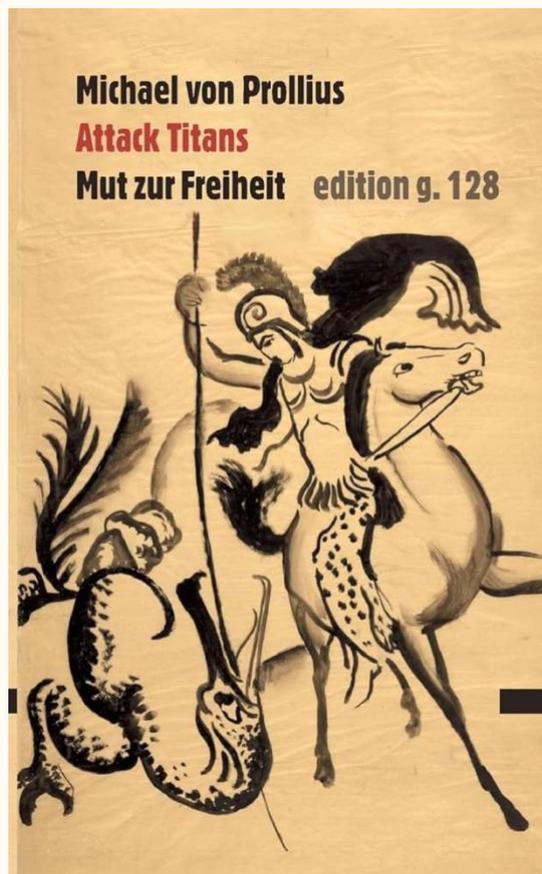


MvP Book Abstract #16

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# Attack Titans Courage for Freedom



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## One-Sentence Summary

*Attack Titans!* applies classical liberal principles to the major political, economic, and cultural conflicts of the early twenty-first century, confronting interventionist power structures, technocratic hubris, and moralized politics with institutional realism, economic reasoning, and a sober defense of freedom.

## About This Book

### Publication Details:

- **Author:** Michael von Prollius
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- **Format:** 312 pages
- **Series Context:** Third volume in the author’s liberal trilogy

### Genesis and Methodology:

*Attack Titans!* emerged from a year-long column series addressing contemporary political economy, state power, and ideological pathologies. Unlike *A Liberal Manifest*, which articulates foundational principles, this book operates at the level of application. It tests liberal insights against real-world crises: monetary disorder, climate politics, trade restrictions, welfare expansion, technocratic governance, moral inflation, and the erosion of responsibility.

Methodologically, the book combines essayistic analysis with economic reasoning and institutional critique. It does not follow a single linear argument but advances through thematic interventions. Each chapter isolates a dominant policy narrative or political reflex and subjects it to liberal scrutiny, emphasizing incentives, unintended consequences, and historical experience.

The title’s metaphor of “Titans” refers not to individuals alone but to entrenched systems of power: expansive states, central banks, bureaucracies, moral majorities, and intellectual orthodoxies that claim necessity, expertise, or inevitability.

### Author's Note:

This book is written in the conviction that liberalism must not remain confined to abstract principles. Freedom must be defended where it is challenged—in concrete policies, dominant narratives, and institutional habits. The tone is deliberately direct. Liberal restraint does not require rhetorical timidity.

## Book Abstract No.16

# Attack Titans!

## Courage for Freedom

*Attack Titans!* confronts a paradox of modern politics: never has the state intervened more extensively in economic and social life, and never have its failures been more evident. Yet each failure generates new demands for intervention, more planning, more control. The book interprets this dynamic not as a series of policy mistakes but as a structural pathology of interventionist thinking.

At the center stands a critique of the myth of manageability—the belief that complex societies can be steered through expertise, planning, and moral intention. Against this, the book emphasizes dispersed knowledge, systemic feedback, and the limits of political control. Economic coordination, social cooperation, and institutional stability arise through decentralized processes, not administrative command.

