

**Commission on Security & Cooperation in Europe:
U.S. Helsinki Commission**

**“A New Approach to Europe? U.S. Interests, Nationalist Movements, and the
European Union”**

Committee Staff Present:

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Europe;**

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Participants:

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Paul Coyer, Research Professor, The Institute of World Politics;

**Jeffrey Rathke, President, American Institute for Contemporary German
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Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., Alex Tiersky, Senior Policy
Advisor, Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe, presiding**

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PARKER: Good morning, everyone. My name is Kyle Parker. I'm with the U.S. Helsinki Commission. I'd like to welcome you all today to our briefing, "A New Approach to Europe."

Here at the Helsinki Commission we have the luxury of looking a little further ahead, going a little deeper on some of the questions that occupy the minds of the legislative branch as well as general national security questions that are confronting the United States. And one of the things, of course, in the past year or two is – there's a tension in transatlantic relations. Something has clearly changed.

I think it's fair enough to say that the relationship is in flux, maybe even strained. Look at many things that characterize this moment – the populist movements, the strong euro-skeptic threat in Europe, Brexit, fairly robust pro-NATO sentiment, real concern in the east about Moscow's intentions, concerns on Europe's southern flank with immigration and a number of policy questions that surround that.

At the same time, I think it's fair to say that a lot remains the same, in that the United States' national security goal post-war, of a Europe that's whole, free, and at peace, remains. And so there's a question of how will we use the institutions that we participate in – namely NATO and the OSCE – to advance those goals in this context? And where does that place us vis-à-vis the EU, which of course we are not members of.

So in our discussion today we have a solid panel who will bring divergent viewpoints to this and hopefully raise some provocative questions. I'd just like to lay out three questions we should shed some light on. And the first one is the question of patriotism, national identity. How much does the lack of what we here in the United States would consider not simply a benign but a positive, even essential, flag-waving patriotism – how much does the lack of that in Europe contribute to the unwillingness of populaces in many of the countries to spend what is necessary to defend their own state, and meet its obvious defense needs, and also to meet their collective security obligations?

So in that sense is NATO necessarily pitted against the EU? Can NATO be aggrandized – or should NATO be aggrandized at the EU's expense, from our perspective? Our attention, understanding the moment we're in and thinking, well, there's broad overlap between these organizations. Let's shore up NATO and let the chips fall where they may on the EU? So that would be my first question.

I also would be interested in this – to what extent is the burden – it's obvious in our own domestic debate that the burden-sharing is politically important. And our current leadership has made it even more important and really highlighted it. But on a tactical and technical level how critical is it from our perspective? I think from the perspectives of the states themselves it's obvious. To be able to defend yourself. But from our perspective, how important is it that these targets are met, and met in the frame that we'd like to see them met?

And finally, let's imagine we arrive at the high-class problem where Germany spends 2 percent or more on national defense. If we were to see that, would we not have other problems in what might look like German militarization? And the fact that, with German politics in flux, we're not going to see that happen under a Chancellor Merkel. What sort of leadership would we see that happen under in Germany? And what sorts of unanticipated effects might that cause politically in neighboring states – Poland, and France, and other places?

Those are the questions I have. And without any further delay, I'm looking forward to everyone's presentation, and would turn this over to my colleague Alex to moderate our discussion.

TIERSKY: Thank you, Kyle. Let me add my welcome to everybody here. I see a very healthy audience that we have, which I take is an excellent sign of interest in this set of topics, and certainly in our distinguished colleagues who have joined us on the panel to have this conversation.

Kyle, thank you for your intellectual leadership in laying out some of the questions that we anticipate discussing today. I would only add that the Commission has a track record of kind of big thinking on a number of these issues, and certainly an engagement policy-wise on issues ranging from the security framework of Europe, to include, for instance, this briefing. In the folders that you may have picked up, there's a resolution that was introduced by our chairman, Senator Wicker, joined by our senior Democratic senator, Ben Cardin, and two other of our commissioners, Senators Tillis and Shaheen, who are the leaders of the Senate NATO Observers Group. They introduced together a resolution in advance of the most recent NATO summit talking about exactly these issues of transatlantic relationship and United States interests.

I would also point out that not very long ago we had an event featuring members of the European Parliament to talk about some of these questions. They were here trying to assess continued United States interest in their institution and collaboration across the Atlantic. So this, I think, fits well within the breadth of the coverage that the Helsinki Commission devotes to these questions.

So, without further ado, my role here principally is that of traffic cop. And what I would suggest that we do is I will introduce our speakers. I'll ask them for some opening comments, in the order you see them to my left. And, dear audience, I will turn to you for questions. So I will assume that you will be jotting down those questions you will have when the time comes, after I take the moderator's prerogative to push our panelists a little bit in areas in which they may agree and in areas in which they disagree.

Let me very quickly introduce the speakers I have been lauding. First, to my left, will be our first presenter, Dr. Ted Bromund. He is the senior research fellow in Anglo-American relations at the Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom of the Heritage Foundation. To say he writes prolifically would be an understatement. He previously served as associate director of international security studies at Yale. And we've asked him to offer us a broad strokes overview of United States relations with Europe in a historical context, as well as thinking hard about what the European Union's role is as a security provider in its own region today.

Our second presenter will be Dr. Paul Coyer of the Institute of World Politics. He'll be offering his thoughts on the nature of nationalism in Europe today, that's been alluded to already, and the implications of some of these trends on transatlantic relations. Dr. Coyer, who is a historian, is a contributor to Forbes magazine and a contributing evidence of Providence, a journal of Christianity and American foreign policy. Of course, we're always also happy to welcome back a former Hill staffer.

Lastly, we will hear from Jeff Rathke, who serves as president of the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies at the Johns Hopkins University. Jeff, congratulations, again, on that still relatively recent appointment. I think they selected a terrific candidate. Prior to joining the institute, Jeff was the senior fellow and deputy director of the Europe program at CSIS. He joined CSIS in 2015 from an extremely distinguished career at the Department of State, where he served as a foreign service officer for 24 years. And in that distinguished career, he was primarily dedicated to U.S. relations with Europe, including stints at NATO headquarters.

So three very different backgrounds to assess this set of questions. I'm looking forward to their presentations. Ted, please start us off.

BROMUND: Thanks very much. Real pleasure to be here. And I want to start off by thanking Alex Tiersky and Kyle Parker for conceiving of and organizing this briefing. It's an important subject, because U.S. policy towards Europe has changed fundamentally since 1945, and in particular since 1989. But in my view, the shifts in U.S. policy have not been well considered or well understood, in part because most of the relevant scholars, policymakers, and funding derive from a single perspective: That of the European Union.

So in my view, the U.S. does not need a new policy towards Europe. It already has a new policy towards Europe. And it's had a new policy towards Europe since the end of the Cold War. It needs to return to its former policy, from which it has thoughtlessly strayed. Inevitably, this briefing, like any discussion of Europe, raises the question of populism. I'm not entirely sure what is meant by the term populism, except that it is obviously used to describe parties, movements, and beliefs that the speaker dislikes. It is a negative term.

At the level of politics, what is happening is that in many European nations – except for Britain, interestingly – established parties on the left in particular, but also on the right, are losing votes to new parties which are often described as populist or nationalist. It's important to understand why this is happening. I've been struck over the past several years by the relatively uncurious approach that's been taken towards the rise of the new parties and the decline of the old ones. The phenomena, in my view, is condemned more often than it is analyzed.

Sometimes the explanation that's offered is that it's all the fault of the Russians. I have been a vehement opponent of the Russian regime, and a great many pieces on it published, but in my view blaming the Russians is so simplistic an explanation that it barely merits a rebuttal. It should be obvious that when large numbers of people vote for new parties, they are doing so because the old parties do not meet their needs. If lots of people did not vote for the new parties, there would be no rise of populism to worry about. It should be equally obvious that the old

consensus and the analytic and policy support for it from the U.S. are equally faulty. After all, if that consensus had been genuinely satisfactory, it would be now receiving more support from the European publics.

One problem is the relative narrowness of the political consensus in Europe. You don't have to go very far on the left, or especially on the right, before you fall outside the European political consensus. In these circumstances, anyone who disagrees with a substantial part of that consensus is going to have to look for a new party to vote for. And given that support for the European Union and for ever-deeper integration are a core part of the elite European political consensus, it's inevitable that a good deal of the rebellion against it is going to be associated with nationalism.

