

## PETER BEYER

Member of the Deutscher Bundestag, former Coordinator of Transatlantic Cooperation of the Federal Government

**Virginie Robert, Foreign Desk Editor at Les Échos, Vice President of the European-American Press Club in Paris**

Peter, you worked with Merkel, and you have worked with two administrations. Can you tell us about it, how you went through it and what your takeaway from it is, too?

**Peter Beyer**

Thank you very much, Virginie. Thanks to everyone surviving all the way through to the last panel of this conference. Yes, I had the honor and the pleasure to be transatlantic coordinator in the Angela Merkel government under two years of the Donald Trump administration and two years of Joe Biden. Therefore, I could see and experience the difference and the changes over time.

One has to keep in mind that at least after the Second World War up to now, and hopefully for the foreseeable future, the United States of America has been our closest partner, I would even say friend and ally when it comes to protection of our sheer existence, if we talk about defense and nuclear sharing. Also, if you look at culture and trade, they are our largest trade partner outside of the European Union. Therefore, we need each other somehow, and so this is important. Even under the Obama administration, we had problems. Not so much on the substance, but there was this wiretapping of Angela Merkel's cell phone. That was under the Obama presidency.

**Virginie Robert**

I remember, yes.

**Peter Beyer**

We somehow figured this out as well. One last remark: just very recently, over the past two, three weeks, Angela Merkel published her memoirs. It is a thick book, 700 pages or so. She presented it twice. She started off in Berlin on stage in one of the theaters there. It was a nice conversation. There were a lot of anecdotes. People are interested in how you got along with your colleagues in France, but also certainly with Trump and Obama. The second presentation was in Washington, DC, very recently, in the last week, together with former President Obama. Although both of them had a bad start before Obama was elected president, when he was only a candidate, they seemed to get along very well. The charming strategy Angela Merkel tried when Donald Trump was in the Oval Office as President of the United States of America failed



completely. I still have in my mind images of this video footage when Angela Merkel was sitting together with Donald Trump in the Oval Office, and he denied the handshake.

**Virginie Robert**

I remember that.

**Peter Beyer**

Therefore, this charming strategy completely failed. I totally agree with my Japanese colleague that there is no time to waste. Donald Trump knows it is his last chance: two years, four years. It will start with dozens of executive orders, right from day one onwards, so we better prepare in Europe and elsewhere in the world, and we might come back to this, how to do this later.