to an end. But there is always one thing: you can declare peace, bang heads together and say there is peace but that is actually not sustainable, because societies need to buy into it. With a whole-of-society approach – think of Colombia, for example. I don't remember the exact year, but there was a peace agreement that society didn't accept. And that is where Europe comes in: broader mediation, and how to achieve reconciliation within society so that you exit this cycle.

And here again I stress accountability – because if there is accountability, then the victims can also say that the people who committed these atrocities, or made the decisions to start this war, are being held accountable. That allows them to step back from revenge. But if there is no such thing, the cycle will continue.

Of course, on the Middle East, the US has much bigger leverage over the actors there than we do. But we are trying to help with the tools we have in our hands.

Audience 2:

I like your word “accountability”. And what we are waiting for is this: I went through some of your statements from last year, and you said that Israel should be held accountable for what they did. So what we are waiting for is – when is Europe going to impose sanctions on Israel? Sanctions that will actually hurt Israel and stop this genocide. Europe had no problem imposing sanctions on Russia, I understand that. But when do you want to impose sanctions on Israel? Thank you very much.

Kaja Kallas:

Thank you. This question is related to the Common Foreign and Security Policy. We have 27 member states. On Ukraine, we have been very united from the start – though it is now more difficult, with one member state blocking, and we currently cannot adopt the 20th package of sanctions because of that.

On Israel, it is much more complicated. This is due to the different historical backgrounds and relationships of our member states – we simply don't have a common position. We have a common position on supporting the two-state solution, on humanitarian aid, and on the ceasefire holding – but we do not have a common position on sanctions. And sanctions require all 27 member states to be on board. It has been put on the table several times, and we just cannot reach an agreement. Right now, some member states are also saying that we should give peace in Gaza a chance – but that is the situation we are in.

We are a union of 27 member states, 27 democracies, with very different historical backgrounds. That makes it harder. But it also raises a deeper question – one we need to face – about reforming our decision-making. Because when we are not able to make decisions in crucial cases, we risk losing people, especially young people, who say: Europe can't deliver, Europe can't decide. So clearly, our decision-making process is a problem we need to work on.

Audience 3:

Thank you very much. To paraphrase, perhaps, the Armenian students – what specific steps are you taking to project power in order to lead in this world, whether it's a new world order? That would be very helpful to understand.

Kaja Kallas:

Well, one very specific step we are taking is increasing our defense expenditure to become a hard military power as well. We have different joint initiatives, because so far defense has been very national. But we see clearly – from what is happening in the Middle East, but also in Ukraine – that we need a regional approach. These capabilities are very expensive and need to cover a larger area, so we need to do this together.

There are several things I can point to. We have nine capability coalitions. We have identified our capability gaps and are working on them – from air defense to ammunition – to actually become a hard military power.

But the other leg is economic power, and there we have been strong. However, we are losing ground because we are not competitive enough. And there too

we are working on several fronts – one is cutting bureaucracy, which is important, and creating better conditions for our companies so that we remain an economic power.

Of course, if I start listing all of this, it gets rather dry and boring, I have to say.

But yes, we are working on those lines. And again, I come back to where our strength really comes from – and that is when we are united. That's why we also need to work on our decision-making process.

And one thing I forgot to mention: Europe is attractive. Just think about how many countries want to join the European Union right now. I was in Canada last March, and when I arrived, they told me there is strong support for joining the European Union. I laughed – I thought it was a joke. But then they said: no, no, I can show you the polls. And it turned out that over 40% of Canadians want to join the European Union. Then I thought, okay, this is serious.

So I said, well, it's complicated – because according to our treaties, you have to be geographically located in Europe. And they had an answer for that: we are connected via the Arctic. So we definitely have some appeal.

Andreas Kellerhals:

Thank you very much. Regarding your defense plans – are you still planning within the NATO framework, or are you also looking for alternative networks, given how the world is changing?

