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2:55 - 3:30 PM

The Future of European Defense and Security

Mircea Geoană, Deputy Secretary General, North Atlantic Treaty Organization

G.E.W. van Leeuwen, Foreign Affairs and Defense Advisor to the Prime Minister of the Netherlands

Tom Tugendhat, Minister of State (Minister for Security) of the United Kingdom

*Moderator: **Peter Spiegel**, U.S. Managing Editor, *Financial Times**

Peter Spiegel:

Our panel here. My name's Peter Spiegel. I am the US Managing of the Financial Times, and this is the third time I have chaired the European security, um, panel here at the, at the Aspen, uh, security Forum because I always put my hand up for it. Um, for two reasons. First of all, um, Aspen always seems to manage to get a panel full of stars that I get to, to, uh, sit next to, but at least since February 24th of last year. There's another reason, obviously, um, that I like to chair the European panel. I think sometimes here in the United States, um, when we talk about Ukraine, we talk about Russia, it is very easy for us an ocean away, um, to be armchair generals, um, for Meia, his home country, Romania borders, Ukraine, um, for the Brits and the Dutch here, it's not much further away either.

And I think getting the view of Europe on the war is essential for us, um, because living the war much more closely than we are. Um, you have met Mercey already. Um, I'll go, uh, from left to right here just to, to introduce you to the other two, uh, Jeffrey Van Luen. My, my, my Dutch is brilliant, having spent six years in, in, in Belgium, um, is basically the Jake Sullivan of the Dutch government, um, the outgoing Dutch government, I must say <laugh>. Um, he is, uh, the Prime Minister's, uh, security and foreign policy advisor, but has a long, distinguished career in, I think, looking at your bio, it's every hotspot that the Dutch government need to send you, particularly long time in Afghanistan and Pakistan. All,

G.E.W. van Leeuwen:

All successful

Peter Spiegel:

Program, all successful. That's a very good point. Um, sitting next to him from, from the uk, Tom Togan Hut, um, his title is Minister for Security, but I think that title sort of underplays the role he has played in the conversation within parliament within the uk more broadly on security issues. He's a former soldier in Afghanistan and Iraq, uh, has a long experience in in the region, and I was hoping it was gonna happen today, but maybe in the next 24, 48 hours, the great mentions this guy have mentioned Tom as potential next defense secretary, and that's the end of that <laugh>. Yes, the FT endorsement has, uh, sunk his candidacy. Um, Jeffrey, lemme lemme start with you. And I wanna pick up where, where David, uh, was talking to, to Meia, um, because I think, and it's unfair to put this to the Dutch, to be honest with you, and, and even to the Brits, but I think there is a, because you guys both have been, uh, the very forward leaning, shall we say, when it comes to advocating for F sixteens, in your case, main battle tanks in the case, uh, for the Brits, for weaponry, for the Ukrainians there.

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I think there still is a perception, however, in the US and, and Colin call mentioned 43 billion the Americans have spent that although there have been commitments and, and rhetoric that the Americans are still the ones, um, putting, paying most of the bill. Let me ask you, is that a fair criticism? And is there things that as a European pillar within NATO or even the EU, that, um, the Europeans can do more, uh, to make that, that that gap less?

G.E.W. van Leeuwen:

Yeah. Well, let me first say that I think that the Russian invasion, um, in, in Ukraine is really a turning point in our European history, and it's a big wake up goal for populations. Um, the, the idea that we could lean backwards and, and, and, and to rely on you guys to to pay for security, that's completely gone. And if you see the, the speed of spending on defense, uh, all over Europe, especially in my country as well, uh, we are, uh, reaching 2% next year. It's 20 billion a year. Um, um, it's double from, from a couple of years ago. Um, we also have this false, this, this, this sense of necessity that we have to draw the line here. We accepted 2014, we accepted the downing of this MH 17. Uh, but this is really for that population, but especially also for the Brits, but many European countries, we had to draw the line. Uh, it is a sense of values in terms of you cannot ev invade another country, and our whole international based system will be broken down and others are watching how we will react. But the second is security, uh, is far, far away from here. It's very close to our sense. And if Putin will not be stopped, it would not have been stopped, would've been next. So I think it's really a turning point in terms of, uh, spending, uh, the Brits have been great in your, I think the leader, uh, again, in Europe in terms of resolve, in terms of spending. Uh, but we are number five, uh, not in percentage of gdp, but in in actual numbers. So it's the US real numbers, number one, it's two is the uk, three is Japan, first Germany, and five is in Netherlands. So for us, it's a wake up call, uh, and we heard the call and, and we are, we're doing actually doing, uh, quite a lot. And if you look at all over Europe combined, uh, we're reaching 40 billion this year. So that's equivalent to what, what the Americans are doing.