Now, nationalism is a dirty word in Europe. That's because nationalism has been tarred by association with Nazism. Precisely why Adolf Hitler, who was a racist imperialist, is now regarded as a nationalist, while the nationalists in Poland, France, and Britain who resisted Hitler and fought to restore or save their political independence are treated as the heroes of Europe's anti-nationalist rebirth is an interesting question. But the broader fact is this: Every single stable democracy in the world – every one of them – grew out of a national state and was fortified by a sense of nationalism. Without nationalism, there is no political community, and without political community there can be no democracy.

This is not an original idea on my part. Philosophers from Adam Smith to John Stuart Mill regarded what I have just said as an absolute commonplace. Historians of almost every European nation – I'm thinking of my first advisor at Yale, Linda Colley, who wrote about Britain, to the distinguished historian of France, Eugene Weber have pointed out the importance of a felt sense of national identity to the making of a political nation—all of these historians have also pointed out something else. National identity is not inherent. Babies are not born French or Polish. National identity is learned and constructed. In other words, you do not just – in Eugene Weber's phrase – make peasants into Frenchmen once. You have to do it every generation.

And you have to do it with immigrants too. Too many in Europe believe that Europe can rest forever on the nation-making achievements of past generations, or even that it should degrade those achievements by denigrating nationalism for the sake of a shallowly rooted Europeanism. This is a fundamental error. Nations are not made forever. And if they are not being continuously remade, they are being destroyed.

I would not, myself, say that nationalism is a good thing. Like any kind of group identity, it offends against God's truth that we are all individuals. Nor would I say that all nationalism in Europe will necessarily be for the best. You cannot spend 70 years equating nationalism with illiberalism and Adolf Hitler and then be shocked that the belief that you have demonized is represented at times by illiberals. Europe has made its bed and it's going to have to lie in it. If liberals do not own nationalism, it will inevitable become the property of illiberals.

But I would say that nationalism is a necessary thing, and that if you don't have it or if you try to repress it, its space will be filled by other kinds of group identities that are fundamentally incompatible with democracy. In other words, I regard nationalism as an

important and necessary force. I disagree with those who argue that nationalism was responsible for Europe's fall. I agree, instead with Adam Smith, Europe rose because it was divided into competing units. Nationalism as the cause of Europe's rise, not Europe's fall.

So part of the reason for the rise of populism in Europe is that a narrow and anti-national elite political consensus left no space for nationalism. Nationalism has therefore made its own space. But this is only part of what's going on. Another part are specific policy errors that Europe has made and that the U.S. has, especially since the end of the Cold War, indulged and supported. If we go back to the immediate post-1945 years, we will see that the U.S. approach to stabilizing and democratizing Europe, or at least Western Europe, rested heavily on the belief that Democracy cannot exist without reasonably high and steady levels of economic growth. At the least, there can be no Great Depressions.

Thus, all of the U.S. initiatives in post-war Europe – from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, we now call it the World Bank, to the IMF, to the Marshall Plan, to the GATT, it's now the WTO, and, yes, even NATO – were fundamentally economic. This belief drew on a diagnosis about the causes of the rise of the Nazis and the origins of the Second World War, which was fundamentally liberal. The resulting, largely liberal, strategy was well-informed and extremely successful.

If I had to sum up that post-1945 U.S. strategy, it was to make economic changes to preserve the political order. What do we do now? We do precisely the opposite. The apple of the EU's eye is the euro, which, as the Obama administration agreed during the euro crisis, must be preserved at all costs. The EU therefore pushes the forces of change away from its economic system and into the political systems of its member nations – such as Greece and now Italy. And the U.S. supports the EU in this error. We now prioritize economics over politics. After 1945, we did precisely the reverse.

The EU likes to boast that the European economic model is different from that of the United States. By this, the EU means that the European model is low growth. And the EU regards that as a good thing, regardless of how much youth unemployment it leads to in Spain. But it is worse than that. With the EU's approach to Brexit and, for example, its impending copyright law, the EU has reached the stage where it simply tries to chain the other guy down or make as much money as possible by suing him. In other words, the EU does not just back a low-growth model, it has abandoned its hopes of becoming a leading digital online power and is now much more interested in trying to insulate its low-growth model by reducing growth elsewhere.

Of course, I would be the first to admit that Europe's growth problem is not all the EU's fault. All over Europe, and indeed in the United States, national policies mirror and exacerbate the EU's policies. But virtually everyone recognizes that, just as the EU claims, the EU and European economic models value social protection over growth. But at some point – and we are well past that point – Europe needs to emphasize growth, for the same reason that it needed growth after 1945. Democracies cannot tolerate persistently high levels of unemployment. It is a sure bet that voting publics will react to low growth and high unemployment somehow, likely by blaming the parties in power and voting for new ones.

The first major error we have made is, therefore, economic. The second major error we and Europe have made is to neglect security. More specifically, the U.S. has sought to outsource the responsibility for European security to the Europeans and the EU. This is the culmination of a long-held American wish, one expressed almost as vehemently by President Eisenhower as was it was by Presidents Obama or Trump. But no matter how long or how vehemently we wish for this, it will not work because the Europeans and, in particular the EU, lack the willingness to provide for their own security. I regret this, but I see no point in kidding ourselves.

The threats to European security today come from two quarters: Russia and the Mediterranean. The European response to the Russian invasion and dismemberment of Ukraine has been a set of modest and largely symbolic sanctions and, except for the NATO member states that border on Russia, no meaningful increases in defense spending at all. In other words, an absolute and complete failure to respond to any significant way whatsoever. In the Mediterranean, Chancellor Merkel, in line with Germany's dual role as America's worst ally and Europe's most selfish power, adopted a cataclysmically irresponsible open borders policy, a policy which rested on no consultations at all and which embodied nothing more than a politically foolhardy sense of guilt.

But the problem is deeper than that. Americans are remarkably gullible in their acceptance of the belief that the EU is our friend and are equally and remarkably unwilling to overlook repeated EU statements that it views the U.S. as a rival. As EU President Donald Tusk put it in early 2017, quote, "It must be made crystal clear that the disintegration of the EU will not lead to the restoration of some mythical, full sovereignty of its member states, but to their real and factual dependence on the great superpowers: the United States, Russia and China. Only together can we be fully independent." Close quote.

The point of this is, indeed, crystal clear. President Tusk classes the United States with Russia and China. I suggest we take him at his word and treat him with as much consideration as he treats us. It is time for us to recognize that the EU is an open and declared enemy to the role that the U.S. assumed in Europe after 1945. At the EU level, the fundamental problem, the reason why the EU takes this approach, is that for the EU everything is political. The point of EU defense initiatives is not to improve Europe's defenses. It is to reduce the defense sovereignty of EU's nation-states, and to diminish NATO in general, and particularly the American role in the defense of Europe.

The point of the euro is not to make the European economies work better. It is a political instrument for European unity. The point of having an EU foreign policy, or a border force, is not to do these things better. It is to elevate Brussels and reduce the role of the nation-states of Europe. This strategy has been remarkably successful on its own terms, but it neglects one key point. Strategy, security, the economy, the border, foreign policy, all of these things are issues with realities of their own. By treating them merely as political instruments for the greatness of the European Union, the EU shows it prefers a show of greatness to the reality of achievement in any of these areas.

At the level of national politics, the rise of populism is therefore not surprising. If you are an established political party in a democratic political system that offers little meaningful

choice, I would suggest that an approach which combines low growth, low levels of job creation, high levels of unskilled migration, increasing levels of supranational control, a rejection of the assimilative force of national identity, and lashings of deeply-felt guilt are unlikely to increase your vote share with the public. If you want to provoke people into voting against you, however, all of these things make up an excellent strategy.

That is the path that Europe has followed. And it is the path that the U.S. has endorsed and enabled. This path is a foolhardy one. The problem is that we are now so far down it that backing out will be extremely difficult. In too many European countries, there are too few credible voices outside the consensus who can lead a move away from it and move back to a path of sovereign national democracies, a restored balance between social protection and economic growth, and a transatlantic security alliance that rests on controlled borders and credible deterrence against the Russians. But that is the right path for us to follow, nonetheless.

TIERSKY: Ted, thanks for that. You put a lot on the plate—questions of the proper understanding of nationalism, the role of growth. You've tied together economics and the strategic plane to politics in a very compelling way.

