

# NORBERT RÖTTGEN

Member of the Deutscher Bundestag and member of the Foreign Affairs Committee

## **Norbert Röttgen, member of the Deutscher Bundestag and member of the Foreign Affairs Committee**

Thank you for the invitation, it is a pleasure and honor for me. Let me start by reiterating the most important thing in my view that has not changed, which is the meaning of Russia's war against Ukraine. The meaning is that the outcome of this war will determine the fate of Europe for decades to come because this war is about whether the return of war in Europe as a land war will be accepted and rewarded as a political instrument in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. If that were to happen, if war turns out to be a political success, war will remain in Europe and, of course, the world will draw a lesson from the success of war as a political instrument. In a way, the world is already learning because the geopolitical struggle between China and the United States functions as a protective umbrella for regional actors to just apply war as a political instrument, as we have seen in the Southern Caucasus and that we are now seeing in the Middle East. Under this umbrella, war is coming back in regional conflicts.

The consequence for Europeans, and I would say for the world, is that it is a definition of victory. Victory means that there has to be a victory over war as a political instrument. It is really fateful, crucial and decisive that we beat war as an instrument. This understanding of the historic dimension of this war has unified, I could even say reunified, the West. It has injected a historic sense again and has contributed to add members to NATO. This has really constituted a new West in response to the return of war in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and at least in Europe.

I slightly disagree. I think we have seen that in the situation of a European land war, the US – against all its intentions which were to pivot to Asia – has again been drawn back to Europe and is acting as the number one security power in Europe. The United States of America is the European security power and we could say that we are lucky to say this but we should also say it is embarrassing for Europe. However, the war in the Middle East is possibly also changing the role of the United States, not only by distracting public attention from Ukraine, which is good for Vladimir Putin. There is also mounting pressure on the President from the Republican party and influential elements, for example now the Speaker of the House, not only to reduce support to Ukraine and to transfer the financial and military support of the United States to the Middle East. There are increasing doubts whether the United States will continue in this role as number one security provider for Europe.

This is only one reason we are not going to see an end to this war until the presidential elections. My view is that, irrespective of this event, Vladimir Putin is neither willing nor able to withdraw from Ukraine. I think he has gone beyond this point and he will and has to stay in because this war, which started as a war to re-establish a Russian empire in Europe, has now become a war about his personal political survival, at least as Russian President and perhaps even personal survival. Therefore, he is unable to withdraw even if he wanted too and at least he will wait until the presidential election and if Trump is re-elected we will see how strong the



Europeans are. I doubt that we have become the number one security supplier, I do not mean commitments but supply and delivery and there, of course, America is far ahead of the Europeans. If Trump is re-elected and not only reduces military support but perhaps strikes a deal with Putin and starts an economic war with China, then we will see where Europe is. This cannot be excluded as at least a possibility, so the Europeans should start to prepare for that.

After more than one and a half years of this war my lesson is that we really have to wake up to recognize this war as a European war. The demand and the necessity for Europe to provide security for itself has become ever more urgent, we have to prepare. The clock is ticking and, if we are unprepared for the events we cannot exclude but can clearly foresee, we will wake up in a disastrous situation and will then contribute to the re-establishment of war as a political instrument even in Europe.

**Terry Martin, Journalist, TV news anchor**

Thank you very much. The point about a victory for Putin would be a victory for the notion of war as a political instrument helps define a bit what success would look like in ending this war.