Peter Spiegel:

Let me ask you just as a follow up to that, the EU itself as an institution, um, because you Dutch are, are obviously both the founding member, both NATO and the EU have much to my surprise, to be honest with you, having lived in Brussels risk as years and covered the EU kind of got its security act in order in a certain extent and is developed a fund that e the EU itself as an institution with funding weaponry, um, and, and, uh, armaments for the Ukrainians. Talk to me a little bit about that and the EU emerging as a force in the, the security space and not just say, aid in trade as there are two tools for foreign policy.

G.E.W. van Leeuwen:

Yep. Well, I, I think there, I think also to the surprise of Putin and to many others to resolve the European Union to say this is enough and we're gonna strike back, especially non sanctions in the beginning phase of the war has been exemplary and we pulled together and we see and we understand the necessity of Europe beyond trade and aid, but also military terms. Having said that, for us in the Netherlands as a staunchly transatlantic country, we see, and I think it's, it's confirmed again by what

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has happened last year. The NATO is our cornerstone towards security. So yes, we will build a stronger, uh, defense forces in Europe, but all towards stronger alliance, stronger nato.

Peter Spiegel:

Tom, lemme turn to you and, and ask the slightly awkward question, um, about the eu, which is, um, you may not realize this, you're no longer in it anymore. Um, and bring this up because I had a conversation with a very senior EU official who came through New York, uh, not too long ago. And I said, isn't it a shame that just at a time when the EU gets his act together on, on foreign defense policy, that one of, if not the most capable militaries in Europe is not participating in this? And I got a very, um, I thought odd pushback, which is we would never have been able to do this if the Brits were in the house. Um, talk to me a little bit about Britain's role in European security. If the EU manages to get its act together on foreign security, uh, issues when you guys are on the, out

Tom Tugendhat:

The uk over the last, well, I was gonna say two or three years, but let's be honest, over the last 80 years has been one of the principal security providers to Europe. The only one that has matched it. Consistency is the United States. And the reality is the UK's role, whichever prime minister, whichever party has been in power, has been absolutely consistent. But frankly, in the last two years, you've seen that even greater. You know, when Rishi Sak took over his chancellor, he increased defense spending when Ben Wallace was alone practically in Europe, to get those lost in-laws in into Kyiv. It was really that that held off Russia's first thrust and allowed the Ukrainians to regroup and push back. So the idea that the UK isn't part of European security, I'm afraid it's simply false. The UK is remains and always will be a European power with a major security contribution. And I'm skipping very lightly over the intelligence contribution that we also make. Now, it's certainly true that other countries, France in particular, have made some very significant intelligence contributions, uh, in recent months and years, uh, from Europe. But the UK remains the principle intelligence and security provider to Europe, from Europe that is not to be overlooked. And while it's certainly true that our cooperation with the European Union has changed from a member to a partner, uh, the reality is that, uh, what Rishi Sak has done as Prime Minister has reset that relationship to one where we are working extremely well together.

Peter Spiegel:

You you mentioned the intelligence, uh, bit of it, and, and I guess as an alliance, there are certain countries that are good at this, we won't name in in shame, but uh, the UK is one of them. The US is one of them. France is one of them. You mentioned few of them, NATO as a whole may have gaps. And I know you've spoken out about this, uh, quite a bit. Can you talk a little bit about where you think NATO should go? What are we talking about at the inte issue of intelligence gathering, sharing?