Let me immediately pass the floor to Paul for his remarks. Thank you.

COYER: Thank you. I'm going to address the issue of nationalism and national identity as well. I'm going to leave out much of what Ted said, actually, I have coming out a chapter in a publication from National Defense University Press next month. That's coming out of a conference at which I gave a keynote in August. So I agree with Ted's take on that.

Ted and I are both historians, so I want to take a bit of a historical perspective to start with. This is November 2018. Can any of you remember 100 years ago what happened? (audience comment) Not Versailles, the armistice. So you were on the right track. In 10 days, we will be observing the hundredth anniversary of the ending of the First World War, a war which has been blamed, to a large degree, on the passions of nationalism, just as the war that followed that would be. And today, we see debate over the virtues and vices of national identity, national sovereignty, and the nation-state vis-a-vis growth and the importance of supranational institutions and more global governance that is strikingly similar, in many ways, to that which occurred in the aftermath of the Great War.

The Brexit vote, the election of Donald Trump here in the United States, and the surge of what has been referred to in a pejorative manner as populist and nationalist movements throughout the West are only the opening salvos of what I am convinced will be a mammoth struggle over ideas regarding national identity versus cosmopolitanism, more local national governments versus transnational government institutions, the importance of identity in general, and the impact that those ideas will have on the shape of the international order.

It is conflicting attitudes toward these ideas, more than anything else, that in my view is the cause of the disconnect that we see currently between President Trump and many Western European leaders. A group of European scholars have argued in an essay last year regarding the EU that the originally envisioned European integration project has become overtaken by a

secularizing, progressive ideological agenda, at odds with the project envisioned by many of the EU's founders, which vision was more grounded in Europe's Christian and classical cultural roots, and which gave room to distinctive national and regional identities. According to these scholars, the project was conceived and initiated in a very different cultural ecology than that which exists among Europe's ruling class today.

They point to Christianity and Europe's classical heritage as being the foundation of European culture, arguing that as that cultural foundation has eroded, quote, "the loss of that cultural horizon in the process of European integration after the Second World War can be explained by the secularization of European societies and by the turn away from classical values in favor of the technocratic, progressive agenda of scientifically informed societal management." One of the things that Alex didn't mention from my bio is that I'm an associate professor at the French Army's version of West Point. And I get a first-hand view in France of this struggle within Europe and among themselves over these sorts of values.

To a large degree, the scholars I just referenced that wrote that paper last year blame this cultural shift I've described, and they described, and the divergence of attitude between the EU's ruling elites and vast swaths of European citizenry toward fundamental issues such as tradition and the importance of national identity and sovereignty for the position within which the EU finds itself today, in which the foundations of political and popular support for the EU project and European integration are increasingly shaky. Along with these authors, I believe that a renewed emphasis on the importance of a healthy nationalism does not require a retreat from European integration, so long as that integration is reconceived to be more in line with the vision of its founders, rather than reflective of the progressive agenda that has come to dominate it.

The United States certainly needs a strong, unified, reliable, and prosperous, and democratic partner on the other side of the Atlantic. And European integration can play a key role in ensuring that that type of partnership exists and continues to exist, so long as the European project gives more space to such issues as tradition, identity, and national sovereignty. Unless it does so, the bases of its popular support will continue to be threatened, and the disconnect between the EU's elites and vast swaths of European citizenry over these issues is going to increasingly threaten the future of the whole political project.

In the context of highly contested visions during the 1980s of the form that should be taken by the emerging European Union at the time, then-British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher warned European leaders against their current course in her famous speech in September 1988 in Bruges. She said, quote, "To try to suppress nationhood and concentrate power at the center of a European conglomerate would be highly damaging and would jeopardize the objectives we seek to achieve. Europe will be stronger precisely because it has France as France, Spain as Spain, Britain as Britain, each with its own customs, traditions and identity. It would be folly to try to fit them into some sort of identikit European personality."

"Indeed, it is ironic," she went on, "that just when those countries such as the Soviet Union, which have tried to run everything from the center, are learning that success depends on dispersing power and decisions away from the center, there are some in the Community who seem to want to move in the opposite direction. We have not successfully rolled back the

frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels. Certainly we want to see a Europe more united and with a greater sense of common purpose. But it must be in a way that preserves the different traditions, parliamentary powers and sense of national pride in one's own country; for these have been the source of Europe's vitality through the centuries.”

That vision that Prime Minister Thatcher gave of European integration, rather than one in which the principle of solidarity is given only lip service, decision-making authority becomes increasingly distant from and unaccountable to the European grassroots, and attachment to traditional sovereignty and national identity are disdained, is one that would address the concerns of those within Europe who have been leading the charge against the EU as it is now constructed and conceived, and would strengthen the space of popular support among Europe's citizenry.

It would also help with the geopolitical challenge posed by Russia, in my view. Like Ted, I have written quite a bit on Russia for Forbes and other publications. I have had my share of troll attacks. The Russians have selected me; I will not fly Aeroflot anytime soon. But like Ted, I have to say that it is absurd, I think, to put it bluntly, to blame everything that's happening in Europe, the rise of what are called populist and nationalist parties, on Russia. However, Vladimir Putin has quite shrewdly played upon the sense among large portions of the West that its leaders no longer share their appreciation of the importance of faith, family, tradition, and national identity. He has played on this theme in order to increase his soft power appeal throughout major segments of the West, while at the same time to create a positive brand for Russia, whose reputation has, to put it mildly, taken quite a hit in the past few years, and which has been therefore in desperate need of rebranding.

The Kremlin's skillful propaganda in this regard, which has been interwoven with its propaganda regarding the West turning hostile to its Christian civilizational roots, the implication, of course, being that Russia remains traditional and Christian, has found broad resonance within Europe and much of the rest of the world, despite the obvious fact that Vladimir Putin is hardly a paragon of Christian virtue, nor an exemplar of ethical Christian leadership.

Early in President Trump's presidency, Guy Verhofstadt, the EU Parliament's Brexit negotiator and former Belgian prime minister, gave a speech in London in which he said that Europe faces a threat from Donald Trump. EU leaders also uniformly speak about how national identity is also a threat, using pejorative language and portraying it as a uniformly dark and fascist force.

Many Europeans, however, see national identity, sovereignty, and tradition as a moral good, and are therefore much more in line with President Trump's thinking in this area than they are with the take of the EU leaders, that see supranational institutions and the diminution of national identity and national loyalties as necessary for peace and prosperity in Europe. Increasingly, the United States and many of our Western allies are being led by those to which the late Samuel Huntington, in his 2004 essay, "Dead Souls," a phrase borrowed from Sir Walter – a Sir Walter Scott poem of the same name, referred to as a, quote "denationalized elite who have forgotten the mystic cords of memory, while the American people have not." He was referring to the American context when he wrote this.

The deep divide within Europe on the issues of tradition, sovereignty, and national identity and what constitutes Europe's historic cultural values is one reason why these issues need much more reflective and nuanced attention than, for the most part, they have been receiving from EU's ruling class. The restoration of a sense of solidarity between these leaders in the West and our citizenry is necessary to the future of liberal democracy. Unless this large gap in perceptions between European elites and much of the European citizenry is addressed, not only will it continue to see the disintegration of the political bases of support for the European project, but the Kremlin will continue to have an open opportunity to continue to increase its influence and standing within our own political constituencies, to the detriment of us all.

The value and importance of transatlantic ties is not in question, despite some of President Trump's rhetoric that has caused heartburn. Whether U.S.-European relations are headed off a cliff, as some suppose, depends upon which Europe one is talking about: the Europe envisioned and espoused by European leaders of today in which a centralized authority, increasingly divorced from much of the people it governs in terms of its governing philosophy and aspirations, or the traditional Europe we see arising in opposition to the EU's leaders, in which European cooperation is to be based upon sovereign, independent nation-states cooperating because it is in their national interest to do so.

A similar debate over all these issues – one that reflects starkly differing worldviews – is taking place both within Europe and here in the United States. And it is the outcome of this debate on both sides of the Atlantic that will determine the nature and shape of the transatlantic relationship going forward.

