

ZAKI LAÏDI

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

Terry Martin, Journalist, TV news anchor

So, Zaki Laïdi, the floor is yours.

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

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be here once again with virtually the same panelists, to discuss the same topic. I would like to introduce a kind of dynamic interpretation. In a nutshell, I would tend to say that nothing has changed since last year but virtually everything could change. Nothing has changed because we are confronted and Ukraine is confronted by a violent Russian aggression, which unfortunately will enter its third year next February, which is probably longer than we all expected. The second point, which Bogdan mentioned, is European support is stronger and stronger than ever, and this point should be stressed. All in all, we have committed – not talking about disbursements, which are lower – around EUR 80 billion for Ukraine through different mechanisms, which I will not detail. For the first time, our commitments are higher than the Americans and I would like to emphasize that because I have had many discussions with the Kiel Institute, who constantly insists that the American commitment was much higher than the European one. At the end of the day, they realized that our commitments were extremely significant and they actually corrected the figures and concluded that the European commitments were higher. Of course, I am not comparing the United States with Europe because we are absolutely on the same line, but it is important to say that we are at the forefront. This idea matters if some unfortunate changes take place in the United States in the near future.

The other achievement is that the level of consensus among Europeans is still very strong, with of course some caveats, but by and large it is extremely strong. That is because all European states see in Ukraine a challenge to their security. In the event of an unfortunate success for Russia, which I cannot imagine, it would be seen as a huge blow to our security. Even European countries that have had a southern orientation are now changing their views and pivoting towards Central Europe, which is a huge change that will take place in the next two decades. Unfortunately, Russia is and will remain a security threat to Europe. This view is now shared massively by the Europeans.

There have been two main achievements on the European side that have to be mentioned and be reaffirmed. We succeeded in putting an end to our energy dependency vis-à-vis Russia, which is a huge achievement. Second, we are probably now on the verge of transferring frozen Russian assets to Ukraine and I hope that we will be able to give them the 300 billions of assets that had been frozen.

In a sense, everything is fine but – we have to confess, even from my personal perspective – the military situation is difficult and much more difficult than was expected compared, for example, to last year. The cost incurred by Russia is absolutely huge and by Western or



European standards they are unbearable. If you see the last months, in October, the casualties on the Russian side were absolutely huge, so they are losing. What is unacceptable by European standards, is perfectly acceptable by Russian ones and we have to take this into account and in this regard you have to read the formidable interview piece written by the Ukraine Chief of Staff, General Zaluzhny in *The Economist*, which is not extraordinarily optimistic about the evolution of the situation. In fact, Putin is unfortunately following what Stalin said in the past, when he said that to a certain extent quantity becomes a source of quality, but that is the way Russia behaves. People are killed *en masse* but they are killed and new waves of soldiers arrive, and the problem is that the Ukrainians cannot work on the same footing so there is an imbalance.

I will stop there and just say that it is going to be a long war, probably much longer than expected and there is no doubt that a kind of fatigue could appear in Europe but also in the United States, where the news are not terribly good. That will put the Europeans in the position of responsibility. If you allow me, I will come back later to the interaction, which seems to me extremely important, between what is going on in Ukraine and what is going on in the Middle East.

Terry Martin

Thank you very much. It is important to point out that the European support has been extraordinary, as well as US support, and I think that Ukraine has also emphasized that. I highly recommend the interview in *The Economist* you mentioned, if any of you are interested in reading further on this topic. The term that is used quite a bit in that interview is “stalemate”, and I was rather surprised to hear the Chief of Staff openly referring to that. We will hope to come back to the points you were making.