

BOGDAN KLICH

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

Ali Aslan, International TV Presenter and Journalist

We are here today to discuss the future of the European Union and European security after the war in Ukraine. Let us get a snapshot because we are still not quite there yet. Bogdan Klich, Poland is a country that has been heavily impacted by this war and I know your country has taken in a large influx of Ukrainian refugees. Poland has also been warning about Russia, and Vladimir Putin in particular, for many years, which is something that maybe your European partners did not take to heart. Let us get a quick snapshot of the view from Warsaw as well before we dive into what this war actually means for the future of the EU.

Bogdan Klich

I do not want to exaggerate but last year, here during this conference, we were also talking about Russian threats, and I warned not only about militarization of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation but also of Vladimir Putin's plans to reintegrate as big part of the Soviet Union, including Ukraine, as possible. By the way, I also mentioned the soft annexation of Belarus, which at that time was almost completed. Frankly, probably in November or December nobody expected a full scale Russian aggression. The CIA knew from the beginning of November and shared this information with partners in Europe about a full-scale war planned by Vladimir Putin, but instead we believed that there would be an operation limited to the southern and eastern parts of Ukraine, without the operational goal that is so visible right now. The operational goal of Vladimir Putin's war against Ukraine is to destroy Ukraine's statehood and exterminate its inhabitants. I underline that because we are not only observing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine, not just in Bucha, Irpin, Hostomel, Mariupol and elsewhere, but everywhere. We also see examples of genocide and either Putin himself or his collaborators have expressed that very clearly.

There are also two more operational goals that are important not only for Ukraine but also for the European and Atlantic communities, I would say the destabilization of the European Union and the paralysis of NATO. They were expressed just before the war began in Ukraine, in the famous ultimatum from President Putin to the West. If you ask about the Polish perspective, this is a war that is not only about the Ukrainian nation and statehood, but also the European Union and Atlantic community as a whole. That is why we are satisfied with three important new factors. The first one is the return of the United States to Europe, which President Biden mentioned during his campaign, and which he has done at least since June 2021, when he paid his first visit to Europe taking part in three summits, the G7 and NATO Summits, but also the European Council, and there are consequences from that. The second important consequence



of this war is the political reintegration of the Alliance. NATO was split very deeply during Donald Trump's presidency and while there was military unity because of the NATO military commanders, there was a political split and lack of political unity. After the beginning of the Russian war, NATO presented itself as an integrated entity. Third, it is the impressive reaction of the European Union. Frankly speaking, as the Chair of the Foreign Affairs and European Union Committee of the Polish Senate, I have never seen before such speed and acceleration of the legislative process concerning external threats, mainly sanctions against Russia. In just two weeks from being started by the European Commission to the final decision of the European Union Council, the main acts were adopted, and a large amount of money was allocated from the European Peace Facility to support Ukraine, that is EUR 3.1 billion, just for military expenses. I did not mention the more than EUR 13 billion for macroeconomic aid and at least EUR 18 billion that has been designated for next year.

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

EPF is more than that now, it is around EUR 4.6 billion.

Ali Aslan

Figures aside, the point you are making is quite clear. Europe has acted uncharacteristically for us, swiftly and getting around the red tape that is often involved in decision-making in Brussels and has acted with decision and resolve here. Thank you so much, Bogdan Klich, I will of course come back to you as this discussion evolves.