

SPEAKERS' DEBATE

Terry Martin, Journalist, TV news anchor

We only have about 19 minutes left for this entire session, so I am going to compress it very quickly. I am only going to ask a couple of questions myself, and then I am going to open the floor. I want to get some discussion going here on the stage. I see each of you kind of raising your fingers. You have points to make. I am just going to mention a couple of points that have been made so far. I find it interesting. Metaphors are interesting. We think in metaphors as human beings, and we have got a couple of interesting metaphors on the table here now. One is the metaphor that heard from Hubert Védrine of the asteroid that is coming our way and that is going to hit Europe in the form of Trump, and that Europe, together with Canada, are terribly unprepared for what is about to happen. We also have the metaphor of the rhino, which I like very much, I am very fond of rhinos. However, it was not entirely clear to me whether the rhino was Trump or Russia.

Vuk Jeremić, President of the Center for International Relations and Sustainable Development, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia

The deal is the rhino.

Terry Martin

Okay. In any case, those are two things to keep in mind. I was intrigued by the comment that you made, Norbert, regarding the need for Russia to fail, basically, for this to be a failure for Russia. Russia cannot be allowed to succeed. I want to talk about that, and I want to get your reflections on that notion, in the context of Trump's promise to end the war very quickly. He is going into office with ending the war being one of his priorities.

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

On day one.

Terry Martin

On day one, yes. I mean, we can kind of dial back some of the bombast, but that will be one of his main priorities. Therefore, many are wondering how that is going to happen, and if the notion that territory is not the most important thing, that sovereignty is the most important thing. I find that very interesting. I am not sure how those things fit together. However, I want to get a response from Hubert Védrine because you have lots of interesting things to say about this whole question of defense and whether Europe is going to be ready to actually do what it needs to do to stand up for its defense, and that is being put into question. The question that I am wondering about is: how is Trump going to end that war so quickly? Also, if

Europe is going to be forced to give Ukraine the security guarantees, because the US is simply not going to do it – it is going to be too preoccupied with Asia, let us say – how is that going to happen? Who wishes to reflect on that? Okay, Zaki, we can start with you.

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

There is a kind of fascination in Europe with Trump, and we tend to think that he will achieve what he said he will achieve. However, let us look at what he achieved during his first mandate, even as someone who is trying to make deals. Arguably, he was not terribly successful as a dealmaker. I just want to remind the audience that the number of American soldiers in Europe increased during the Trump administration. I agree with you, the fact that he claims that he is going to find a solution is something. The other thing is how he will do it. He has to be very cautious, because if he invests a lot politically in Ukraine from the beginning, and if he does not achieve his goals, it would be a failure. Third, there's the influence of the US establishment, including the Pentagon. He can bypass the Pentagon, but that is not so easy. During his first mandate, he wanted to withdraw American troops from Syria, and he was prevented from doing so by the Pentagon. Therefore, we need to be cautious. What is sure is that he is not going to vote a new supplemental. However, I think that the Biden administration was not going to do it anyway, so I do not think that the difference is going to be huge. We need to be cautious.

Terry Martin

What about you, Hubert Védrine?

Hubert Védrine, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, Founder of Hubert Védrine Conseil

Two remarks. First, I think Trump will try to freeze the war, but at the same time he will feel compelled to dissuade Putin; otherwise, he will be seen as a weakling. I do not rule out that he will promise Putin the lifting of sanctions. It is in his nature and that will put Europeans in a very tough spot.

Again, the thorniest point here is that even if Trump cannot leave NATO, he will give very few American guarantees and shift that onus on to Europe. But there is some confusion between what has to do with Europe and what has to do with NATO. There is no body composed of European allies within NATO. So we may have to invent one. Will we then face a question we have never had to deal with because it never came up, i.e., who decides? This is not just a matter of the armaments industry or declarations. It is a matter of war and peace. Consequently, policy decisions must be totally legitimate. We had better think about that.