Kaja Kallas:

That is a very good question. 23 countries of the European Union are also members of NATO, so the majority of NATO members are also EU members. NATO has very good structures, and we need to strengthen the European part of NATO – so that the steps we are taking for the defence of our countries are also making NATO stronger.

Now, the reason I am not in favour of creating alternative European structures comes down to something fundamental – and perhaps coming from a country that has thought these things through very carefully helps clarify it. In a crisis, when you actually need military power to defend yourself, the most important thing is the chain of command. Who gives orders to whom? In NATO, that is very clear. We know how the armies of European countries work together and who commands whom, because every country has its own army chiefs who operate within an agreed framework.

If we create an alternative European structure, the first question is: would you create another German army, another French army, another Estonian army? No – that is simply not possible, as any serious discussion on the topic shows. You still have one army per country. So if you have two parallel structures, the most dangerous question in a crisis becomes: which chain of command applies – the European one or NATO's? And if that is unclear, the ball falls between the two – which in a crisis is a very, very bad outcome.

That is why we are strengthening the European members who are also part of NATO, rather than creating any alternative structures. NATO as such still works.

Audience 4:

You talked about the Iran situation, and also about Russia and China posing a risk to the international order. However, over the last two years we have witnessed a genocide committed by Israel, which is an ally of the EU – and as was criticized earlier, no sanctions have been imposed. So I want to ask: do you think that Israel and the US, especially looking at what they are doing in Iran right now – attacking another sovereign nation unprovoked – pose a threat to the international world order?

Kaja Kallas:

International law gives you two possibilities to use force: one is self-defence, and the other is under a UN Security Council resolution. So whoever uses force has to justify that they are doing so in accordance with international law – otherwise it is not lawful.

And that brings me back to my point about accountability. The UN Charter is very clear – clear about the principles of what is right and wrong, and how states should relate and communicate with each other. But what it still lacks is accountability. What happens if somebody breaches international law? That is why I have also been advocating for developing international law further, so that it includes a proper accountability mechanism – because that is also what prevents wars from happening in the first place.

If there is a clear risk that you will be held accountable, you think twice. Because right now – and I'm sorry to all the gentlemen in the room – it is one person who decides to send his soldiers into another country to kill the fathers, sons and brothers of another nation. You send your own fathers, sons and brothers to kill theirs. They pay with their lives. But the people who make these decisions do not feel the pain that those who suffer feel.

That is why, in Ukraine's case, we have also initiated a tribunal for the Crime of Aggression – to target those who decide to go to war in violation of the international order. But as I said, we have serious problems with international law right now.

Andreas Kellerhals:

Thank you very much. We are probably slowly coming to an end – maybe one last, very personal question. Do you have any special relationship with Switzerland? I ask because we have a small gift for you: two cocktail glasses with the Matterhorn in three dimensions in the middle. So whenever you drink from them, you will see Switzerland – a reminder of the future, perhaps.

Kaja Kallas:

Well, if you say Matterhorn – I was skiing there last year, but I don't know if that counts. I do have good friends in Switzerland, and you know, you may not fully understand – if you have always lived in the free world – how much that means.

When I was a young child, whenever I was sick and my grandmother would babysit me, she would tell me stories about the golden Estonian age. She spoke very good German, and at some point she had applied for a job in Finland, teaching German to a family. The head of that family was a ship's captain, and they took her along to England as well.

And I remember, as a child growing up behind the Iron Curtain – a child who had no freedom at all – thinking: Grandma, don't tell me these fairy tales. How was it possible that you just went to Finland, and then to England, and nobody asked you any questions? How did they let you out?

I genuinely remember not believing it. And now, living in this world – one day I'm in Switzerland, the next I'm somewhere else – it all seems so easy. But it has not always been so easy. So let's not take it for granted. It is a tremendous thing that we have friends across Europe, that we have no real borders, that people can travel and experience so much. We have such rich and diverse cultures – and that is something we should truly cherish.

Andreas Kellerhals:

Thank you very much. So we have a little more work to do on that Swiss connection – I've just found that out. Thank you so much, and you are always welcome back.