Tom Tugendhat:

Sure. Look, if you look at, uh, how we're being threatened today, NATO has been a brilliant military partnership. There's no question about it. It's been essential to our common defense. But there are

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countries like Russia, China, Iran, that are now using the tactics of criminals and terrorists to challenge us. We've seen, uh, human trafficking being used as a form of destabilization. We've seen, uh, drugs being trafficked in order to harm different powers. We've seen a whole series of different criminal actions being used by hostile states and indeed non-state actors. And getting NATO together to share that intelligence in new and different ways and making sure we have the intelligence corporation that goes beyond the military, uh, into areas of crime, into areas of, uh, terrorism is extremely important for how we shape ourselves into the future. And that's something that the prime ministers asked me to work on and that we are doing a lot of work on. I know that many others, uh, around the European Union and indeed others outside the European Union, but in our neighboring areas have been extremely, uh, active in making sure that we're able to cooperate.

Peter Spiegel:

Jeffrey, can I put you on the spot on this one as well? Because the, the Dutch U situation here in that it is in many ways one of the most, or not the most trans-Atlantic Atlanticist nation on the continent. Uh, that's for sure. Um, we, we may not remember that there was a Secretary General. We forced Oldenberg. It's gone on for a long time. Um, he was Dutch. Um, you also are, however, a founding member of the EU and trying to square that circle. Maybe I'm making too much of this, but it is just striking to me again, if the EU is going to play an increasing role in defense in security issues, how does that work alongside your atlanticist tendencies to have the Americans and the Brits and others in, in the house as well?

G.E.W. van Leeuwen:

Well, first of all, we don't see the conflict. And, and let me also concur with my, uh, British friend. Uh, when we talk about European security and European partners, it's also the UK it's not EU. Uh, when we talk about European security, no, we don't see it as a conflict. Um, we do see NATO as the cornerstone of our collective security. We do see the need as Europe to step up. And we are, I think, stepping up at this moment. It means investing. I think it's number one, it's investment, investment investment. It's, it's basically having more budget to spend. Um, but it also means, and a lot of that investment and, and, and, and defense orders are, are, are coming to the US. Uh, and I think that solidifies our transatlantic relationship. But it also means working together with, with European partners. And we are doing so, uh, with the French, uh, on helicopters recently, but also with Germany. We're integrating our armed forces, um, with the, with the Belgium, uh, and German Navys reordering frigates and mine sweepers together. So we we're setting tremendous steps on the European front, um, but only to strengthen, basically NATO to make sure that collectively as Europe we we're stronger. But, but so we don't see the problem. We don't see the, the conflict.

Peter Spiegel:

Meia, lemme turn to you and ask a slightly different question. Cause we're supposed to be talking about the, the post. There will be a war, the war will end. And so sometimes it is, it doesn't seem like, but all wars come to an end.

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Tom Tugendhat:
Vla Ukraine will win

Peter Spiegel:

According to Tom, and Ukraine will win. Um, like all men, um, Vladimir Putin will, will, will disappear from the scene. Um, and so talking about what the post-war architecture, security architecture, um, of Europe would look like, you and you and David talked about the NATO end of things. Ukraine also wants to join the eu. Um, you as not only, uh, when you were a younger man worked to for, for nato, accession for Romania, you also worked for EU session for Romania. So can I ask you just put your Romanian hat on and, and, and, and think about this, I, I emailed, um, an old source of mine, uh, in Brussels, uh, saying I was going to to work on this panel. What should I raise? And he said, the most difficult thing we are dealing with now is the issue of Ukrainian membership. And I just wanna read what he, what he sent to me.

Um, the very success of the EU that which makes others want to become part of it is what will pull us apart, if you can. Ukraine is brought in his argument being you will have a member of the EU that is at war with Russia, has a, a military, even if the war is over, has a military that is clearly ready for a fight with Russia. It's a country. 40 million people all now countries like Romania, which gets net uh, benefits from the EU will have to be net payers into Ukraine. How do you see Ukraine joining the eu given Zelensky passionate plea to join?

Mircea Geoană:

I have a fundamental belief that all nations on my continent in Europe that desire democratically freely to join the west and are ready to join the west. They will be joining our family, nato, eu or combination of both. I have absolutely no doubt historically, strategically, philosophically and personally. I know that Ukraine will be with us. I know the Republic of Moldova will be with us. They're neutral constitutionally. So this is eu. I know that Georgia, an exceptionally relevant strategic country across the Black Sea, towards the Cusas. And Santa Asia, in the end will be with us because this is also NATO and eu. This is all about the choice of free nations on our continent to be able to, to choose to choose their destiny. So I'm not that much concerned about the arrival of Ukraine in terms of, of, uh, you know, net payers.

