

DEBATE

Ali Aslan, International TV Presenter and Journalist

Considering the time we have, I am going to ask the panel to take notes because I am going to combine the questions rather than go through them one by one. I am going to come to all of you and collect the questions and then throw it back for one last Q&A session with the audience.

Steven Erlanger, Chief Diplomatic Correspondent, Europe, for *The New York Times*

Thank you, Ali, and thank you to the panel, which has been very good by the way, but I do want to throw it more to the future. The war will eventually end, it will end in negotiations but there is already disagreement in the Alliance about how we treat Russia afterwards. Do we have European security against Russia? Do we have European security with Russia? Do we have European security with America, who are worried about China? The big question is, what happens to Russia after this war? That is frankly a much more interesting question. Will it be a new time of troubles? Will it disintegrate? What will that do? Mostly, I just want to get people to talk about how you look at Russia post-conflict in relation to European security and the kind of security guarantees you can provide Ukraine if, as Zaki Laïdi says, outside NATO. Personally, I do not think they exist but perhaps I am wrong.

Ali Aslan

Thank you, Steve, a question we would be happy to incorporate. What does security with Russia look like afterwards and what does Russia look like?

Jean-Michel Severino, President of Investisseurs & Partenaires, former Director General of the French Development Agency, former Vice President for Asia at the World Bank

Merci pour ce panel passionnant. Deux questions rapides. La première porte sur la remarque de M. Zaki Laïdi sur le réarmement européen : est-il vraiment crédible au-delà de l'émotion qu'on a aujourd'hui ? On voit bien que, OTAN ou pas OTAN, il n'y a aucun avenir dans notre relation avec la Russie sans une force militaire en Europe très puissante. Il y a beaucoup d'émotion mais cela va-t-il durer au vu de l'ampleur des budgets que nous avons jusque-là refusé de consacrer à ces sujets ? Ma deuxième question est la suivante : l'intégration de l'Ukraine dans l'Union européenne. Ce sujet n'a pas été mentionné, on l'a admis, nous savons tous quelle est la réalité de l'économie et des institutions ukrainiennes, nous nous sommes engagés dans une promesse politique dont on voit bien qu'elle est absolument incontournable mais est-elle réalisable ? Or, cette intégration fait partie d'une vision de moyen-long terme dans notre relation avec l'Est de l'Europe.

**Ali Aslan**

Thank you so much. I promise I will get everyone in.

Hervé Mariton, Mayor of Crest and Chairman of the Franco-British Council

Two quick comments and a question. There is unanimity in Europe in supporting Ukraine and this will be helped by the good qualification of events. I want to react to the fact that events have been qualified by one of the members of the panel as genocide, for example. Are there war crimes on the scene? Obviously, and this has to be condemned. Is there humanitarian crime? This can be discussed. Is there genocide? I do not believe that qualifying events this way helps support European unanimity in this situation. This is my first point.

The second comment is you alluded to Solzhenitsyn, and he never denied the existence of Ukraine as an independent state. He just said that this would probably be a difficult period, that there might be war and that he would oppose the participation of his sons in the war. That is precisely what he wrote. The question is, particularly from a French point of view but it goes beyond, as the panel emphasized, the war has made the penny drop about NATO. For example, for the French, NATO was often denied and French politicians talking about defense in Europe very seldom spoke about NATO, as if France did not actually belong to NATO. Now the penny has dropped, and I believe this is a good thing.

As to Europe, and Hubert Védrine emphasized that the panel is supposed to be about the future, I want to ask the panel how they value the present situation, for example, when you have got a Franco German cooperation on FCAS? Just around the same time an important announcement is made on this, you have the Italian-British-Japanese cooperation on a competitor to FCAS, for example. Europe seems to be united at present, but if we look to the future, the divisions in Europe on industrial and other issues regarding security seem to be just as strong as ever.