A recurring theme is the asymmetry between political incentives and social outcomes. Policies justified as protective—trade barriers, monetary expansion, welfare programs, climate regulation, sanctions—systematically benefit organized interests while imposing diffuse costs on ordinary citizens. Liberalism, the book argues, is not a doctrine for elites but historically a movement “for the small people,” opposing privilege, monopoly, and concentrated power.

Monetary policy occupies a central place. Inflation is interpreted as institutionalized dishonesty: a hidden transfer from citizens to states and financial systems. Central banking appears not as neutral stabilization but as a permanent source of distortion, dependency, and moral hazard. The book revives classical liberal arguments for monetary restraint, competition, and responsibility.

Foreign policy and security are treated with similar sobriety. Military interventions, sanctions, and moralized geopolitics are criticized for their empirical failures, humanitarian costs, and domestic consequences—militarization, propaganda, and erosion of civil liberties. Liberal peace, grounded in trade, prosperity, and institutional restraint, is presented as the neglected alternative.

Across topics, the book resists both left-wing egalitarianism and right-wing authoritarianism. It rejects identity politics, moral inflation, and collectivist claims while also distancing itself from naïve market romanticism. Liberalism is portrayed as a demanding order: freedom bound by law, property linked to responsibility, and state power strictly limited but not denied.

## **Thematic Chapter Mapping**

While *Attack Titans!* is not structured as a linear treatise, its chapters form coherent thematic clusters. The following mapping highlights the book's internal architecture and facilitates selective reading without reducing the work to a chapter-by-chapter summary.

### **Liberalism for Ordinary People and the Social Narrative Problem**

Chapters I–III

The opening chapters address a central misconception: the portrayal of liberalism as an ideology of elites. They argue that historically, liberal movements were mass movements opposing privilege, monopoly, and political power. The problem today is not liberal economics, but liberal communication and empathy deficits. These chapters establish the book's social orientation and its insistence that freedom is not a luxury good.

### **Monetary Order, Inflation, and Institutional Failure**

Chapters V, XV, XXIV

These chapters form the monetary core of the book. Inflation is analyzed as a consequence of deliberate policy rather than market failure. Central banks are framed as inflation authorities whose actions benefit states and financial systems at the expense of wage earners and savers. The chapters also introduce historical analogies and discuss alternative monetary orders, emphasizing responsibility and restraint.

### **Knowledge, Ignorance, and the Limits of Planning**

Chapters VII, IX, XXXVII, XLII

Here the book develops its critique of technocracy. Drawing on insights from economics, systems theory, and epistemology, these chapters expose the arrogance embedded in planning and expert governance. The “pretense of knowledge” appears as a recurring driver of policy failure, particularly in crisis situations.

### **Trade, Globalization, and Economic Peace**

Chapters IV, XXVI

These chapters defend free trade against resurgent protectionism. Trade is presented as a mechanism of empowerment, especially for poorer populations, and as a stabilizing force in international relations. Development aid and sanctions are contrasted with trade as instruments of prosperity and peace.

### **Property, Welfare, and Dependency Structures**

Chapters VIII, XXVII, XXVIII, XXXVIII

This cluster examines property rights, redistribution, and welfare policies. The analysis focuses on incentive effects, dependency, and moral justification. The book distinguishes sharply between voluntary solidarity and coercive redistribution, arguing that the latter often undermines both freedom and social cohesion.

## Power, Security, and Political Overreach

Chapters XVII, XX, XXIX, XL

Security policy and state authority are analyzed with particular sobriety. Military intervention, sanctions, and emergency governance are assessed through empirical outcomes rather than moral claims. The chapters emphasize liberal restraint and warn against the domestic consequences of permanent emergency politics.

## Democracy, Leadership, and Institutional Fatigue

Chapters XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV, XLVI

The concluding chapters reflect on democratic overload, leadership myths, and systemic fatigue. Rather than calling for radical reform or strong leadership, the book argues for reduced political scope and better institutional design. Liberalism appears as a strategy of limitation, not mobilization.

## Core Themes / Principles

**Applied Liberalism:** The book translates liberal principles into concrete judgment. Freedom is assessed not by intentions or rhetoric but by institutional effects.