I think Chancellor Schultz had a quite interesting remark, I think a few months back, uh, way, uh, after the Titan Vende, uh, major speech, uh, he made a quite interesting remark that after this war, the center of gravity in Europe is moving east towards. And I think he's right. And I believe this is good. And I believe this is, uh, something that will have to, to, to, to rearrange in a way political, economic, technological, military power. This will be more evenly distributed across, across, uh, our continent. The other thing that I would also mention, uh, president Macron had a very interesting remark in Keino when there was a summit of the European political community. He, he said something quite interesting and that resonates his music to my ears. That the difference between the founding older of the club, of the clubs and the new ones starts to be less distinguishable.

So the new ones are learning the ropes. The new ones are becoming stronger with one condition. And this is true for my country, this true for Ukraine is true for Moldova. Anyone else, if we continue to transform from with them more transparency, real democracy, rule of law, and really putting our

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potential to work. So I'm absolutely convinced, absolutely convinced as being an eyewitness to transformation of my continent since, since I was much younger and a younger BA to Washington, I know that have Ukraine, I know have Moldova, I know have Georgia, and I know every country that wishes and, and is prepared to join us. They should be with us. Just a small, a small footnote about numbers last year, European allies in Canada have increased their defense spending before Venus. The decisions by 8.3% of their GDP up to 2030 European allies will be purchasing 600 F 30 fives nato, EU with the arrival of Sweden and Finland.

And I'm so happy that these two great democracies, grace nations are also with us. In nato. 96% of the population of EU member states will be also NATO populations. So we have only one thing, and I'm happy that I have my British and, and, and, and Dutch allies here, but this is true for our French allies. True for everyone else. I also do not see an inherent tension between the, you becoming stronger in defense and NATO continue to be even much stronger on defense. We need each other. We are too sides of the same coin. And also to, if you look to the competition also with China and the others, we'll need everyone. And this is why I'm so happy to see our alliance moving forward. I'm so happy to see our European Union moving forward. And also it's not only the UK uh, here, it's also, uh, TOK is also Norway. There are other, let me give you an example of a contribution. Uh, and I'm asked by US Congress and members of Congress why we are not spending as much as the us If you put military help for Ukraine, economic support for Ukraine, macroeconomic support for Ukraine, humanitarian for refugees, and having Ukrainian kids, you know, learn in our schools all over Europe, there's also a cost. So I would say that of course, US continues to be the number one military provider because of the size of the country. But I would say that the others are also trying to also cover their part of the deal. Iceland doesn't have an army and they're contributing with C one 30 s or whatever they have for transportation, uh, for help for Ukraine. So I think, I think we are doing pretty much okay, we should do much better. But I think we are not that bad as some people try to describe.

Peter Spiegel:

Can I just challenge you a little bit on the, the first bit of your remarks, this, the music to your ears? Um, cuz it, it, it's slightly surprising to honest with you, to hear you say that again. My, I was, I was in Brussels for the original Ukraine crisis 2014. Um, and the bolts, the central Eastern Europeans, the Brits to a certain extent pounding the table. We see, we told you so. We told you so. And yet there was a huge percentage, a huge percentage, a large percentage of member states, um, I maybe should name in shame, but I won't mention any countries that are here right now. Let's say the Italians being one of them, um, who wanted to go back doing business with, with the Russians very quickly. And the polls and the bolts were furious about this. Um, you are saying now that you think the whole of of, of Europe is singing in one songbook as as as Europe moves east. Can I just push you? Do you really believe that? Because I do think there are still countries out there, um, who roll their eyes at the bolts and the polls when they are banging the table about the Russians. Um, just wanted to to push you a bit on that.