TIERSKY: Thanks, Paul. I take away a number of things from your presentation. Your description of a European integration that, while it has its challenges, in your view, need not necessarily be in retreat. A united Europe can play a key role as a partner to the United States, but under specific circumstances and not based on an identikit strategy. I also take away your description of Putin being able to play on the differences between the elites and the citizenships – the elites who – you referenced Samuel Huntington's "Dead Souls."

Let me pass over now to Jeff Rathke for his views before I engage you all in responding to some of those points. Thanks.

RATHKE: Thanks, Alex. Thanks also Kyle Parker, and to everyone associated with the Helsinki Commission. And I want to recognize at the start the important work that the Commission does, and my appreciation for the invitation. I also want to thank those who are here, who made the effort to come in person, but also those who are watching online.

I'm speaking today on the one hand as president of the American Institute for Contemporary German studies, but also as someone who served as a diplomat for a long time in Republican and Democratic administrations and worked mainly on U.S. relations with Europe – both political relations as well as defense and security.

So an important question brings us here today, whether the United States needs a new approach to Europe. I have to say, I've heard relatively little about what the new approach should be thus far, so I want to try to contribute a bit to that. It is unquestionably true that the international landscape in security terms, in economic terms, and in political terms has been changing for quite a few years.

The United States and its allies face a revanchist Russia that attempts to alter borders by force in Europe, and also seeks to exploit the social and political vulnerabilities in our societies, to weaken our cohesion, and to undermine our democracies. I would agree with both the previous speakers that Russia does not create those vulnerabilities. It does seek to exploit them, sometimes with success. And so that is something we need to be vigilant about, even as we recognize that the divisions they exploit are largely of our own making and not of Russia's creation.

Beyond Russia, we have the challenge from China expanding its international influence and its ability to project economic, political, and military power not only in the Asia-Pacific but also in Europe, which is a challenge to the international order. Proliferation of nuclear and missile technology in North Korea and Iran is a pressing concern. And international terrorism is an important threat. These geopolitical factors, I believe, are correctly diagnosed in the administration's national security strategy.

Now, turning more particularly to Europe, which is the topic of discussion today, there has been a rise – regardless of how you want to characterize it – of nationalist or of anti-establishment political forces inside Europe over many years. And it has spread over time across much of the European continent. This is altering the internal politics in European countries. It's affecting the dynamics within the European Union. And it's affecting the relations among European states. Brexit is one example, perhaps the most prominent. But there are others.

So the question for this panel, as I understand it, concerns U.S. policy toward Europe. Now, for seven decades the U.S. has had a remarkably consistent approach to Europe, I would argue, promoting a stronger and more integrated Europe so that it can play the role of a partner to the United States in transatlantic security, in shaping the global economy, and in responding to international foreign policy and security challenges.

Now, that's not to say we haven't had disagreements with Europe on many issues over the decades. There have been some quite serious ones. But on just about any major international problem that the United States has to confront and has tried to confront – whether by Republican or Democratic administrations – the United States has inevitably sought the partnership and support of European countries in that endeavor. That's true of military operations, such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the fight to eliminate the so-called Islamic State, the intervention in Libya, and the wars in the Balkans, if you go back farther.

When it comes to the economic relationship, the ties across the Atlantic are the most intense and important trade and investment relationship in the world. One trillion dollars annually in two-way trade, 5 trillion (dollars) in mutual investments. The U.S. and Europe have sought over the years to reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers, because they realize that the

potential gains to the transatlantic economy are enormous given the breadth of our relationship. Now, those negotiations have not always succeeded. And there's certainly much more to be done.

The United States also works together with Europe to fight proliferation, to counter terrorism, to advance democracy and human rights, and to promote international norms and standards that favor freedom and the rule of law.

Now, sometimes there is an element of nostalgia that comes with discussion of the transatlantic relationship. I think both previous speakers have tried to avoid that, and I appreciate that, because, you know, while the U.S. security alliance with Europe brought about what I would argue is the most monumental success of the late 20th century – the triumph of democracy and liberty in the standoff with the Soviet empire – sentimentality is not a guide for the policy choices that we face today and for the future.

So another way of formulating the question might be this: Do the changes in the international environment in recent years mean that the transatlantic instincts that leaders of both parties have cultivated since the end of the Second World War are no longer valid? I would contend that the logic behind those instincts is as compelling as ever. When you look across the Atlantic, the United States finds the largest collection of economically advanced, militarily capable, and politically likeminded countries, that are prepared to take political risks and stand with the United States in confronting a challenge.

European countries and institutions like NATO and the European Union are our partners of first resort. And it is clear that the United States benefits from and should seek partnership with Europe, unless we choose to deliberately do things alone, which is a choice. Now, getting to the policy differences that we have with some of our European friends and partners, those could be reasonably be raised as an objection. The Nord Stream II gas pipeline is one example. But I believe that an effective foreign policy for the United States is one that seeks to establish priorities that are achievable within the resources that we have available to us.

And if we look at the world through a lens of great power competition, as I believe this administration does, in which there are five crucial challenges – Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, and international terrorism – U.S. success in meeting any of those challenges will be greatly enhanced by partnership with Europe. Economically, it is hard to see the European Union as a greater challenge than China, for example, and to portray the European Union as a foe is, frankly, absurd. The United States and the EU together account for 46 percent of global GDP. Our influence is enormous together on global economic issues. Alone, the United States is 24 percent of global GDP, and necessarily wields less influence in trying to shape the future of the global economy than we would in partnership with Europe.

I would remind that the majority of U.S. foreign investment is in Europe. Fifty-eight percent of our foreign investment is in Europe. And Europe is the largest source of foreign investment in this country. Sixty-nine percent of foreign investment in the U.S. comes from Europe. So I think it is not particularly helpful to U.S. policy formulation to demonize the countries that share the most with us in terms of their economic models, their democratic values, and their willingness to take actions beyond their own borders to achieve common goals.

Now, it's a separate question whether the changing politics inside Europe means that these partners should be somehow less attractive. If you look at European foreign policy, which is a complicated mix of national policies and policies coordinated at the EU level, let's look at European Union sanctions on Russia, for example. Those were adopted as an EU policy by consensus. And they have held since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014. Now, if we raise the question of whether we would have a more effective European response if it were not coordinated at the European Union level, I think the answer is obvious.

And it becomes even more obvious now when you look at the number of countries that want the European Union to end its sanctions on Russia, because they don't want to make that economic sacrifice anymore. Is it in the United States' interest to have effective sanctions against Russia or not? If the answer's yes, and I believe it is, then working with the European Union is the way to accomplish that. Working with not only leaders of the European Union – that is, the European Commission and the European Council – but with the leaders of European Union member states. I think previous speakers have both pointed out that the national leaders remain important. And I would argue that they remain the most important factors in European decision making, especially on crucial foreign policy issues. There is no Europe that is driven – in crucial foreign policy issues – by faceless bureaucrats in Brussels or by the European Parliament. It is the engagement and the priority setting of the national leaders in the European Union that are ultimately decisive.

And, I would say that we see the European Union is able to act in unison, despite the sometimes-fractious politics within Europe. Let's look at one example, which is the retaliatory tariffs that the European Union imposed on the United States after the United States imposed national security-based tariffs on imports of steel and aluminum from the European Union. Now, it's a separate question whether there's really a national security basis for those kinds of sanctions, but I think it belies the suggestion that Europe is not able to act together when it sees its interests at stake.

But there are other cases where the European Union has failed to reach consensus on taking unified action. One example in recent years was the European Union being unable to agree on a resolution that was up at the United Nations that criticized China's human rights record. Now, that resolution was torpedoed by Greece. Greece, which has been a recipient of a significant amount of Chinese investment since the European and global financial crisis in 2008 and 2009. So China's growing economic stake in Europe, and China's promotion of arrangements like the 16+1, raised major concerns in Europe, as I think they do for the United States, that China will try to use its economic influence to divide Europe and prevent the European Union from achieving common and critical positions on matters of concern to Beijing.

There's also a rising concern in many European countries about investment by China in Europe, and from other countries, not just China, investment in strategically significant industries. Currently, that's a national competency. It is the responsibility of EU member states to have their own national standards. But this has led to proposals for an EU-wide investment screening framework. It's currently under discussion, and has not been concluded. But if the United States sees China's economic model and its predatory capitalist approach, its theft of

intellectual property, and its attempt to use its infrastructure investment to gain political influence, it seems to me obvious that the United States has an interest in a robust and unified European response, rather than piecemeal national efforts that will allow countries to be picked off one by one.

