

DEBATE

Terry Martin, Journalist, TV news anchor

Thank you very much. I want to bring in Norbert with a question. We are going to collect three questions and then move from there.

Friedbert Pflüger, Director of the European Cluster for Climate, Energy and Resource Security (EUCERS) at the university of Bonn, Founding Partner of Strategic Minds Company GmbH

My name is Friedbert Pflüger, I am German, I have been a colleague of Norbert Röttgen in the German Bundestag for 20 years and first, I would say to Bogdan that he was very modest. Not only is Poland back, but he is back, he was re-elected by 71%, which is a wonderful victory we should mention.

Bogdan, I want to address what you just said. You said NATO has been strengthened by this war, there is new unity, the US is back stronger than ever in Europe and Europe has lived up to that challenge. However, if I hear the undertones in this discussion, I think we have to put some question marks in and I would like to be the devil's advocate and paint a picture and I hope that you can bring counter-arguments forward. The West is pretty weak, you are right that NATO is pretty good but look at the United States and we see this enormous polarization and we do not know if Mr. Trump will win next time. It is the same with EU, look at its position on the war in Israel. The question is, if we are well-advised to follow Mr. Zaki Laïdi's position not say it is just the West. If we want regulations in foreign affairs, we should not say that it is only the West that is asking for that. If we do that, I think we have found ourselves pretty much isolated in this world, just look at the BRICS meeting. People are fed up with this polarization, they want regulations, they do not want war to win, as Norbert put it, but if we put it as this a Western value or point, I do think we are not doing the right thing.

Terry Martin

Thank you very much. This is obviously feeding into the whole discussion about the Global South, the West and whether these terms are useful and what the perceptions are around the world and whether we maybe need to come up with new terms. Let's take the last questions.

Hiroyuki Akita, Commentator of *Nikkei*, Japan

Definitely, defeat of Ukraine is a bad scenario but maybe a worse scenario is simultaneous wars in Europe and Asia and obviously, there are many focal points, for example, the Taiwan Strait or the Korean Peninsula. How should we avoid the same scenario of World War One or World War Two, where war in Europe spilled over into Asia, especially World War Two, which spilled over in two years after the German invasion of Poland in 1939. Two years later, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, so the timeline was very fast. How should we win in Ukraine and simultaneously deter China?

**Terry Martin**

Again we have the emphasis on the West but we also now have the question about how to avoid a spillover. We'll have two more questions.

Volker Perthes, Under-Secretary General and Head Independent Strategic Review of UNAMI (United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq)

If Norbert Röttgen is right and I think he is, that Europe has to prepare itself from now to provide security for fellow Europeans threatened by a power that does not respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of its neighbors, what does that mean for the institutional development of Europe? What does it mean for budgets and the narrative that your party, Norbert, and others will have to pursue in the coming European elections?

Terry Martin

That is a complex question, we could put a whole panel together on that. We will take one more question, Thierry de Montbrial drew my attention to a lady in the front.

Elisabeth Guigou, Founding President of Europartenaïres

I am very happy that at the beginning of the discussions, Bogdan, Zaki and Norbert have given us some signs of optimism in this very gloomy and worrying context and I want to come back to the European Union. Of course, it depends on how this war lasts and on the conditions on which it will end but suppose, as we hope, Ukraine wins the war and can negotiate some kind of peace on acceptable terms. In the view of the panelists, what degree of strategic autonomy should the European Union have vis-à-vis the United States given the fact that the European Union will obviously support the massive costs of the reconstruction of Ukraine?

Terry Martin

There is a lot on the table here, much of it institutional-focused on the European Union, concerns about that and the question of strategic autonomy, which has been a big discussion for a long time. What we get a feeling for here and also the broader global debate, which this plugs into about the West, what it is, what it stands for and what is at stake for, but also the question of this possibly spilling over. There has been a great deal of discussion about any lessons that maybe other countries are taking from the Ukraine war about how to pursue their own foreign policy interests by violating another area's territorial integrity.

Let us get some responses from the panel.