Mircea Geoană:

Yeah. Um, I think the allies from the East were right in saying that Russia is a dangerous, uh, player, but I'm not in the business here and not even without my official position to criticize also the other allies in

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Europe because geography matters. Not everybody is a neighbor to to, to Russia. They, they, our allies from the south, from the Mediterranean, Spain, Italy, Italy, and the others, they are concerned as we are in NATO about the risk of terrorism, instability, fragility into an arc of instability from the Gulf of Guinea all the way to Afghanistan. So not every nation has this, an identical strategic culture deriving from its history and geography, number one. The second, the second thing, I believe what really happened, and I would like to thank our US UK and other allies because there was a lessons learned from 2014, I understand from my colleagues that were in, in the organization in NATO in 2014, that it took a few weeks for all allies to recognize that the little green man were in fact Russian.

These guys, guys and what the US and UK and others have done prior to the invasion, like never before is information intelligence sharing with allies at the volume and a level of intimacy. Like never, ever before Abel Haynes was in Brussels more often than she was in her office here in Washington, director Burns and the others uk. And I think the fact that we are able to go to a level of, of sharing, of real sensitive information kept this alliance very much together. Also, speaking of the ones who are doing business with Russia, because mercantilistic interest do exist, I have to say that they've done exceptionally quick and fast Germany disentangled from the Russian gas and the others, it was costly and speaking also in terms of burden sharing, I think now I think 40% of gas in Europe comes from us, L N g, which is also good for business. So, uh, yeah, I think we learned the lessons and I'm quite confident that these lessons will stay with us.

Peter Spiegel:

So I hope you're right. I hope, right. Tom, lemme turn to you and, and, and go back to something I said at the start, which is, and, and you added to my, my comments that this war will end and let's, let's, let's hope that Ukraine is, is the victor. And let's go to that scenario. Let's go. I think the way you, your remarks, um, you're looking at a, an expanded NATO with Ukraine as a member, um, a defeated Russia, perhaps a Putin less Russia. Um, what does Russia does not then disappear. It still exists on the periphery of Europe. How does the European security architecture, we welcome Russia back at the family of nations. We tried this once after 89. Um, someone mentioned the NATO Russia council. I had to attend those, I had to cover those things on multiple occasions. Um, it was very clear no one took this seriously. And, um, uh, there was a lot of rolling of the eyes about NATO still is about keeping the Americans in the Germans down and the Russians out. What should a post-war Russia's role or relationship with look like if we get to the best case scenario?

Tom Tugendhat:

Well, Russia's got two choices. Fundamentally. It can either be a partner with Europe or a vassal of China. We'd all like it to be a partner of Europe. But that means changing some things inside and some things outside. Outside. It means ending the occupation of Georgia. It means ending the occupation of Ukraine. It means releasing people like Evan Gers, sovich, uh, and uh, and uh, Alex Navalny. It means actually changing, uh, the political dynamic inside, but those things are doable in a Russia that isn't run by a mafia gang calling itself a government. Those things are possible in a Russia that actually has business relations with the West that are not simply based on arm sales and energy. Mm-hmm. Now all of those things are possible. And again, no, you're right. This isn't the first time. But again, the UK and

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I'm sure the European Union, though I can't speak for them, of course, I hold out a hand of friendship and would very much welcome, uh, a relationship with Russia that sees it as a, a fair partner.

Peter Spiegel:

Let me tell on something you said. I mean the, the, the two things that which are clear I think everyone has agreed with is obviously Russia out of Ukraine is a condition. Russia out of other places don't do it again. The other thing you mentioned though was an internal reform, uh, freeing Evan, uh, other things internally. Is that not a bit naive? Is it not? What we learned from, frankly from the Persian is the next leader could be more Pergo than Navalny. And if it is a Persian figure, as long as they get out of Ukraine and promise not to do anything like that again, is that good enough to return to the top table? Cuz that is what we did in the Soviet period. We, it was a regime that we detested, and yet we did welcome 'em back to the top table, had summits with them in various places. Is it good enough to just do the first two and not the third?