Now, you could also look at this as a situation that the United States could seek to exploit for its own national benefit. In that sense, the question would be: is anti-establishment or populist or nationalist politics an opportunity for the United States or a threat? Does the rise of populism and its stress on sovereignty present new opportunities to promote U.S. interests more effectively? In other words, is there a silver lining in that cloud? I would start by looking, again, at the EU sanctions on Russia. In international economic diplomacy, the EU has had much more at stake in its relationship with Russia. And it has made much greater sacrifices, frankly, than the United States has economically in trying to impose costs on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine.

Now, it's a separate question whether there could have been other responses. For example, the Obama administration was unwilling to sell lethal arms to Ukraine. That's a policy that's been reversed by the Trump administration. I think that's a topic that's worthy of debate and discussion, especially critical discussion with our European friends and allies. But it's clear that the Europeans have made greater economic sacrifices in trying to constrain Russia in its revanchist project in Europe.

And regardless of what you think of the JCPOA, it is also true that European Union countries were willing to impose substantial costs on their own firms in order to try to bring Iran to the negotiating table. Again, that's separate from discussing the merits of the JCPOA, which is perhaps worthy to do, but I don't think it's really the topic of this panel. But the point is, Europe is able to act when we forge common cause on crucial issues, and that benefits, in my view, the United States.

And more broadly, I think the benefit to the United States in populist contagion is chimerical. We can seek it, but we're never really going to find it. It is precisely the nationalist governments in Europe that exhibit the greatest sympathy for Vladimir Putin's Russia. If you look at Italy, Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini, who's the leader of the far-right Lega Party, which now has the highest proportion of public support – according to opinion polls – recently visited Moscow. He is vocal in his opposition to sanctions on Russia. Hungarian President Victor Orban has called for lifting sanctions, as have the Czech Republic and Greece. Austria is sympathetic. And by the way, the right-wing FPÖ, which is part of the ruling coalition in Vienna, even concluded a cooperation agreement with the United Russia party of President Putin.

Poland is the one exception to that trend. It is a nationalist-oriented government that remains tough on Russia. But it's the exception. There is a high degree of correlation between nationalist governments in Europe and pro-Russian sentiment. So if Russia is one of our top geopolitical competitors, one of the top two challenges we face if you take the hierarchy of the administration, why should the United States be encouraging Moscow's best friends? I don't see it.

Now, I think there's a legitimate criticism of European leaders. There has been a lack of sufficient creativity and political willingness on the part of many European countries, and at the European Union level, to play a stronger international role, and to be proactive in trying to find issues around which the United States and Europe can coalesce. So I don't mean to try to suggest that they don't bear a share of responsibility for finding the substantive elements of a future-oriented agenda between the United States and Europe. But I think our focus today is on U.S. policy toward Europe, which is why I've directed my remarks there.

I would conclude by saying that when you get to burden sharing, which, Kyle, you mentioned at the very start, I think we need to be clear about what we seek from burden sharing. There is a focus on 2 percent of spending, but I think Ted Bromund also raised the question about what role burden sharing plays. I heard— you can correct me if I misunderstood —a criticism of the U.S. that it has tried to outsource the security relationship to Europeans and to the European Union. I think there's a tension, though, between whether we want Europeans to bear their share of the security responsibility for transatlantic security, for our shared security — whether we want them to do that or not.

I think we should have European countries bearing their share of the security burden. They have not done as much as they should have over the years. I think the way to get there is through persistent, effective diplomacy that takes American policy desires and finds ways to promote those in ways that build European support, not just of governments but of publics as well, for this common security agenda. So I would just end by saying I think rather than being an open and declared enemy of U.S. objectives in Europe, as Ted Bromund put it in talking about the European Union, I would say the Europeans are our closest allies, our most effective partners when you look at the challenges we face in the world. And we need to focus on ways to collaborate with them, rather than to demonize them and to try to stoke animosity across the Atlantic. Thank you very much.

TIERSKY: Thanks, Jeff.

I see in these three excellent presentations really an opportunity for a classic debate to break out, but I'm going to try to manage this as a conversation rather than a debate format. Let me ask a couple of kind of framing questions before I go back to the audience, because— I'm sure there's a lot that the audience would like to jump in on here. Clearly some different perspectives were expressed on the level of leadership in the European Union currently and U.S. policy, and where it should be going.

But let me start with asking Ted, perhaps, to respond to Jeff's last point, which is the tension between Europeans bearing their fair share for providing security in their own region, as opposed to the tension that we have with the outsourcing debate. If you could and we've got a number of things on the table, so I'll ask your responses to be relatively brief in the two-minute range.

BROMUND: That's a really excellent question. Let me start off by saying that in my view the point of increased European spending on defense is not primarily to acquire additional

military capabilities. Those are, of course, desirable and they are necessary. But that is not the main point. The main point of increased European defense spending is to reinforce the American political consensus in favor of a strong American contribution to European defense. It has been an argument for generations that the political consensus in the U.S. in favor of NATO is not sustainable unless the Europeans pay a fair share and are seen by the American people to pay a fair share. So I am opposed to outsourcing security to the Europeans or to the European Union and I want them to pay a fair share precisely because that is the only way to ensure that we also play a role over the long run.

Let me explain what I mean specifically by “outsourcing” with some historical examples. In the 1990s, after the end of the Cold War, we did everything we could under two administrations to try to leave the Balkan wars to the Europeans. We eventually were forced to intervene. I’m very glad that we did. But we delayed, and delayed, and delayed. After the Cold War, reductions in U.S. forces in Europe were certainly necessary and warranted. But they went much too far. We took over 90 percent of our forces and, under the Obama administration, all of our armor out of Europe. There was excessive U.S. disinvestment in European security. When you take a look at crises on the European border, in my view, we have tried and tried and tried to leave it to the Europeans, only in the end to belatedly have to get involved. Libya is the classic example here.

So I am unhappy with the U.S. approach that doesn’t take a strong leadership position on security issues in and around Europe, that outsources. But I am equally unhappy with a European underspend approach, precisely because it reinforces our desire – which we have had since the Eisenhower administration – to try to leave all these things to the Europeans. These are not contradictory factors. They are complementary problems. And they can only be solved by addressing both of them together.

TIERSKY: Let me shift gears on a question to Paul and go back to something that was present in your presentation. You described the potential for a healthy nationalism.

I think, Ted, if I jotted this down correctly, you used the phrase “nationalism is necessary” and it’s become a “dirty word” in Europe.

I would love for the two of you, but let’s start with Paul, to help us understand where the line is between a healthy nationalism and a potentially unhealthy nationalism. I think this gets to one of Kyle’s framing points about Germany. Are we concerned about a nationalism that would develop in a manner that would be contrary to peace and security on the European continent and, therefore, to the United States’ interests?

Paul, I’d like for you to take a crack at that and maybe Jeff after. Thanks.

COYER: Sure. This is a good question. And just to reinforce, yes, I do believe there are healthy and unhealthy nationalisms.

One of the things that I disagree with in the rhetoric that we hear coming out of EU leaders uniformly is that nationalism is always seen in the pejorative and they don’t recognize

the fact that there is a healthy form of nationalism. As Ted alluded to, it was in the context of the modern nation-state that we developed modern democratic governance and representative governance, human rights protections, that sort of thing, the rule of law. Liah Greenfield of Boston University and many other academics have written about this, that without the modern nation-state we would not have democracy.

Getting to your question of where to draw the line, I don't think it is exactly a fine line, but there's a long debate that we don't have time to get into now over creedal nationalism, which we see in the United States, where we are defined by a creed that came out of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, as opposed to an ethnic nationalism that you see prominently in places like Russia. It isn't just ethnic there, it's more cultural; but there's an ethnic component to it, with the Russian world being a big, supposedly unified culture in the post-Soviet space.

I have Serbian friends. The Serbs constantly get criticized, sometimes justifiably when you look at their history, for an ethnic Serb nationalism that is a bit virulent. So when you do have a nationalism that, in my view, is defined by an ethnicity more than anything else, that's particularly where you need to double down on democracy promotion and the rule of law and transparency, that sort of thing.