Fathallah Oualalou, Senior Fellow at the Policy Center for the New South (PCNS), former Minister of Economy and Finance of the Kingdom of Morocco

Je voudrais poser une question à Hubert Védrine. Je crois que la Russie, qui a agressé l'Ukraine, va sortir affaiblie de cette guerre. Même si elle est européenne de culture, il y aura une rupture de confiance entre l'Europe et la Russie, laquelle se déploiera de plus en plus vers l'Asie, notamment l'Inde et la Chine. Cela ne représente-t-il pas une opportunité pour l'Europe ? D'une part, c'est une opportunité de s'intégrer, de se renforcer, d'avoir une politique stratégique commune, etc. D'autre part, c'est l'occasion de s'intéresser à son autre géographie, au Sud, et de se réconcilier avec le monde arabe et avec l'Afrique, ce monde qu'elle va même pouvoir accompagner dans la gestion de toutes ses transitions, énergétiques entre autres. Elle a intérêt à ce que le problème de développement et de la Méditerranée soit résolu.

Ali Aslan

Thank you so much. I think the gentleman just right next to you had a question. Can I see by show of hands who am I missing? Right here on the first row and then the young gentleman. Why do you not just go ahead while she is getting the microphone.

**Randy Kotti, Engineer of the Corps des mines**

I think it is quite telling to see that only French speakers are talking about European defense and independence. It is quite disheartening to see, for example, Germany is pouring billions of dollars into American fighter jets, although other opportunities are available in Europe, not just mentioning the Rafales. In fact, is it just that we listened too much to De Gaulle and the French people dream of European independence, or does it translate into English as well? That is probably a question for the foreign speakers on the panel.

Dania Koleilat Khatib, Co-Founder and President of the Research Center for Cooperation and Peace Building (RCCP)

I have a comment more than a question and I want to make an analogy between Germany and Russia. Following World War I when Germany was humiliated and plunged into hyperinflation, this led to the rise of a belligerent figure like Hitler. After World War II when Germany was treated with respect and we had the Marshall Plan, we had a peaceful and prosperous Germany. This is a great panel, but I do not see the Russian perspective. I speak to Russians a lot and they have a lot of grievances. If you talk to a Russian, they will tell you that Gorbachev was promised the moon and that if he dissolved the Soviet Union we would have prosperity, but this was all sweet lies. What I am saying is that I hope Ukraine will win but I also hope that, after that, and I go back to Steven's question, Russia will be treated with respect and humility. That is just so we do not have Putin 2.0 because a defeat for Russia does not mean it is going to become more peaceful.

Ali Aslan

Unless I have overlooked someone, I believe we have got everyone. Everyone will get their share, being mindful of the time, of course. Peter, why not kick it off and then we will get everyone in here for one last round.

Peter Beyer, member of the German Bundestag, former Coordinator of Transatlantic Cooperation of the Federal Government

Thanks for that really great set of questions and comments. I am trying to pick some of them. The first and last questions actually referred to how to deal with Russia once the war is over and the future of our relations with a huge country and many millions of Russians. Russia is a proud nation with a lot of history and tradition, and we had good relationships before. The fact is that the change through trade approach we tried with hands reached out, did not work out. Putin's Russia betrayed the world, and they were free riding on that. Yes, there were stupid mistakes and those were alluded to earlier, that especially in Germany, we increased our dependency, especially when it comes to Russian oil and gas. Obviously, there needs to be a future relationship with Russia, the country, and its people in particular, cannot be ignored and we need to have something, and I hate to use this term but for lack of a better one, we need something like an off-ramp. I am not talking with regard to Vladimir Putin but for the nation, the country, the people of Russia, which I have respect for.

However, it is way too early and now I will try to connect that first question with the last one. This is absolutely not the time to talk about respectful treatment of Russia, they are the

aggressors. At the beginning of the war, we talked about it being Putin's war but, as was said on the panel earlier, it is not only Putin's war, he gets a lot of support, and it is Russia against Ukraine and the rest of the world basically. I totally disagree with giving Russia any representative or platform at this conference or any other at this point to lobby for themselves. First, they have to stop this war and then we can talk about respectful treatment and an off-ramp but above all else, stop the war and only then is it the time to do that.