Tom Tugendhat:

Well, I mean, in the Soviet period, we have much to do with 'em either. I mean, we, we did the top table negotiations, that's true. But the only trade was energy. Mm. There was pretty much nothing else. If we want, uh, and I think we do want Russia to be a European partner and not a Chinese vassal, then what we want is we want a ch uh, a Moscow and a Petersburg that looks west, not east. And I think those things are entirely possible. You just have to meet Russians. Okay. Admittedly more in Istanbul and, uh, and Dubai than in Moscow these days. Uh, some of us are sanctioned, um, you know, and you, you meet people who really do look to the West. You see young people in Russia studying in Berlin, in Paris and London. Uh, not so many studying in Beijing.

Peter Spiegel:

Jeffrey, let me ask you the same question, but a slightly different way, which is, um, the EU now is debating the issue of whether to take Russians seized assets and, and including sovereign assets and use them for the rebuilding. Um, one of the countries that has been, uh, objecting to this has been Germany. Um, I'm not sure they've articulated this way, but I think we'll all remember that in 1919, Germany had a very bad experience in which a defeated country decided was forced to pay reparations to those who were the victors. Uh, do we not risk repeating that error in again, if I may, may, if I, I use their scenario where best case scenario, Ukraine wins in nato, Russia defeated, don't we have to find ways to bring Russia back to the family nation and isn't forcing reparations on Russia the basic say be made in 1919?

G.E.W. van Leeuwen:

Yeah, it's a, it's a difficult con, difficult one. We we're not in principle against, uh, seizing the, the well we seized word yes assets, but using it for Ukraine, but has to be done in illegal. And I think that's German's objection as well. It has to be in a legal sound matter to hold up in the courts. Uh, so we're, we're not that, that far that we can say we can, we can do this. Uh, yeah, I think that's also for, for longer term.

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Uh, and on, on the short, medium term, uh, it is making sure Ukraine can push them back and that's all our focus is on. So we're not ready yet to, to take those assets, um, and, and give that to, to Ukraine.

Peter Spiegel:

Can I ask you just the same thing I asked Tom, which is, if the scenario Tom put, and I'm putting slightly words in your, in your word mouth, so I apologize, but the three, the three things that are, are required to, to rejoin the family nations one out of Ukraine. Two, don't do it again, get outta the region three, some kind of internal reform so we see them joining with our values and stuff like that. Do you think all three are necessary? Because again, in the Soviet period, we had a very peaceful coexistence with a lot of danger, but there was peaceful coexistence without number three. And the likelihood of number three happening, I think is far less likely than one and two. Or would you accept a, a Russia with a Persian type of leader in, in Moscow, but as long as they got out of Ukraine and promise not to, they got outta the other bits of the world where they're making promises.

G.E.W. van Leeuwen:

Yeah, but probably we have to judge them by behavior. Don't have much, much choice. Um, but I don't think particularly we're gonna be eager to return to normalcy with Russia. I mean, look at all our business investments being wiped out. I think there's very little interest to return to Russia, uh, in that sense. Uh, so I think we'll just take it as it comes. Uh, I I I think it will will take some time to see what their actions are, but I don't think we'll define exact criteria to, to what extent we're gonna talk to them.

Peter Spiegel:

Fair enough, fair enough. I'm, I'm getting two different numbers about how much time is left, so I'm gonna go with the one that's as, as, as the longest, uh, as, as someone else did. Um, let me change the topic entirely. Um, um, we are after all in Aspen, we are in the United States. Um, and we have in many ways a reinvigorated NATO with again, to to quote, um, the first Secretary General of nato, the Americans in, um, robustly. Okay. I'm getting, this might be the last question then. <laugh>. Um, however, it was not so long ago there was a president, the United States, who shall we say, was not so enthusiastic about the transatlantic relationship, as a matter of fact, threatened to pull out, uh, and, and there is a non-zero chance that that man could be returning, um, to the White House. Is the US still a reliable ally to the Europeans in nato? Jeffrey, let me ask you to start with that and, and go down the line.