Philosophically speaking, a healthy nationalism, in my view, is one that appreciates one's own traditions and culture while also appreciating those of other people. There's a point that's made by a friend of mine, Yoram Hazony, an Israeli scholar that just came out with a book called "The Virtues of Nationalism," a title that tells you where he's coming from. And one of the things that he says is that we should try to inculcate a type of nationalism that is characterized by humility in our own national distinctiveness, a pride in it, but not an overweening pride; a sense of our own distinctiveness that also is tempered by humility, knowing that we are not the be-all and end-all of cultural achievement.

When you can look at other cultures – my wife, for instance, is a Venezuelan. I've lived much of my life overseas. When you look at other cultures and can appreciate their distinctiveness and where they might have some aspects of their culture that are superior to your own, that can provide a limiting effect on a tendency toward an overweening pride.

I mean,— this could be the topic of a whole daylong discussion, obviously. The chapter that I told you about that I wrote on this issue approaches nationalism specifically from an ethical point of view. And that was only 20 pages long, and that could easily have been 2(00) or 300. So I'll end my brief remarks there.

TIERSKY: We appreciate the executive summary. Thank you. (Laughter.)

Jeff, over to you.

RATHKE: Thanks. So I wanted to touch on a couple of things.

First, I think it's important to remember that support for NATO in the United States is at an all-time high. On the one hand, that suggests a commitment by the American public to the

transatlantic security alliance. I think it's also worth noting at the same time that there is a divergence, an increasing divergence, in the views of people, based on their political affiliations in the United States, toward NATO. I think, while there has been a dramatic rise among independents and supporters of the Democratic Party in their support for NATO, among Republicans it has declined, which I think is certainly regrettable. I think it's probably a function of the administration's harping on the 2 percent target. But nevertheless, taken as a whole, American public support for NATO is increasing.

I would also highlight that if you look at public support for the European Union across EU member states, you find that in many of the countries whose governments are most critical of Brussels, you actually have the highest level of public support for their membership in the European Union. So I think it's a more complicated issue than is sometimes presented in the media, as far as publics being frustrated with Brussels and questioning the value of the European Union.

But I wanted to come back to the question you asked about Germany, and which Kyle also mentioned at the start, and Germany's role. Kyle, the way you put it is: If Germany spent 2 percent on defense, would we have a problem in Europe? I would go back to the always-quotable Radek Sikorski, former minister and defense minister of Poland, who said quite a few years ago that he fears German weakness more than he fears German strength. And I think that is still the case. Germany needs to do more in the defense realm. Germany acknowledges it, but the progress has been very, very slow, slower than anyone, I think, would like. But I don't think there's any real objection to Germany increasing its commitment to the transatlantic alliance. Instead, I think there's just frustration that it hasn't been going as fast as people would like.

That has deeper roots within the German public, among the political parties. And as much as we might like to see it go faster, I'm not sure it's going to speed up even with a change in the CDU leadership, frankly, because it brings up questions of complicated coalition politics – what government can be formed if there ever is a change of government, and what political coalition will move Germany faster toward that goal.

TIERSKY: Colleagues and friends in the audience, I think I've stood between you and the panel for long enough now. I would love to take some questions from the audience and keep my own in abeyance for now.

I see a hand in the back on the right. Please identify yourself, if you could.

Q: Hi. My name is Ben. I'm an intern with Congressman Cohen.

My question was, I understand the point that you were making on European technocratic authenticity separate from the people who can be difficult to support, but what is the ideal format for the European Union that has this sovereign diversity of strength that you see? Is it a U.N.-style secretariat? Does it continue to have a transnational parliament? Does it focus more on the Council and backroom deals? I'm not quite seeing how it maintains the sovereignty of strength and continues to include the people, if you have thoughts on that.

TIERSKY: Thanks. Let me add to that. If we find a different institutional framework for the European Union, I would like Ted and Paul both to respond to this because it also gets to, I think, Jeff's advocacy of the EU as a partner of first resort, I think was his word, on challenges internationally. If we find a different kind of governance structure that's more responsive to the publics, as you've described, do we lose a kind of a partnership with the EU, and on what areas? How would that cooperation look under a different kind of governance structure, as well?

COYER: I can start and then we can move over to Ted, I guess.

I think one place I would start would be the European Commission, which people in Europe don't feel is responsive to them. That needs to change.

To answer the issue that Alex raised just now, I don't think a change in governing structure, however you look at it or redefine it or reshape it, necessarily means a reduction in American partnering capacity with Europe. I think that you can certainly do it in such a way where we continue that strong relationship.

And I completely agree with much of what Jeff said, that we need that transatlantic relationship. I not only teach in France, I did my Ph.D. in Britain, travel there a lot, and of course we need that.

Now, specifics how to structure it are harder to define and that would take some more careful thought. I would just start with the EC because that's the obvious target. That's the one that people point to the most as being unaccountable.

BROMUND: I'll pick up on that just quickly. I appreciate the question and I appreciate that it's a very serious one. I'm a little reluctant as an American to sort of sit here dispensing my purported wisdom about the way the EU should be organized, which, frankly, whatever I say will have absolutely no impact on what they do. So with all respect to what is clearly a very serious question, I'm not sure that this is something where American input is going to be very usefully offered.

My personal instinct – and I emphasize personal – is that the way for sovereign democratic nations to cooperate is through the traditional mechanisms of interstate diplomacy. You can call that backroom deals for the European Council if you care to, I would call it diplomacy. Probably Woodrow Wilson would also have called it backroom deals. But I remain very supportive of that basic mode of operation, if only because I think diplomacy is the way that civilized nations do business and diplomacy is traditionally done by sovereign nation states.

On the question of European partnership, well, let's look at the five big challenges. I agree there are rising concerns, but the EU has played and European nations in general have played a largely negligible role in concerns about China. And in my view, they will continue to play a largely negligible role.

Europe does, of course, have a role in combatting terrorism. I'm not sure that European efforts in the North African Sahel regions have been particularly successful.

Europe is a nonfactor on North Korea, simply does not matter in the North Korean issue.

And we come to Russia. Jeff mentioned the sacrifices that Europeans and the EU have made vis-à-vis Russian sanctions. Of course, there have been more economic losses due to sanctions in Europe than there have been in the United States because they trade more with Russia or did trade more with Russia than we do. But the Russians have invaded and occupied a nation in Europe and we are sitting here saying, oh, the EU has done wonderful things because it has imposed really some fairly limited and not always effective sanctions on the Russians and we are busy patting them on the back for this tremendous achievement. This is not a tremendous achievement.

Jeff passed over Nord Stream 2 fairly quickly. In the midst of all of this supposedly brilliant sanctioning achievement, Germany is busy totally on its own backing and constructing a gas pipeline to Russia, which is absolutely going to have an infinitely greater restorative effect on the Russian economy than all the EU sanctions have had a negative effect.

I am stunned by the paucity of the EU's and the Europeans' ambition in this regard. And I'm stunned by our willingness to give them credit for doing well when in response to a Russian invasion of a European nation they have done so little. Let's not pitch our ambitions here too low. If the EU and the Europeans want to play a serious security role in their own continent, the invasion of a European nation needs to be met with more than a few economic sanctions.

TIERSKY: Sure, Jeff, please.

RATHKE: Thanks. I'll respond to that point. I did not use the words "wonderful" or "tremendous achievement." I said that the European Union's sanctions have made a greater economic impact than the United States' economic sanctions. And you're right, it's because Europeans previously did trade more with Russia. That's a function of geography, it's a function of Russia being a natural resource exporter. There's not exactly a value judgment behind that, I think.

I think the fact is that, confronted with the invasion and occupation of a European country, there has been a relatively consistent European response. It could have been done more in other areas, I agree with you.

But I think we also have to be honest about what the scope was for nonmilitary action in response to the invasion of Ukraine. That is, I think, a different and broader topic to discuss.

I wanted to come back to the question about what's the right, structure. Like Ted, I wouldn't want to prescribe, but I would highlight, for example, counterterrorism, which is clearly an issue of concern for the United States as well as for European governments and for Europe collectively. And if you look at the response since the attacks in Paris and in Brussels, for example, you see a greater role being played by European institutions in information sharing, things like passenger name recognition and so forth. On the European level, greater

responsibility Europe-wide for things that contribute to the fight against terrorism and law enforcement.

It seems to me that that benefits the United States because the more the Europeans are coordinated among themselves and sharing information, the easier it is for the United States to work with them rather than to work with 28 individual member states. So I think that suggests another area of benefit to the United States that we haven't talked about before.

