

PETER BEYER

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Ali Aslan, International TV Presenter and Journalist

We have forty minutes left and we will have one quick round here with a plea for relatively short answers because I do want to get to the audience. Peter Beyer, I think helping Ukraine is key, winter is coming, winter is here even if it does not feel like it in Abu Dhabi but certainly in Berlin. We have already talked about the failures on the part of some European governments to diversify their energy. Germany now has a conundrum and the question I want to ask you is, the support for Ukraine on the part of the German people is high if you look at the polls. However, as living costs are rising and the immediate impacts are felt by the average person, do you fear that the support for this war, or rather the Ukrainian people, is going to decline in Germany? That is going to be a litmus test here.

Peter Beyer

Yeah, it is a very good question and certainly one of the things any government, not just the one in Germany, has to take into consideration when forming their policies and the necessary political decisions. As you quite rightly say, the support for Ukraine in this war with regard to financial and military aid is very high in Germany. Actually, it is always wise for politicians to really listen and have all their senses open to the people they represent. To give you a little example of the very early weeks of that war when after the invasion on February 24, three days later the German Chancellor delivered a fantastic speech with everything in it with regard to the so-called *Zeitenwende*, completely changing politics in Germany. I alluded in my introductory remarks to the history that we just do not deliver weapons into war zones and German people said we do not like weapons, we are more pacifists, but we think it would be the right thing to do. I think that the German people, the society understands much better what needs to be done, maybe with a gut feeling not just with intellectual reflection. Support is high but there is certainly that concern. We not only have energy prices shooting through the roof and, I have to say, it is only just the beginning, next winter, by the end of next year, will be much more expensive. We have an inflation rate in double-digits, which is around 10% in Germany and many other things. Taken together, this is really a challenge for any government, be it on a Federal or more regional or local level, to hold the side together. However, they have the responsibility to communicate and explain to constituents why it is necessary.

Of all the good reasons I heard from the panel, it is not just about Ukraine, which would be cause enough to support it, but the Ukrainians are defending us here. Let us be very clear, Vladimir Putin, Russia, will not stop at the border of Ukraine as a sovereign state. I have not yet heard the Republic of Moldova and the Baltic states being mentioned but they are really



threatened. Since this year, they have become really frightened of what is happening and they have suffered a lot under Russian repression. It is very concrete and very clear, and that is the responsibility of everyone who has been elected to these top positions, to lead their states and hold society together in their own territory and also beyond their borders within the European Union. Not on this panel here, but there is so much talk that the European Union is over, whether it has a future, etc. Why not give the good examples of the European Union? It is a guarantor of peace, stability, and prosperity in the so-called old continent, it is very successful, and it has proved to be in this very situation, as the Personal Advisor to the High Rep just said. That is not just wishful thinking, it is reality but of course it is only the beginning. We have to think about what comes after the war, what our idea and vision is for the next 30 or 50 years of the European Union. Our population is decreasing but we are also an economic powerhouse and there are a lot of opportunities and options, we just have to look around to reinforce old alliances and pursue paths of new alliances, be it in the Indo-Pacific, Latin America or elsewhere.

Ali Aslan

The rethinking part is obviously an important one, not just in Germany but Europe in general. It will be interesting to see, as you pointed out Peter Beyer, whether Germany can shed its pacifist attitudes, which are obviously in place for good reasons post-1945. However, these are different times now, which may require a different attitude.