

# BOGDAN KLICH

Senator, Minority Leader of the Senat; Former Minister of Defense, Poland

## Ali ASLAN

Richard, you might believe Brexit will not happen, but I heard at least two people, Elisabeth and Steve, who might think this process is irreversible. I am very curious to see what the spectrum will be once we get to Michael Lothian, but Eastern Europe was mentioned, and that is why I am very pleased to welcome Polish senator and minority leader of the Polish Senate, also former Minister of Defence, Bogdan Klich.

Poland is an important country, of course, one of the most populous in the EU. It has been mentioned a few times, both in a positive and, let us be honest, also in a less favourable manner. That is why I am very curious to hear the view from Warsaw now.

## Bogdan KLICH

I am very glad to be here, and very glad also that we have Americans who believe in Europe. It is not only Europeans who believe in the future of the EU, but also Americans, meaning that there is a chance for a renewal of the good partnership between Europe and the US.

Secondly, I am not from Eastern Europe but from Central Europe; there is a difference between Central Europe, which joined NATO and the EU when Eastern Europe did not. There is also a huge difference concerning the relationship to values, the approach to values, such values that were in place at the beginning of the alliance in 1949 and at the beginning of the process of European integration. I mean democracy, the rule of law, civil liberties, the rights of minorities and the market economy. Central Europeans believe in those values, although there are governments that are Euro-sceptical and partially undermine those values, but Central Europeans are committed to this set of values – Euro-Atlantic values.

84% of people in my home country are in favour of the future of the EU, are satisfied with our membership of the EU, so please do not put society and the current government in Poland on the same level. This is the policy of the current governments in Hungary and Poland but not of Central Europeans; please remember that.

Regarding Europe, because that is what we are talking about, we are in a paradoxical situation in the EU, because on the one hand we are aware of deterioration in the political situation in our neighbourhood. I mean our southern and eastern neighbourhood. Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean are in crisis. Regarding the aggressive policy of the Russian Federation towards Ukraine, we did not expect that there would be a military invasion of Russian troops into one part of sovereign Ukraine, especially after 1994, when the Russian Federation together with Great-Britain and the US guaranteed the sovereignty and territorial integrity of that country, but it happened. This means that in Eastern Europe, and even more so in the Euro-Atlantic zone, the existing model of security – that was, once again, paradoxically introduced into the strategic documents of the alliance in November 2010 –, the cooperative model of security, was blown up by the aggression of the Russian Federation, because this model was based on the assumption that dialogue is much better than military confrontation and military confrontation was excluded from the vocabulary of our collaboration with Russia. However, confrontation exists, and after the illegal annexation of Ukraine and after having so many Russian troops in Donbass, there is no satisfactory solution concerning the future of Ukrainian sovereignty. Following the Russian Federation's not only assertive but aggressive use of power, and after it also decided to show its power in the Middle East and decided to get involved in the war in Syria and engage strongly in this conflict, we see a set of threats coming from Eastern Europe.

It is a similar situation in the southern neighbourhood of Europe, although after the Arab Spring we witnessed asymmetrical rather than conventional threats. However, after four years we have the unstable Mediterranean region,



we have failed states like Libya, we have the recovery of the authoritarian military regime in Egypt, and have only two stable countries, Morocco and Jordan, which are partners of the Euro-Atlantic community.

That is why, in this deteriorating environment, we have to do something with our European capabilities in the sphere of security and defence. It means that Europe should take more responsibility for its own security. We are aware that we can deal politically with a variety of crises in our neighbourhood, but we are not prepared to do the same using our military capabilities, because we do not have crucial capabilities that should be used in such situations. We need more planning capabilities, we need more operational capabilities, and we need more coordination between civilian and military aspects of missions and operations at the level of planning and at the level of conducting operations.

I would say that CSDP does not need new institutions right now, because we have sufficient tools that were incorporated into the Lisbon Treaty. Following 2009, we are aware that we have permanent structured cooperation that we can use, that we have the European Defence Agency that was introduced in that treaty, and that we have battle groups that were prepared but were not used even during the crisis in Mali, although one of the battle groups was on duty at the time. We have enough institutions but we do not have enough political will to do that.

There need to be expectations that European leaders will be able to send a significant political message to the rest of Europe, stating that Europe is able to significantly improve its capabilities regarding CSDP in the future. It does not mean that we need more Europe everywhere – we are used to this situation of more Europe – because we are in a different situation than 20 years ago, when we expected more Europe everywhere and were working on constitutional treaties. However, there are at least two areas where there is a need, a public expectation, of more Europe – external security and internal security. The citizens of the EU believe that more Europe means more integration in those two areas, and I do not want to say that it is possible to improve European capabilities concerning counter-terrorism without reviewing the treaties. It would probably be necessary to review the treaties and prepare a new treaty in this sphere, but we can do without changing our EU treaties in renewing our security capabilities outside. This means that, with the operational HQ, with the improvement of battle groups, with the improvement of the EU research policy – the study on which we were working on – and even with the new battle groups concept, the EU is ready to do that.

It is necessary to have the leadership, and I hope that, after the creation of the new coalition government in Germany, Germany will be together with France to lead this process. I hope that, after the change of government in my country, Poland will join this leadership, as we proposed in the second Weimar letter. I was one of the authors of that letter in 2010, proposing some of the solutions that are being incorporated right now.

#### **Ali ASLAN**

Thank you so much, Bogdan, for giving us a view from Poland, also reiterating that more than 80% of Polish citizens are in favour of the EU, perhaps in stark contrast with the current administration. Thank you also for reiterating the need for a common European defence policy, something that both Richard and Elisabeth have already alluded to. Richard, I am sure you are quite delighted to hear Bogdan say that Europe is not just ready but willing to take its own security in its own hands, no longer looking towards Washington and the US for its security.