

NORBERT RÖTTGEN

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Steven ERLANGER

Norbert, you are a politician too, the other part of the French-German couple. Over to you please.

Norbert RÖTTGEN

Good morning everybody. The question is 'What next in and for Europe?' Before I try to elaborate a little bit on this question, let me just briefly summarise where we are and from that point we can ask how it will go on. I think we are at a point and situation not seen since World War II. I think that there have not been so many crises at the same time, abroad and internally, in Europe and confronting Europe. Externally, we have fundamental new posturing of Russia, which has shattered the European peace order, which we considered eternal after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain. Everybody considered this European peace order to be the historic consequence of the bloodshed of the 20th century and we were absolutely sure, not that Russia is a democracy in the Western European style, but that Russia was absolutely determined to remain a part of that political order. We have to see that Russia not only violated a border; it is not only about the Ukraine but about the persistence of the peace order in Europe and what we are dealing with Russia when we talk about the Ukraine. In the increased turmoil, the territorial extension of the conflict from Northern Africa, over the Middle East to Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and an increasing complexity, which also seems to be persistent. It is not going away any time soon. We see a mixture between the Russian posture in Europe and the military encroachment and activity in Syria by waging a war and committing war crimes. What we see as Europeans for the first time, of course, the geography has not changed but the politics have changed; there is a fundamentally new quality of mobility of crises.

The consequences of crises now are spilling over in to Europe and we can no longer say we have domestic policy and politics, which can be separated from foreign policy crises. They are there and have always been there but were far away. They are no longer far away; they are coming and entering Europe and having a huge impact on the stability of our societies. Problems which evolved and emerged as foreign policy problems have roots in societal problems in foreign countries spilling over into Europe as foreign policy problems and affecting the stability of our societies. We no longer have the separation between domestic and foreign policy, we no longer have just inter-state problems; we have a mixture of social and foreign policy problems. I will add to that description of the external challenges. Now, we have a new President-elect in the United States and, maybe for the first time in the history of American foreign policy, at least for the last 100 years, nobody in the world knows what foreign policy we can expect. At least nobody knows it. There have been some comments on foreign policy but they were addressed exclusively to domestic voters and Trump did not care much that there were some foreign listeners when he talked about NATO etc. We now have a new portion, quality or insecurity coming from the United States, which is injected into our global insecurity.

At this critical juncture of foreign policy surrounding Europe, unfortunately, we must say that it is in the worst state internally since the Roman Treaties. It is the worst shape not because, as in the past, there is a crisis, a challenge and then you adapt and Europe emerges stronger than when we entered the crisis; it is a crisis of mentality, perhaps of political culture. It is the re-emergence of state egotism and partly nationalism, not seen in the decades before, which fundamentally weakens us. This may be an insufficient description of where we are, so how do we respond to that? Of



course, it is so complex and complicated it is not easy to answer but a few things can be said about how to proceed in the interest of Europe.

My first assumption is that in this increasingly globalised world, without developing an international order, and with an international order that is maybe even in retreat, the West as a political concept is indispensable. Either can persist to assert a Western concept of politics, which consists of fundamental principles and values such as the rule of law, the dignity of man, democracy or these minority values of the minority Western population will diminish and will not remain strong. The West is indispensable.

Secondly, when it comes to a possible retreat and new isolationism in the United States, I make no predictions. We do not know what American foreign policy is about but America first sounds a bit like that. I do not know and, of course, I do not claim to know anything about the future. Whatever happens, the United States is irreplaceable for the West. Some say that the United States might backtrack and then we must come in as Europeans. Given its political, economic, technological, and military power, there is no substitute for the United States in the concept of the West.

Thirdly, the EU is insufficient as a second pillar in this concept if we want to activate, perceive, and preserve the West, particularly on foreign policy. We must evolve as an actor on foreign and security policy because, even if Hilary Clinton had been elected President of the United States, she would have been forced to focus on domestic challenges, creating jobs, bridging the social and societal gap in society. The current and future President must work on a heavily domestic agenda. In our national interests, as European nation states, we have to do more and we have to accept and face the reality that we no longer live in the Cold War with the security umbrella of the United States; we have to do more for our own security.

My last remark is that to do that and overcome our internal, dividing differences is pivotal and a prerequisite for us to forge a common foreign policy at European level. What do I mean by that? I think we have three dividing issues in Europe: the refugees; the economy and austerity; and Russia. As a German politician, I want to make clear that in regard to these three issues, Germany must shift from a partisan participant in the struggles to a new position as a provider of solutions. We do not strive for the leading role; it is not something we want and I would not presume it was a healthy situation. However, we have a political weight that we cannot ignore and we must put this weight behind a solution and increase the legitimacy of the result. This is a prerequisite for our overarching goal of unifying Europe, to make Europe work again, to develop a European voice in the field of foreign policy to serve our own fundamental interests.

Steven ERLANGER

Thank you very much for that.