**Limits of State Action:** Political power is structurally prone to overreach. The expansion of state functions produces dependency, clientelism, and systemic fragility.

**Spontaneous Order vs. Technocracy:** Complex systems cannot be managed like organizations. Attempts at centralized control generate cascading failures.

**Monetary Integrity:** Stable money is a constitutional issue. Inflation undermines trust, savings, and social order.

**Trade, Prosperity, and Peace:** Free exchange is both an economic and a civilizational achievement. Protectionism and sanctions are regressions.

**Responsibility and Restraint:** Liberalism requires self-limitation—by individuals and institutions alike.

## Thematic Deep Dives

### Monetary Disorder and Institutional Dishonesty

One of the analytical cores of *Attack Titans!* is a sustained critique of contemporary monetary regimes. Inflation is not treated as a technical malfunction or an unfortunate side effect of crisis management, but as an institutionalized form of redistribution. By expanding the money supply beyond real economic output, states and central banks systematically erode purchasing power, transferring resources from savers and wage earners to debtors, governments, and asset holders.

The book insists on conceptual clarity: inflation precedes rising prices. Price increases are a symptom, not the cause. This distinction matters politically, because it exposes the misleading narrative that inflation is driven by external shocks, greedy firms, or supply shortages alone. While such factors can affect relative prices, persistent inflation is rooted in monetary expansion.

Central banks appear not as neutral guardians of stability, but as political actors with structural incentives to accommodate fiscal expansion. Monetary policy thus becomes a tool of implicit taxation and debt socialization. The book draws a historical line from medieval coin debasement to modern fiat money regimes, emphasizing continuity in political temptation rather than technological novelty.

Importantly, *Attack Titans!* does not present monetary reform as a technocratic optimization problem. Stable money is framed as a constitutional issue: a question of limits, responsibility, and trust between state and citizen. Proposals such as monetary restraint, competition in currencies, or institutional rules are not blueprints but reminders that monetary order cannot be sustained by discretion alone.

## **The Myth of Manageability and Crisis Governance**

A recurring target of the book is what may be called the myth of manageability: the belief that complex societies can be steered through planning, expertise, and decisive intervention. This belief gains particular force during crises, when political demand for rapid solutions converges with technocratic ambition.

Drawing on systems thinking and institutional economics, the book contrasts linear cause-effect reasoning with the reality of feedback loops, unintended consequences, and delayed effects. Policies designed to “fix” one problem often amplify others. Crisis governance thus becomes a generator of secondary crises, each justifying further intervention.

Pandemic policy, climate governance, and macroeconomic stabilization serve as recurring examples. In each case, political action is justified by necessity and moral urgency, while costs are deferred, diffused, or obscured. The book is not primarily concerned with the correctness of individual measures, but with the structural pattern they reveal: the substitution of control for coordination.

Against the language of “management,” *Attack Titans!* emphasizes the difference between organizations and societies. While firms and agencies can be managed, open societies rely on decentralized decision-making and spontaneous order. Attempts to govern them as if they were machines produce fragility rather than resilience.

## **Trade, Protectionism, and the Political Economy of Privilege**

The book’s defense of free trade is grounded less in abstract efficiency arguments than in political economy. Protectionism is analyzed as a policy that concentrates benefits while dispersing costs. Organized producer interests gain visible advantages; consumers bear invisible losses through higher prices, reduced choice, and slower innovation.

Historically, periods of trade restriction coincide with stagnation, conflict, and social tension. Conversely, the expansion of global trade has lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty, primarily through self-directed economic participation rather than aid or redistribution. *Attack Titans!* repeatedly stresses that trade empowers “ordinary people” by widening opportunities and lowering entry barriers.

The rhetoric of protection—defending jobs, standards, or national sovereignty—is treated with skepticism. The book shows how such arguments often mask rent-seeking and political favoritism. Even where exceptions may be justified on security grounds, they remain exceptions to a general rule: voluntary exchange benefits all parties involved.

Trade is also framed as a peace institution. Economic interdependence does not eliminate conflict, but it raises the cost of violence and fosters cooperation beyond political borders. In this sense, free trade is part of a liberal security architecture, not merely an economic policy choice.