With respect to China and whether the EU will play a significant role, I think one of the interesting things this administration is doing is to partner with the European Union and Japan to try to address what they refer to as global economic issues, which is really about how to deal with China's growing international economic role. So I think that is an indication of readiness to engage with this U.S. government. And I think that's a welcome thing. The greater collection of countries that are interested in open economies, the better for the U.S.

TIERSKY: Thanks, Jeff.

I'd like to take another few questions from the audience if I could. I see a lot of hands. Great. Let me start in the corner, standing up.

Q: Hi. My name is Erika Schlager. I'm with the Helsinki Commission staff. Thank you for this extremely interesting program this morning.

I want to preface my question with a little comment on the definitional issue that was at the start of this panel, how we're describing various political parties today. And I certainly agree that the terminology that we have available doesn't seem to be as helpful as we might like.

So extremist, populist, even left, right aren't necessarily very informative anymore and there may be a quick consideration of whether certain parties or political actors have fascist tendencies. I would like to hear more people discussing whether they have communist-era tendencies, whether some of the policies and practices echo somewhat the 1945 to '48 practices that we saw and the takeover of communism in Central Europe.

That said, I am now going to use the word "nationalism" since we sort of concluded our discussion there. And it seems to me that we're sort of talking about two levels here: U.S. policy towards what's going on in specific individual EU countries and then the U.S. policy towards the EU itself. And with respect to the nationalist voices – caveated use of that word – but with respect to the nationalist voices or parties or nonstandard parties that are emerging, it seems to me that one of the challenges or one of the problems that we face is that those nationalist parties and voices also tend to be the ones advancing anti-human rights policies and anti-democratic policies. And I'm thinking about the extreme centralization that's taking place in Hungary, the rise in antisemitism and historical revisionism, stripping religions of their religious status, the purging of the supreme court in Poland and the reintroduction of the Soviet-era feature of lay judges and the end of the finality of legal decisions and the end of legal certainty.

So are there nationalist voices that are also pro-democracy and pro-human rights? Because it seems to me, if you can't get those two things to go together, it's going to be hard for us to be neutral or supportive of a different kind of nationalism. Thank you.

TIERSKY: Please.

BROMUND: Well, I'll gladly take a crack at that one. It probably should have been obvious from our remarks, but I'll just spell it out here. I am rather skeptical about the value of a lot of these populist movements, however one sort of cares to classify them, not all of them, but most of them. And I largely agree with Jeff's comment that, although not all populist or nationalist movements in Europe are associated with the Russians, there is more of an alignment there than one might care to see.

But I don't think we can necessarily stop there. If our answer to these populist or nationalist movements is to say "We reject them completely, we need to go back to the old system," we're, therefore, left with a problem. Where did these movements come from in the first place? They came from the old system. So, obviously, something was not satisfactory in the previous setup and simply contending the new developments without trying to sort of fix or revive or change the older system is probably not going to get very far. It's going to put us right back where we are today or maybe even a worse place.

That really is the point of my argument, that we need to think about economic growth in Europe. I don't see how you have stable Christian democratic or social democratic parties without reasonable levels of growth. I don't see how you have them without more awareness of Europe's cultural and, largely, Christian past, to take Paul's point. And I don't think you can have them without a meaningful approach to national security, which includes strong and reasonable border controls. If you don't have those things, I think you're going to be pushed in some undesirable or different – frequently undesirable – direction.

But you put your finger really on the core of the problem. We are where we are in Europe because of a series of policies and events that have happened over the last 70 years, many of which, in my view, were a mistake. And we are now in a position where the routes out of that series of errors is frequently very unattractive for precisely the reasons that you and Jeff and indeed Paul and also I set out.

So how do we go forward? Do we simply approve of every populist or nationalist movement that appears in Europe? I simply don't propose to do any such thing. But can we have policies which make it clear that we prioritize growth over stability? I think we can. I believe we should.

Should we have a strong deterrent policy towards the Russians? I believe that's absolutely necessary. Should we back firm European border controls? I think politically in Europe that is an absolute necessity right now. If we don't back sensible things that are somewhat different from the immediate past consensus, we will simply get more of these movements, some of which are going to do things that we are going to find extremely distasteful.

TIERSKY: Paul?

COYER: I would just agree with that. And I would just add to that, I think a void in the national aspirations of many Europeans has been created in the manner which I have described and Ted has spoken to as well. And when you don't fill the void with something that's healthy, it's going to be filled with something that's unhealthy. And that's why I think we need to take an active role in defining and shaping a healthy sort of nationalism that includes human rights protections.

Indeed, as I mentioned earlier, modern conceptions of human rights, modern democratic governance, the rule of law, all that arose in the context of a modern nation-state. So it is not mutually exclusive. I don't see nationalism as being something that's in contradiction to all those aspirations and those things that we need. So I think that we need to be actively involved in shaping a healthy form of nationalism and defining that so that these sorts of issues are addressed.

And I also agree with you, and as Ted also said, there is a negative tendency on the part of not all, but some of these movements within Europe to be too sympathetic to Putin and to Russia. This is another reason we need to be heavily involved. I think I made this point in my initial statement as well – the more the EU leaders double down on their blanket condemnation of national identity and tradition and that sort of thing, the more it plays into the hands of Putin and gives rise to some of these negative actors.

TIERSKY: Jeff, I'm actually going to beg your forgiveness and ask you to hold your comments because we're getting close to the end of our time here today and I saw a number of questions in the audience. I really would like to give folks a chance to participate.

So what I propose is a kind of a lightning round where I take as many questions as I can and our panelists do their best to take what they can and respond and offer any final remarks at this point.

So I see in the front row here and then in the back and then in the far back, one, two, three. Am I missing anybody else? OK, four, great. We'll do four at once.

Q: Should I skip the identification, or is that still important?

TIERSKY: No, it's important for the transcript.

Q: Short, please. Yeah. Per Bergstrom (sp), Senator Murray's office. These are mostly my thoughts.

Merkel seems to be getting out while the going is still good. And with her out of the picture, it seems that only Macron in France is a major European head of state that seems to be willing to speak for the European project. How do you think this affects the dynamics we've been talking about today?

TIERSKY: Great. Do me a favor and hand the microphone straight back.

Q: Mark Toner, Helsinki Commission, the State Department's senior adviser.

My question is pretty basic and simple, which is, soft power diplomacy. This is my view – but we've let the transatlantic relationship atrophy, and by that I mean we had this distinct relationship with the post-war generation of Europeans that understood and appreciated America's role. And that relationship between Europe and America, I don't think the new generation has that appreciation.

We talk about working within multilateral settings with the EU and at NATO, but I think that relationship doesn't filter down to the publics both in America, despite Jeff's quoting strong support for NATO, but certainly in most European populations. So how do we revitalize that?

TIERSKY: Great. And then one here and then in the far back, please.

Q: Hi. I'm Andrew Myslik with Congressman Larson's office, also speaking from my views.

I am curious, to go on a NATO stretch here, to what stock and how should we define 2 percent of GDP as well as the 20 percent threshold contained within that, specifically given that a lot of European nations in the East, should NATO have to move heavy weaponry such as U.S. tanks rapidly East, could not actually support a lot of that infrastructure in their trains and their bridges. So there has been this debate and an ongoing debate in NATO regarding how 2 percent GDP should be defined.

And then also, we in the U.S. like to say that we are spending all this and carrying all this burden – and we certainly are carrying a very large burden, we spend upwards of 3 ½ percent – I'm not sure of it exactly – but a lot of that is spent out of NATO areas. So are we actually carrying a sufficient burden in NATO as well?

TIERSKY: Great, thanks for that. And I will commend to you the transcript of a briefing we did with General Ben Hodges just after he retired as U.S. Army commander in Europe on precisely that subject.

Paul, please.

Q: Paul Massaro with the Helsinki Commission.

A few years ago, it looked like the next big step in transatlantic relations would be an EU-U.S. free trade agreement. That appears to be totally off the table now and outside of the discussion. To what extent should free trade be part of the U.S. approach to Europe?

TIERSKY: Great, thanks. And very succinct, thank you.

Here's what I propose. Let's start in the opposite order that we did the panel, so we'll go Jeff and then in this direction, for your final thoughts. Thanks.