Second remark. I think we should not forget a body that was reinvented by Letta, Draghi, Macron and Scholz, i.e., the European Political Community. I am aware that nobody believes in the EPC for the moment. It seems marginal. The media ignore it. However, it is the only body that brings together *all Europeans and only Europeans*. The EPC will not replace NATO; but since we are going to encounter the hardest questions that we Europeans have had to face in seventy years, which we must absolutely settle, it must not be neglected.

Last point. You brought up the idea of giving prospects to Ukraine by mentioning dissuasion, and a total danger in the Balkans without any real prospects. Mr. Bourlanges, who chaired the French foreign affairs commission, said, “If European decisions are blocked because a unanimous vote is required, a step-by-step approach must be taken, with membership being the last step. Everything must not be subordinated to the finish line.” Thus, to offer them hope, countries in the European process – that we want to consolidate – will be encouraged in order not to give arguments to others, whether the Russians or others. That means joining different programs step by step. This has not completely materialized, but I think two ideas must not be forgotten: the European Political Community and step-by-step membership.

Terry Martin

We have about 11 minutes left. I have developed all sorts of really interesting questions, of course, to put to each of you, but before I open the floor to the audience, I would like to give each of you an opportunity to provide further input if you wish. You have been sitting here next to me very quietly and calmly, Yann, but perhaps you wish to reflect from your perspective on what we have just been talking about in terms of security and what the implications are for the private sector, if nothing else.

Yann Coatanlem, Cofounder of GlassView, President of Club Praxis

I am going to be the naive guy here since I am not a foreign policy expert, but my question would be around the effectiveness of NATO, and especially in regard to Article 5, which has never been activated.

Norbert Röttgen

It has been activated once in Afghanistan after 9/11.

Yann Coatanlem

How effective would it be even if Ukraine were to join NATO?

Norbert Röttgen

The purpose of Article 5 is to exist in order not to be activated. It is deterrence, and deterrence lives from its credibility. For the first time, I would say there is a real danger, even for the credibility of NATO, if there was this deal. NATO was invented to provide and organize European security. This is why NATO exists, European security. If we now were to witness and experience that the leading power of NATO were to cut a deal with the adversary of Europe at the expense of European security, Article 5 would remain in place, but nevertheless, it would fundamentally damage the credibility of NATO. It would split NATO, because the Central and Eastern Europeans would say, “As long as it was about the security of Western Germany and the West, NATO was there, Article 5 was credible. Now it is only about us, the Central and Eastern Europeans, and you let us down.” NATO would not be the same after that deal as it was during the Cold War.

Terry Martin

I know you would like to say something, Vuk. Go ahead.

Vuk Jeremić

However, Ukraine is not a member, so Article 5 does not cover Ukraine. I do not think that Central and Eastern European members of NATO would have such a strong view.

Norbert Röttgen

However, they see the security of Ukraine as an imminent threat to their own national security.

Vuk Jeremić

Sure, got it, but Article 5 is not about imminent threats. Article 5 is about actual attacks, if a member is attacked. I think we generally, as Europeans, because I consider myself a European despite the fact I am not from a country that is in the European Union, should spend more energy talking to the other side. You call it the adversary, but they are very much part of the future security situation, be it a catastrophe or not a catastrophe on our continent.

Terry Martin

You are referring to Russia? Is that right?

Vuk Jeremić

Yes, I am talking about Russia. Because you said that what we must not do is to let a pause be just a holdout for another of Putin's invasions so that he can replenish the stocks, prepare and then invade again. Well, do you believe that this is exactly what they think about the West and Ukraine? They even quote Madame Merkel when she said, "Well, Minsk Agreement was actually just buying time for Ukraine so that Ukraine could rearm and the like." Therefore, the Russians are saying, "Well, we do not want a halt so that they can just rearm them now that Europe is going bring up its defense spending and the like." We are talking past each other in Europe. I think we should be talking more to each other. This is the last thing that I am going to say. I recently organized a debate between people who have very, very different views. One was Ian Bremmer, and the other one was Sergey Karaganov. They sat and they talked. They viscerally disagreed about certain things, but then they came to an understanding that they agree on 90% of things.