G.E.W. van Leeuwen:

Okay. Well, absolutely yes. I mean, for us it's, it's, it's the strategic most important ally that we have. We have, uh, not just on security, but also on trade investment. The US is a number one investor in Netherlands. We're the number two investor in the United States. They're 1 million American jobs because of Dutch investment. Uh, we, we, we, we got along quite well with the previous, uh, president. My prime minister always said, we understand what he's saying. We understand that, that you're upset, but the fact that we as Europe collectively are not doing enough on defense. So we got those messages, we're doing something about it. So we are, we are quite happy to deal with any president, uh, you

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would elect in the future. Very, very pragmatic. Uh, and, but as a key ally, uh, it is the most crucial ally to ask

Peter Spiegel:

Tom. Same question. Obviously given a little bit more weight, given the special relationship, you know, this was, this was not a president who treated the potential relationship particularly well. Um, are you at all concerned that, that a return of a Trump administration would, would see the, the, the unity of the alliance that we've now seen fray?

Tom Tugendhat:

Well, to misquote, uh, a former president of yours, while the Dutch may be number two, we were number one in terms of investment. Uh, and it's, uh, you know, this is a very deep alliance I see in the audience general John Allen, I served under his command in Afghanistan. And I have served alongside, um, many US officers, some of whom have now made it to three and four. So it's amazing. Generals are getting younger these days, <laugh>, and it's, um, this is not just a deal, it's not a, it, it's, it's not a treaty that is exchanged. The reality is that the relationship that we have, certainly in terms of security, but in many other areas as well, is absolutely fundamental to who we are. And the exchange of personnel between our forces, our intelligence, uh, information and so on, is so much deeper than anything that happens between number 10 and the White House that I'm not genuinely concerned. And that's not to say that good relationships can't advance things. Of course they can, but the reality is that the relationship between our two nations is so deep that it's not something that a four year or even an eight year term will change.

Peter Spiegel:

Marcia, let me have you the last person to address this, but ask you the question in a slightly different way, which is, um, within a, both an EU and NATO context, some of the reaction to the Trump administration was, holy cow, we need to take our own defense much more seriously. We have relied on the American umbrella for too long. So there was a bit of a salutatory effect in that actually we have to get our own house in order. Has is that, is that still you think the case and does the prospect of a Trump administration light a fire under the Europeans to be more serious about how they think about their own security and defense?

Mircea Geoană:

Listen, we work, uh, with both sides of the aisle. Um, on, on the hill, I'm seeing the numbers in the American public opinion supporting nato 67, 60 8%. So rock solid. What I what I know that in the arch competition with China and whoever else China will be attracting in its orbit, America needs all its allies, not only in Europe, but around the world. This is a formidable competition. And for the first time, probably for us Europeans in five centuries, for Americans since the inception, or America becoming a global superpower, this is a formidable challenge. You need all your allies, big and small European, non-European, because this is what America has is more precious than anything else. So Secretary generalist,

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Totenberg, uh, in, he's already, uh, uh, extended, uh, after extension mandate. And uh, we are very proud to work with him. And, and, and for him.

He served with President Obama, president Trump, president Biden. And of course there are differences. Of course there are nuances, of course it makes a difference. But by all, I think there is a realization on both sides of the aisle in this great country of America that is good to have allies. It's good to have friends. So yeah, there will be differences in Europe. To answer the second part of the question, there's always be a natural question mark, is it good to be overdependent on one big ally? And sometimes there is also a political argument that is trying to use the pretext of so-called American, let's say. Not only is very, very linear, uh, foreign policy, uh, to advance some political subjects, very pathetic. So I think, I think we are pretty rock solid. Uh, America needs his European allies, we need America, and all of us need, uh, all around the world friends and allies. That's bottom line. Tom,

Peter Spiegel:

Have you completely spoiled your candidacy to become defense secretary? I feel I owe it to you to have the last word you wanna watch. Put one more thing on, on here.

Tom Tugendhat:

Look, the, the, the last thing I was gonna say is the major strategic challenges we are facing are of course Russia and Europe, China, in different ways around the world. And Iran operating as a terrorist state, attempting to murder people in the UK and sadly here too. And staying strong on all three of these is incredibly important. But one of the things that is absolutely striking about the relationship that they have with others and we have between ourselves is they have no allies. They occasionally brutalize other nations into supporting them. They occasionally bribe other nations in supporting them. The United States, the United Kingdom, all other NATO partners have partners who are willing to go with them because they know it's the right thing to do. That is an amazing position of strength and that's why this alliance means so much more than others. On

Peter Spiegel:

That optimistic note, shall we wrap up please? A round of applause for my panel here, Griffin.