## **Welfare, Dependency, and Moral Inflation**

A central concern of *Attack Titans!* is the transformation of social policy into a system of dependency. Welfare expansion is not criticized for its intentions, but for its long-term institutional effects. By weakening incentives for self-reliance and mutual aid, extensive welfare systems risk undermining the very social fabric they claim to protect.

The book introduces the concept of moral inflation: the tendency to elevate political demands by framing them as moral imperatives. Redistribution, regulation, and intervention are increasingly justified not as pragmatic choices but as ethical necessities. This moralization shields policies from criticism and turns dissent into a form of moral deviance.

Importantly, the book does not deny social responsibility. Instead, it distinguishes between assistance that empowers and policies that entrench dependency. Self-help, voluntary cooperation, and decentralized solutions are presented as liberal alternatives to bureaucratic provision.

The critique extends to development aid and international redistribution, where similar patterns emerge: good intentions, poor incentives, and disappointing outcomes. Here again, liberal skepticism is directed not against compassion, but against the hubris of centralized benevolence.

## **Power, Security, and Liberal Restraint**

Security occupies a distinct place in the liberal order articulated in *Attack Titans!*. Unlike anarchist positions, the book affirms security as a core function of the state. Without protection from violence and coercion, freedom cannot exist.

At the same time, security is identified as one of the most abused justifications for power expansion. Military interventions, surveillance, sanctions, and emergency measures are

frequently defended as necessary safeguards, while their long-term consequences remain underexamined.

The book subjects interventionist foreign policy to empirical scrutiny. Military campaigns and economic sanctions rarely achieve their stated goals, but consistently generate humanitarian suffering, domestic militarization, and erosion of civil liberties. The concept of “liberal intervention” is treated as a contradiction in terms.

Liberal restraint does not imply passivity. It implies proportionality, rule-bound action, and skepticism toward moral crusades. Security policy, like economic policy, must be judged by outcomes rather than intentions.

## Clarifications / Conceptual Distinctions

- **Liberalism vs. Lifestyle Liberalism:** Cultural openness without institutional restraint is incoherent.
- **Security vs. Control:** Security is a core state function; its abuse becomes a pretext for domination.
- **Inequality vs. Injustice:** Outcome differences are not moral failures; unequal treatment before the law is.
- **Crisis vs. Normality:** Permanent crisis narratives justify permanent intervention.
- **Management vs. Coordination:** Societies are coordinated, not managed.

These distinctions serve to protect liberal reasoning from moralization and conceptual dilution.

## Key Analytical Patterns

Beyond its thematic arguments, *Attack Titans!* is unified by a set of recurring analytical patterns. These patterns structure the book’s critique across domains and reveal a consistent liberal mode of reasoning. They explain why similar policy failures emerge in different fields and why political learning remains limited.

### Concentrated Benefits, Diffuse Costs

A foundational pattern is the asymmetry between beneficiaries and payers of political decisions. Interventionist policies tend to produce visible, concentrated benefits for organized groups—industries, bureaucracies, financial institutions—while imposing dispersed, less visible costs on the general population.

Because costs are spread thinly and often delayed, political resistance remains weak. Inflation, protectionism, and welfare expansion all follow this logic. The book repeatedly shows how this asymmetry distorts democratic accountability and favors persistent intervention even in the face of poor results.

## **Intentions vs. Institutional Outcomes**

*Attack Titans!* systematically separates moral intention from institutional effect. Policies justified by fairness, protection, or solidarity are evaluated by their structural consequences rather than their declared aims.

This pattern exposes a central illusion of modern politics: the belief that good intentions can compensate for flawed incentives. Whether in social policy, climate regulation, or crisis management, the book demonstrates that institutional design matters more than ethical rhetoric. Moral language often functions as a substitute for analysis.

## **Crisis as Accelerator of Power**

Crises play a decisive role in the expansion of state authority. The book treats crises not primarily as external shocks, but as political opportunities. Emergency narratives lower resistance, suspend normal constraints, and legitimize exceptional measures.