There was also a question or comment whether rearmament of Europe would be realistic taking into account the defense investment pledge that means, by 2024, NATO member states should increase their defense budgets to 2% of GDP at least. Being a German parliamentarian, there were a lot of things we did not do in the past, and especially during the term of President Donald Trump we were heavily criticized for not doing enough. On the merits he was right, but the style was not really good. We have increased our defense budget over the past several years enormously, by at least 50% and we are stepping up to that. We are fully committed to reaching that 2% goal and to keep it. The German Chancellor is not from my party, but during his speech on February 27, which I mentioned earlier, he said very clearly that from now on Germany would spend 2% of its GDP on defense each and every year. From my perspective and from a German perspective, let there be no doubt that we will live up to the commitments we have made for our own security interests but also as a commitment to our partners within NATO, as a reliable partner.

Ali Aslan

It is very clear from your words that this goes beyond the party in power or in opposition, this is a unified German position and stance, and stern and frank words about Russia there.

Everybody is going to chime in before we wrap up. Bogdan Klich, go ahead with some of the questions.

Bogdan Klich, Senator in the Polish Parliament, Chairman of the Foreign and EU Affairs Committee in the Polish Senate

Steve, frankly, there was a great wisdom after World War II, that can be focused on one sentence beginning with keeping the Americans in. I would say that because we are witnessing right now the first full-scale war in Europe since 1949, we should refer to this wording. My very short answer to your question would be to keep the Americans in, Russians down and to make the European Union stronger. Let us think in those categories.

Secondly, when you mentioned the necessity of reinforcing the European pillar within NATO, I keep in mind the famous concept of European Security and Defense Identity, ESDI. According to my understanding of history, that is completely outdated because after ESDI was put aside there was a great start to European security and defense policy. Once again it began in 1998 after the meeting between Tony Blair and Jacques Chirac. Now, we have at our disposal within the European Union a common security and defense policy with plenty of instruments, several tools that can be used in a variety of situations and a variety of options. The problem is still with funding those tools and, from time to time, with the lack of political will to use them. If we use everything that was included in the Lisbon Treaty, all our achievements after 2017, the European Defense Fund, Mechanism CARD, other tools...

Zaki Laïdi, Personal Advisor to the High Representative and Vice President of the Commission EEAS

EDA.

Bogdan Klich

...we will be able to be much more effective as the European Union than by concentrating on reinforcing the European pillar within NATO. I do not want to undermine the necessity of better involvement of European partners within NATO, I am in favor of reinforcing the CSDP within the European Union and better collaboration between NATO and the European Union in the sense of both declarations from 2016 and 2018, which created a new framework for the cooperation between those two organizations.

As for the genocide, we have discussed in Europe whether or not what we are witnessing in Ukraine is genocide. I am convinced that theoretically and practically in several places in Ukraine we are seeing genocide and when you go to Borodianka, for example, in this small city you can see five buildings, three of which were hit because they were the pieces that were easier to destroy while those that were built of brick were not hit. Therefore, the first three buildings were hit because it was easier to murder more people inside. Is that genocide or not? Is it only a war crime or not? It is a complex extermination of the nation, it is an ideology of extermination of the nation, theoretically and practically and let us not forget that. However, if there are controversies about that, there is one crime that is not assessed and that should be tried by the Special Tribunal, and this is the crime of aggression. That is why, together with my colleagues from various parliaments, the chiefs of Foreign Affairs and European Union committees, we call on European governments to create a Special Tribunal to assess the crime of aggression by Vladimir Putin and his inner circle.

Ali Aslan

Thank you so much. Hubert Védrine, some of the questions were addressed to you directly and of course, I am going to come to you, President, as well, as I will to Zaki, being mindful of the time.

