

## SPEAKERS DEBATE

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

I have been told that we cannot get a connection with Hubert Védrine and so I am afraid we will have to proceed without his input. If you can hear me, we hope to see you maybe next time. We will proceed with the panel we have and we already have a lot on the table, we have already explored quite a bit of important territory for thinking about the trajectory of the Ukraine war. While we cannot talk about how it will end, we can talk about how we might *want* it to end, and how of course Ukraine wants it to end, and the principle factors that will determine the trajectory as we move along. The commitment from the European Union, other European players, as well as players abroad such as the United States is absolutely critical within the context of NATO.

I want to get the conversation going and then I am going to bring in some input from the floor as soon as we can. First, I want to put a question to Elbegdorj Tskahiagiyn because you look at this from outside the European Union, Mongolia has a special geographical and political location in this discussion. I want to ask you first, not about the future, but where we are right now regarding the West and this war. The West's leaders failed to anticipate and prevent this war, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. How much has that in itself damaged the West and its standing in the world?

### **Tsakhiagiyn Elbegdorj, former President of Mongolia**

I do not think this war is between the developed West and the Global South, I think it is actually the long-fought war between autocracy and democracy.

### **Terry Martin**

That is actually a pretty popular view.

### **Tsakhiagiyn Elbegdorj**

When I was in office, I worked very closely with Putin and I really regret that he has started this war. I think one of the many reasons is that if a free, democratic Ukraine integrated with Europe became more successful it would be a bad example for his rule in Russia and that is why Putin started this war, as a punishment. Since 1990, my country has been the only democracy encircled by Russia and China and surviving for 33 years. It means that there is only one country between us, a free and democratic Ukraine and a free and democratic Mongolia. In those terms, I think this war has global implications and if we lose, meaning the free world loses Ukraine, those autocrats will be encouraged. If Ukraine and the free world prevail, then I think those autocrats will be discouraged, even in Russia, Asia, Latin America and Africa, and because of that this war has really big global implications. Of course, this war has regional implications for Europe, Ukraine is a gate to Europe. I think Europe as a regional structure and continent does not want to keep their enemy inside their gates but outside and Ukraine is also fighting for that.



Since the start of this war, in fact the world community has been very supportive of the Ukrainian cause and has also blamed the Russian aggression. We all know that at the United Nations, 141 nations actually blamed the Russian aggression and only five countries, including Russia, supported it. I think this support is still solid but there are some cracks and because of that Ukraine, as I said at the beginning, has a brilliant diplomacy and they have to do more of that. I also have one idea for Ukraine, which is that it should be more engaging and less reactionary.

**Terry Martin**

More engaging in what sense?

**Tsakhiagiyn Elbegdorj**

They should be more engaged with countries all over the world, they have to push for new diplomacy. Yesterday, we heard their Foreign Minister and I think there were brilliant questions and he gave really good answers, and Ukrainians feel that something is changing there and even in Europe there are some countries. Because of that, I think that Ukraine needs to engage more and it should also be more graceful and thankful to the world community, including the Global South.

**Terry Martin**

Thank you. If you have any questions start thinking about raising your hands. I am just going to put our critical question, basically our headline question to the panel before that. That is the West, which we even defined at the beginning: what about how this war, in the way it is being prosecuted and in the support Ukraine has been getting from Europe, the US and the rest of the world, is affecting the West's status?

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

I have to disagree with the way you are framing the debate and respectfully disagree with our Mongolian friend, for the following reason. I think it would be a terrible mistake to frame the conflict in Ukraine in terms of the Western world against the rest of the world. It is a terrible mistake. I am very proud to work with the High Representative, and he is doing his best not to frame the problem in those terms because the crux of the matter is the respect for the territorial integrity of an independent state, whose independence has been recognized by the United Nations and by a large number of major powers, including Russia. If you start saying that only democratic states are liable for that, it is a terrible mistake. All attempts that aim to put the West on one side and the rest of the world on the other, are doomed to failure and this is one of the worst mistakes. I would never, ever talk in terms of the West against the rest, that is the way that some people would like to see us framing the problem. I am surprised because you are constantly talking about the West.

**Terry Martin**

It is in the title, I did not make it up.

**Zaki Laïdi**

Sorry, on reference to Europe, I am introducing a sort of debate. I am talking about Europe politically speaking because in a sense I am a political actor. The less we frame the problem in terms of the West against the rest the more we gain support because when you are in front of countries from the Global South I can tell you the objections they make about Ukraine and



they are independent from the nature of their government. We talk to hundreds of governments all over the world, democratic, non-democratic, leftist and non-leftist, and they virtually have the same view.

### **Terry Martin**

I am sure they do. This is an important debate and important points you are bringing up with the whole question about the Global South and how it perceives what is going on. I also take your point on the West, and whether or not it is a useful term. I am not really one to say that it is a wonderfully useful term. But I think it is also important to point out that we are not necessarily talking about a binary opposition here, “the West and the rest”. Rather, as I defined the West at the beginning for the purpose of our conversation, a group of mainly liberal democracies who hold principles of a rules-based international order, which includes territorial integrity as sacrosanct.

Anyway, there is that part, and we can define it in terms of autocracy and democracy, that kind of conflict. However, I think the point we are trying to look at here is that there’s whatever you want to call those countries represented by Ukraine and those that support it, whatever term you want to use – “Ukraine’s side”, to use a neutral term; then there is whatever Russia represents, which Norbert Röttgen described in these terms as a threat - the notion of using war as a political instrument - *that* idea - coming into conflict. Just to make sure that we are not really setting up a false dichotomy here with “the West and the rest” in our discussion.

We have 27 minutes left and I do want to get input from the audience and I hope perhaps they will direct some questions to you. Before we do that, Bogdan Klich has indicated his wish to intervene.

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

I wanted to underline that in my understanding of this conflict and the Hamas aggression against Israel, we can and should talk about the West because we are united not only by our similar interest but because we are a community of values. Those values are the basis of our political systems, they are in the Washington Treaty preamble, the Lisbon Treaty Article 2, so they express the unity of our community. That is why this war of Russia against Ukraine is also a war against the West. We were threatened by the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, on the eve of the second aggression when he presented an ultimatum to NATO. Let us not forget that because, in fact, it was an attempt to reverse the recent history of 20 years.

Second, we should not separate the involvement of the United States from the European partners because the basis for this coherent reaction by the West after February 24, 2022, was the meeting between President Biden and European partners in June 2021. He visited Europe for the first time with the message that “America is back”, and let us say it was the reconstruction of the cohesion of NATO, the role of the United States in Europe as a major provider of security to European partners, and cooperation between the European Union and the United States that was not previously at this level. In June 2021, the United States recognized the European Union as an indispensable partner, not only on security issues. Those factors should be taken into consideration because they were undermined by President Putin’s aggression against Ukraine.

Very briefly, I want to say that Ukrainians are also dying for Western democratic, liberal values. In 2013, they decided that they belonged to this community of values and it was the beginning of their huge problems with the Russian Federation. We should not forget that the Ukraine is also fighting for the set of democratic values.