Once introduced, these measures tend to persist beyond the crisis itself. Temporary interventions become permanent institutions. The book highlights this ratchet effect as a key driver of long-term power accumulation, particularly in monetary policy, surveillance, and regulation.

## **Management Thinking vs. Systemic Coordination**

A recurring analytical distinction separates management thinking from systemic coordination. Management presupposes control, hierarchy, and clear objectives. Coordination relies on decentralized knowledge, feedback, and adaptation.

*Attack Titans!* argues that modern governance increasingly applies management logic to systems that cannot be managed without severe distortion. Economic and social orders are treated as if they were organizations, leading to rigidity, fragility, and policy failure.

## **Moral Inflation and Conceptual Drift**

The book identifies a gradual inflation of moral claims in political discourse. Concepts such as justice, security, and responsibility are expanded to justify ever broader intervention. As terms lose precision, they gain emotional force but lose analytical clarity.

This conceptual drift weakens liberal resistance. When almost any policy can be framed as morally necessary, principled limits appear callous or obsolete. The book insists that conceptual discipline is a precondition of freedom.

## Power as a Structural, Not Personal Problem

Finally, *Attack Titans!* treats power as a structural phenomenon rather than a personal failing. Political actors are not primarily corrupt or malicious; they respond to incentives embedded in institutions.

This perspective allows the book to criticize systems without resorting to moral condemnation. It also explains why replacing elites or changing rhetoric rarely produces different outcomes. Without institutional restraint, power tends to expand regardless of who holds it.

## Conclusion: Orientation

*Attack Titans!* does not promise solutions in the sense of political programs. Its contribution is orientation. By identifying recurring patterns of failure and illusion, it equips readers to recognize when power expands under false pretenses. Liberalism appears here not as optimism, but as composure: skeptical of grand designs, confident in human cooperation, and aware of the permanent risks of domination.

## Comparative Positioning: *Attack Titans!* And *A Liberal Manifest*

*Attack Titans!* And *A Liberal Manifest* are closely related, yet they serve distinct intellectual functions. Read together, they form a coherent liberal framework consisting of principles and application.

*A Liberal Manifest* articulates the foundational structure of classical liberalism. Its purpose is clarification: to define core principles, draw boundaries, and protect liberal thought from conceptual dilution. It is concerned with orientation at the level of first principles—individual dignity, property, law, spontaneous order, and the strictly limited state. The tone is declarative and compositional.

*Attack Titans!* operates at a different level. It assumes the principles articulated in the manifesto and subjects them to stress tests. Rather than asking *what liberalism is*, it asks *how liberal principles perform when confronted with contemporary political realities*. The book engages directly with crises, policies, and dominant narratives of the early twenty-first century.

The difference is not merely thematic but methodological. While the manifesto proceeds by articulation, *Attack Titans!* proceeds by confrontation. It attacks not persons but recurring patterns of thought: technocratic hubris, moral inflation, crisis-driven power expansion, and the illusion of manageability. The essayistic form allows for flexibility, topical focus, and direct engagement with public discourse.

In terms of tone, *Attack Titans!* is sharper and more polemical, though still analytically disciplined. Where the manifesto emphasizes composure and clarity, *Attack*

*Titans* emphasizes vigilance. Liberal restraint, the book suggests, must be defended actively where it is eroded incrementally.

Taken together, the two books form a complementary pair. *A Liberal Manifest* provides the grammar of liberal order; *Attack Titans!* demonstrates its use in practice. The former guards liberal meaning; the latter guards liberal space.

### **Concluding Note on the Abstract's Extended Form**

With the inclusion of thematic deep dives, analytical patterns, chapter mapping, and comparative positioning, this abstract moves beyond a compact overview. It functions as an interpretive companion to the book, enabling non-German readers to engage with its arguments in substance rather than summary form.

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## About the Author

Michael von Prollius is a German historian, economist, and author specializing in the intersection of ideas, institutions, and historical development. He holds degrees in history and economics and has conducted extensive research spanning ancient history, economic thought, political philosophy, and contemporary policy analysis.

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