Hubert Védrine, Founder of Hubert Védrine Conseil, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of France

Je vais réagir très rapidement à la première et à la dernière question me concernant. Sur la première question, celle de l'avenir contre ou avec la Russie, je dirais que l'esprit de défense ayant été réveillé en Europe dans le cadre de l'OTAN par Poutine, l'avenir sera contre la Russie. Il viendra peut-être un moment, dans un certain temps, où il faudra repenser la sécurité avec la Russie comme voisin. J'espère qu'à ce moment-là, l'Occident réussira à surmonter son manichéisme, fondamental en Occident, pour avoir la même audace, la même intelligence, la même efficacité stratégique que les grands dirigeants américains de l'époque de la guerre froide, avant l'époque du triomphalisme. Ce n'est toutefois pas pour maintenant. En résumé, je réponds d'abord contre puis avec ; ce n'est pas ce que je souhaite mais ce que j'analyse. En matière de pilier européen, selon l'expression employée par Zaki, l'opportunité a reculé, elle n'est pas pour maintenant, la question se reposera après, quand les Européens se poseront la

question de la force et de la durabilité de l'engagement américain. Voilà pour la première question, il faut y travailler, il y a des éléments, des procédures, des outils – je parle mentalement – mais on voit bien quelle est l'opinion européenne aujourd'hui, cette table ronde le montre.

Sur la question de M. Oualalou qui portait sur l'opportunité de l'Europe de s'intéresser au Sud, selon l'ancien langage. Je le souhaite énormément mais ne le sens pas du tout. Les Européens ne sont pas du tout dans cette phase, ils sont réoccidentalisés à l'ancienne, à cause des décisions aberrantes de Poutine. Comme ils sont redevenus manichéens, ils ne peuvent même pas imaginer une politique avec les nouveaux non-alignés, ces 40 pays qui représentent 60 % de l'humanité et qui n'ont pas condamné la Russie alors que l'agression est évidente. Il le faudrait mais les Européens ne vont pas réagir comme ça, ils vont essayer d'harceler les non-alignés de reproches moraux, juridiques, politiques. Je ne crois pas que l'Europe d'aujourd'hui, au sein de laquelle il y aura une bataille d'influences demain entre Pologne, Ukraine, France, Allemagne, etc., soit capable de penser cette politique. Ce sera une nouvelle occasion stratégique manquée, ce que je regrette, mais c'est ainsi que je le vois en dépit des efforts énormes de beaucoup d'Européens.

Ali Aslan

President Elbegdorj, your final remarks and then, Zaki, you are going to get the final word.

Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj, former President of Mongolia

Thank you very much. Since the start of this war millions of Russian people have actually protested against it and Putin and the Russian people are two different things. Also, with the start of this war, Putin caused Russia great losses in terms of the economy and the military, and most important, a loss of confidence in Russia and that is a very bad thing. One thing I would like to say is that Russian mobilization is now focused disproportionately on ethnic minorities in Russia to fight the war, most of them originally Mongol dissidents, Buryats, Kalmyks and others. Putin is killing Ukrainians in Ukraine but in Russia, Putin is killing ethnic minorities and using them as cannon fodder, and we have to pay attention to this because it is a very important issue. Also, on the issue of mobilization, we opened our border to ethnic minorities, to people from Russia coming to Mongolia because we have a big border with Russia, and we have received thousands of people from there. I think if there is one less man against Ukraine, that is also a great contribution to peace in Russia. After this war, there will be big developments and changes in Russia and I think that is still happening in a mindset of people not only outside of Russia but also inside, to be part of Russia or how to deal with the consequences of war.

Ali Aslan

That is indeed the very important question Steve alluded to, not only what the future of the European Union will look like but what the future of Russia will look like once this war is over.

Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj

On the last point on the European Union, I think the European Union is the greatest project we have for humanity. I think after the war it will be a test for the European Union and it will be more

united and stronger, and other parts of the world should follow suit. For example, in Asia, we have 48 United Nations members, but we do not have the sort of establishment that exists in Europe. Myself and other people are now contemplating the idea of a Council of Asia, to find a kind of consolidation. In Europe, you have had 50 years of consolidation and it will be stronger.

Ali Aslan

Europe will be stronger even from an outside perspective, something I am sure you would attest to, Zaki Laïdi.