RATHKE: OK. I will be quick. So, Paul, to your question, I think there should certainly be the ambition to work on, whether it is tariffs or nontariff barriers or the kind of global structural issues, the economy, the United States and Europe need to be working together. Whether that has to lead to a free trade agreement--, tariffs, on average, are relatively low in the United States and in Europe already, so there is some gain to be realized there. But as we saw with TTIP, both in the United States and even more crucially in Europe, there was a lot of public opposition, so you've got to figure out where you can make progress and focus energy there, I think, as the first order of business.

On the 2 percent, 20 percent question, 2 percent has always, for a long time, been something the United States wanted NATO to adopt. And it predated the Trump administration. I think the difference now is there is a singular focus on that one number, which does not always bring countries along to increase their contributions. I think 20 percent matters more because that's actual investment in real military capabilities, that is 20 percent of spending on R&D and procurement of equipment.

I think we need to define what capabilities we want Europeans to have and then hold them to those commitments. We need to measure outputs rather than inputs. And if we measure only inputs, you can have an inefficient defense establishment in country A that spends 2 percent and accomplishes much less than a country B that spends it efficiently.

As for the future of the European project, Angela Merkel is going to remain chancellor of Germany. She's not going to run for her party leadership, but she, depending on how that turns out, she could remain chancellor until 2021. Now, she's weakened by the recent political developments, so whether Germany is going to play an active role will depend a lot on how this succession takes place. But it leaves France as really the country that's putting out ideas that others have to react to. But without support of other major European players, it's hard to move those forward.

One last comment because it's been discussed a little bit – growth rates. It is true that, on average, over the last 10 years, the U.S. economy has grown faster than Europe, but the gap is actually not as dramatic as it might seem. There have been years where Europe's growth rate was higher than that of the United States. And then there have been years where it's been the opposite, especially during the Greek financial crisis in the 2013, '14, '15 period.

But I think it would be a mistake to write off Europe's economic model as one that is ineffective and that fails to deliver. Despite its problems and complications there are still a lot of places across Europe where the economy is growing and where unemployment is falling.

COYER: I'll be similarly quick. On the 2 percent issue, Ben Hodges spoke about this I think in January when he was here, that I think it's wise to look at that not just in a purely strict way, but also look in other ways that countries may contribute to our mutual defense that may not count toward the 2 percent. I think it's smart to consider that because there is a lot that other

countries do. He raised the issue of Germany, which is many times criticized and has been perennially on this issue, that they give more than is counted toward their actual number.

On the issue of French leadership of the EU, Macron right now has very, very, very low approval ratings. I've forgotten what they are, but they're really bad--15 to 20 percent, something like that. So whether he sticks around very much longer is an issue as well.

As I believe I mentioned in my opening statement as well, one of the key issues that will determine how the EU thrives or whether it withers away is whether or not the ruling class in Europe can rethink their approach to governance and speak to the clearly expressed aspirations of many of the European citizenry we see in these movements that are EU skeptic movements that are arising.

About popular support on both sides of the Atlantic for the transatlantic relationship, that's a very, very good point. And that's something that I try to address in my speaking and my writing. That's actually one of the reasons why I, about four years ago with several friends, started this journal called "Providence: A Journal of Christianity and American Foreign Policy," because on the U.S. side of the Atlantic, as you know, Evangelicals and Catholics are a big voting bloc. Many times, especially Evangelicals, they're not that well informed. They have kind of a kneejerk sense of what America's national identity is and what its role in the world should be, but it's not well thought out. So one of the reasons why we started this journal was to educate that critical voting bloc in the United States. And we specifically, in the area of transatlantic relations, are trying to address it from a normative and moral perspective, as well, which is a language that crowd gets as to why it's so important in terms of democracy promotion, which leads to human flourishing and freedom and thriving, which, again, is language that Evangelicals and Catholics get.

That's just one aspect of the American voting bloc. The populace as a whole needs to be educated on this. Same thing in Europe, but a very good question.

BROMUND: Let me take a stab at doing all four of them really quickly. U.S.-EU free trade, the USTR has announced the intention to negotiate a trade agreement with the European Union as well as the United Kingdom and Japan, so that is back on the table in some shape or form. The fundamental problem with TTIP, in my view, was that it was an effort at regulatory harmonization to European levels. It was not a tariff-cutting, preeminently, exercise.

In my view, a regulatory tie-up between the U.S. and the European Union would do considerable long-term damage to the competitiveness of both of our economies, although it would be very convenient for large companies today who would dictate the terms of that regulatory tie-up. So unless we take a fundamentally different approach than we did during TTIP, I remain somewhat skeptical about this approach.

On 2 percent, with all due respect to General Hodges and his national service, I think he is doing an enormous disservice by promoting this line that infrastructure spending is a replacement for tanks. No amount of German autobahns or improved railways to the East are

going to deter the Russians. You do not deter people with empty railcars and highways with nothing on them. It takes actual military capabilities.

All of this argument about infrastructure and logistics, I do not underrate the importance of logistics, but it all comes down to being an excuse to allow places to spend money on things that are not actually contributors to genuine deterrent power. And that is all it is. So it is a fundamental disservice to increased genuine European defense spending.

Third, soft power. I'm tempted to be flip and say the way to get the old relationship back is to have World War III because, I mean, World War II was what did it. We're not going to get that back and we shouldn't run around wishing for it to return, in some respects, because it would mean an absolute cataclysm.

I don't think there is a really easy or even a very convincing long-run answer to the correct problem that you are articulating. I am clearly a Euroskeptic and quite a firm one, but I am certainly not anti-European nations and I am not anti-European unless you narrowly mean anti-European Union by that stricture.

I don't think that there is a lot of anti-Europeanism in the American public. I do think that there is a significant element of anti-Americanism in Europe. I wouldn't say it's a predominant element, but it is there, it is a real factor and TTIP proved it, among other things. The single-most-useful thing that could happen would be for European political leaders to stop making excuses for anti-Americanism, full stop.

Finally, Merkel, Macron--the last time I checked, Macron was at 27 percent, so I guess he's doing a little better, but it's still terrible. Macron, in a way, is a symptom of the problem we've been talking about, right? He is another populist leader. He happens to be a somewhat more attractive one in some respects, but where are the traditional parties of France, the traditional post-Gaullist settlement parties of France at least? Macron, in some ways, is a rebellion against those parties because they were seen to be, well, failing. So for many reasons he is as much a symptom of the problem as he is any sort of potential cure for it.

That really highlights sort of the core problem here, that one can be very critical, and I am, of Chancellor Merkel or other European political leaders in big nations. But it's not very clear who the next appealing person is. One can be critical of Theresa May in Great Britain, and I am quite critical. Would you prefer Jeremy Corbyn from a transatlantic point of view? Well, I would not. Would you prefer the French nationalists to Macron? Well, I probably would not prefer them. And that's the problem that we've run into, that the political consensus now is so shallow, commands so little loyalty, but yet is so all-encompassing that when you look outside of it, many of the options are not very appealing; but when you look inside it, it's obvious that the options are not very appealing either. And that's a very bad place to be in.

Let me close on the mundane question of growth rates, which Jeff has returned to. We all prioritize growth too little, including in the United States. We are marginally better than Europe, but we, too, prioritize stability excessively and growth too little. The Europeans are on sort of one extreme of that tendency, but we ourselves are no paragon of virtue in this regard.

I will simply close and reiterate what I said at the start. After World War II, we came to the understanding that you don't have stable democratic political systems unless you have reasonably high and stable levels of economic growth. Social protection is important, but it must be balanced with growth. Everywhere in the developed world, we give too much attention to protection and too little attention to growth. And that is a rejection of the lesson that we learned the hard way by 1945.

TIERSKY: With that invocation of World War II, let me thank our panelists for informing the Helsinki Commission and our broader community here in Congress and around Washington and our Facebook feed.

I think we've seen today the evidence of why it's important to air both our agreements and our disagreements, particularly at times of significant change. One key point I take away from this is that, regardless of its form, I think all of the panelists have agreed that a transatlantic partnership that is strong is crucial, even if we disagree on how to get there.

Colleagues, panelists, we appreciate your contributions to our reflection on this set of issues and in particular for staying a few minutes extra to undertake responses to the excellent questions we got from our audience here. Thank you very much for your time. (Applause.)

[Whereupon, at 11:43 a.m., the briefing ended.]