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

Thank you. Perhaps I will pick the question of Volker Perthes who asked what the meaning was of European security in terms of institutions, budgets and narrative. I would answer these questions in reverse order because when you start with a narrative the answers follow naturally and I think there is space, room and necessity for a European narrative. If you think about the possibility of the election of Donald Trump, which I consider a nightmare, we have the war in Europe and the Middle East, but this implosion of the West is the real threat. It comes not from the outside but from the inside. If you just consider for a moment that this is a possibility that cannot be excluded, then the narrative is absolutely clear. As Europeans, we have to provide for the security of our Europe and security has also become different in other

areas. There is a new paradigm, people feel scared and unprotected in different areas, in the economy but also in terms of physical, military security. I think this is the core narrative we have to develop, and we can sell it because it is the truth. We are facing the fact that we have to provide and care for ourselves. We cannot rely, as we did during the decades of the Cold War, solely on America. I would add that even if Joe Biden were to be re-elected there will never be a time, as we saw during the Cold War, when Europe was just a receiver of European security. At some point, he will come back to the new priorities of American policy, which is the reconstruction of the American economy and, of course, the competition with China.

Either way, we will have to face this necessity and once we have made it clear that this is the historic challenge for this time for Europe, then the ensuing questions are answered. Of course, the budget has to follow the idea of what is necessary at this time and the institutions to a policy that is necessary. I am not scared about that.

Terry Martin

May I ask you, do you see the political will among the European Union member states to come up with the agreement and the resources to create and strengthen those institutions, particularly on the military and defense side? Right now, the European Union does not even have that identity outside NATO.

Norbert Röttgen

We can say that we have developed the state of mind and of policies since the war compared to before. Now it is fundamentally different, and I can really say, for example, that our society and attitudes in Germany have changed as profoundly and quickly than ever before in the post-war period. However, I admit it is not sufficient, the change is profoundly impressive measured against the past, but measured against what is necessary it is insufficient. My answer to your question is that we could act out of insight and foresight but unfortunately, I do not expect this to happen. I am afraid that we will act, and more react, out of necessity. We could avoid it and be better prepared, but I do not think it is hard to predict the circumstances where Europe will have to bring itself to a level of responsibility because we are forced to act, then Europe will act quite convincingly.

Terry Martin

I will just point out the need that many see for institutional reform in the European Union also in terms of its decision-making process when it comes to foreign and security policy. If it is only going to be unanimous decision-making that is going to be a difficult ask.

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

I am always amazed in debates like this to see to what extent the European Union is constantly underrated. Your comments, coming from a non-European view, but which is perfectly acceptable, are the perfect illustration of this.

Terry Martin

I have lived longer in Europe than anywhere else.

Zaki Laïdi

You started by talking about the limited effort but I think Mr. Röttgen made it very clear, the changes that have taken place in Germany are very impressive. At the beginning of the war in Ukraine, people were laughing at the Germans because they thought they would just send helmets to the Ukrainians.

Terry Martin

5 000.

Zaki Laïdi

Now Germany is the leading provider of military aid to Ukraine behind the United States and the quality of the German equipment is outstanding. As a European, I am very proud to defend what the Germans have done and the changes that took place and even with regard to their energy dependency, what Germany has done is absolutely formidable. I remember meetings of the Gymnich just before the beginning of the war and journalists coming to the HRVP and asking him: 'How can you expect a common position on Russia when we were all divided'. The response was that they should wait to the end of the meeting and see, and after the meeting the decision was taken to have very hard sanctions against Russia. In terms of military effort, a change is taking place but, of course, it is not going to take a year or two, it is a sea change.

If I just come to three questions, in fact, I do not see a lot of differences between us.

Terry Martin

Just to intervene on sea change, I believe the word *Zeitenwende* has been put out there as a result of this.

Zaki Laïdi

On EU/US relations, I think that we agree that this relationship is absolutely crucial and fundamental, nobody is questioning that. However, I think we all now agree that we need to make a European effort on our side because we cannot foresee what can happen in the future.