Zaki Laïdi

I did my first presentation in English, but I will give my answers in French for the sake of Francophonie.

L'avenir de la Russie dépend d'abord de la Russie. Fondamentalement, quel est le problème de la Russie ? C'est le renoncement à son identité impériale au profit d'une identité plus nationale. Je vous invite à lire un article remarquable écrit il y a plus de 20 ans par un Russe, Alexandre Lebed, dans lequel il a clairement posé les termes de l'avenir de la Russie entre une identité nationale déterminée par les frontières de la Fédération russe et une identité impériale. Tant que la Russie ne fera pas ce travail de rupture, elle aura des problèmes et nous aurons des problèmes avec elle. On va me dire que c'est très difficile. Oui, c'est très difficile. Je discute avec Borrell tous les jours de ces questions et il me dit : « Tu sais, pour l'Espagne, la perte de Cuba a été une terrible tragédie. La perte de l'Algérie a été pour la France une tragédie. Mais, l'Espagne comme la France s'en sont sorties en renonçant à leur projet impérial. » Il faudra bien qu'un jour la Russie fasse cet effort qu'elle n'a pas réussi à faire, probablement à cause de la nature de son régime. Il n'est pas question que de l'Ukraine, il s'agit également de l'Asie centrale, où nous voyons très clairement la volonté de sortir de l'orbite russe, peut-être pour rentrer dans l'orbite chinoise. Il s'agit donc de passer d'une identité impériale à une identité nationale.

Concernant la défense européenne à présent. Je reviens de Washington où, tous les ans, nous avons un dialogue entre l'Union européenne et les États-Unis sur la Chine au plus haut niveau américain. Chaque année, les Américains nous disent que nous devons consentir un effort militaire beaucoup plus important et être beaucoup plus autonomes car eux ont d'autres priorités. Ce n'est pas être contre l'OTAN ou contre les États-Unis, avec qui nous partageons fondamentalement les mêmes valeurs, que de dire que, qu'on le veuille ou non, l'Europe devra être la garante de sa sécurité. Elle le sera avec le soutien des États-Unis, et heureusement, puisqu'aujourd'hui, le chef d'État-major français le dit : s'il devait y avoir une guerre de haute intensité, l'armée française, qui est la plus puissante d'Europe, ne tiendrait pas plus de 10 jours. Le soutien américain est essentiel. Cependant, quand je parle d'autonomie ou de responsabilité stratégique, j'ai en tête, et je ne suis pas le seul, qu'il faut que nous apprenions à penser par nous-mêmes notre propre avenir et notre propre sécurité, pas parce que nous sommes contre les États-Unis mais parce que personne ne le fera à notre place.

Sur le Sud, et là je ne suis pas tout à fait d'accord avec Hubert, dans le sens que, depuis le début de la crise en Ukraine, il y a eu en Afrique un formidable travail de désinformation russe destiné à rendre l'Europe responsable de la crise alimentaire. Qu'avons-nous fait ? Le



représentant a envoyé une lettre aux 52 ministres africains des Affaires étrangères dans laquelle il a expliqué que les céréales n'étaient absolument pas couvertes par les sanctions et que les pays pouvaient s'adresser à nous pour les problèmes d'*overcompliance* qui se posent car nous avons ouvert une hotline pour régler un certain nombre de problèmes. Nous ne pouvons pas accepter l'idée qu'un ministre africain dise à Borrell que les sanctions sont responsables de la crise alimentaire puis qu'il réponde « Poutine » quand on lui demande qui lui a dit ça.

Ali Aslan

Thank you so much. Ladies and gentlemen, the future of Europe and European security after Ukraine, I think I speak for all when I say that this is a subject matter that we could sit here until 8pm and still not have covered all the aspects. However, I think you will agree that this panel managed very splendidly to give us a very content-rich debate, which I am sure will also be used with the discussion with Foreign Minister Kuleba later today. The 8am session on any day is never an easy task, so please join me in thanking this wonderful panel.