The point on which I respectfully disagree with you concerns the Global South. If you go to the Global South and tell them that in Ukraine, we are defending Western values and you need to share those values, you are going to face huge opposition. You should certainly not approach them with the Ukrainian issue through the lens of democracy because you have to emphasize the issue of territorial integrity of nation states. In fact, you have democracies that will tell you that it is our problem not theirs. If you take Latin America, is it part of the West or not? If you take Latin America, almost all are democratic countries, but their narrative and interpretation of the conflict is not really different from Asian or African countries. They agree that there has been an aggression but there are lots of others in the rest of the world, and second, do not expect more than condemnation of that from us because we have our own agenda and we do not want to see the Ukrainian agenda hijack other issues that are much more important for us. This is the narrative and perception that you will find widely around the world and it does not matter if a country is democratic or not, African, Latin American or Asian; that is simply not true. You have to look at the reality of the world as it is and not as you expect it to be.

Terry Martin



Thank you. Bogdan Klich, perhaps you can pick up on some of those points and also maybe speak to the question that was raised concerning the risk of spillover, which is quite concerning.

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

In the words of Robert Gates: The United States faces more serious threats to its security today than it has in decades or perhaps ever. It has never before faced four allied adversaries at the same time, Russia, China, North Korea and Iran, with a combined nuclear arsenal that could be nearly twice that of the US in a few years. This is what Bob Gates says. Of course, this is the specific situation of the US, which is responsible not only for security in the Euro-Atlantic area, but is also engaged in other parts of the globe. Let us not forget that, to some extent, this is also our problem because, as we know, the West consists of two parts of the Atlantic Ocean. That is why I am totally aware that there is a difference between those threats from the East and the South. We have traditional, conventional threats from the East in the form of full-scale military aggression in the neighborhood of Europe, while in the South we face more asymmetric threats because nobody can even predict if the evolution of the Hamas-Israeli war will create military danger for Europe. There could be massive migration flows, the next wave of terrorist attacks on European soil, or cuts in energy supplies to Europe, but those are different types of threats, and that is why we should be prepared to have different responses.

When we talk about the possible policy strategy of the US after the presidential elections, this is one of the main challenges for the West and nobody can predict what will happen. Therefore, we should be prepared to keep the Americans in as we did during Donald Trump's first term. Of course, the political cohesion of the Alliance was undermined by Donald Trump's approach but thanks to great commanders in the US forces, NATO military cooperation continued.

When it comes to what we should do in Europe, referring to Elisabeth's question, the current Spanish presidency has focused our thinking on strategic autonomy on social and economic issues alone. We have abandoned this political military aspect last month because of the good cooperation with the United States, mainly because of the Russian-Ukrainian war. We should continue to think about European strategic autonomy in terms of those social and economic categories, not forgetting the security and defense union that could be achieved under the existing treaties. There is no mood for treaty changes in the European Union but we can go farther with the European Defense and Security Union and this is one possible direction.

Terry Martin

We only have a minute left, so I would like to give Elbegdorj Tsakhiagiyn a chance to intervene.

Tsakhiagiyn Elbegdorj, former President of Mongolia

I think that to live free is a universal desire, not a Western, Eastern, or Southern desire. I think we choose freedom because we want to live free and, in my country, freedom is non-negotiable because it equals our independence and our right to exist. I know in the West you may see some socialists, even communists or autocrats as friends and I do not think that is new but the desire to live is very important and universal.

The other thing I am really concerned about is this Middle Eastern conflict and there are also flash conflicts in Asia, the South China Sea, Taiwan and the Korean Peninsula. The



North Koreans are also delivering that arsenal, almost 1 000 containers of weapons allegedly. Those things are a bit concerning and maybe if there are more flashpoints, something will happen next in Asia and I think it will be a nightmare if this war or conflict becomes more global. Because of that, we have to talk about more issues related to global things while, of course, paying attention regionally.

Terry Martin

You ended right on 00, so congratulations on that. We are out of time, it is obvious that the discussion could continue for a long time and you said there is much need for discussion. Fortunately, we are in a place where we have some brilliant minds and really experienced policy-makers and analysts to help us put things into context. I really appreciate the input from you all. I was hoping for a frank and open discussion, and we got that. It is a really difficult subject and I hope we can maybe follow it up bilaterally at some point. I want to thank our audience for being with us today and please feel free to continue our discussion later.