

AMERICA-2016/05/05

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AMERICA'S PLACE IN THE WORLD

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. WRIGHT: Good afternoon. My name is Tom Wright. I'm director of the Project on International Order and Strategy here at Brookings, and it's my pleasure to welcome everyone here today to a very special event co-organized with the Pew Research Center. I would like to thank Pew for partnering with us on launching their new survey on America's Place in the World, which looks at American attitudes on foreign policy and many of the most pressing questions that have been debated over the last six months in the primary campaigns. The timing could not be better. We have copies of the findings around the room and I think you'll find that it breaks it down by support for the different candidates, so it gives us a very interesting insight into where the country is and to where the debate is headed over the next six months.

I would like to thank Bruce Stokes, Carroll Doherty, and Bridget Jameson from Pew for partnering with us here today. And we have a very exceptional lineup. Carroll Doherty will present the findings for 15 or 20 minutes and then we'll have a panel discussion chaired by Margaret Brennan. Margaret is a foreign affairs correspondent with CBS News and we thank her for chairing the panel here today.

On the panel we have my colleague Bob Kagan, who's a senior fellow with the Project on International Order and Strategy here at Brookings. Derek Chollet, who is counselor and senior advisor for security and defense policy at the German Marshall Fund. He is also author of the forthcoming book on Obama's foreign policy called "The Long Game." And we're particularly pleased to have him here since, as you'll see, he was recently in the wars in Rock Creek Park and is here. We have a spot for him up there, but glad you made it here, Derek, so thank you. And Laure Mandeville, who's a Washington correspondent for Le Figaro, who will give us sort of an international perspective on the findings and what Europeans and French people will sort of interpret these findings as being is there something happening in the United States about America's role in the world?

With about 30 minutes to go, we'll turn to all of you in the audience for questions and answers.

Bob asked me to give his apologies in advance because he has to leave at 4:30 for a prior engagement, but we're very grateful that he can stay here for the first hour.

AMERICA-2016/05/05

So without further ado, I will call on Carroll Doherty to present the findings. Oh, one final thing. We have a hashtag, #usworldrole, so please Tweet. Thank you very much.

MR. DOHERTY: Thank you so much. It's great to reconnect with Bob after many years when I worked at CBS and he was at the State Department. So let me run through these slides.

Let me talk about this study a little bit first. America's Place in the World has a long and rich history at the Pew Research Center. My former boss, the late president of the Pew Research Center, Andrew Kohut, started this after the end of the Cold War to measure attitudes about foreign policy and global engagement, so it's more than 20 years old. It has a long history.

We normally do it every four years. We pushed it up a little bit this time because of we wanted to do some comparative attitudes in Europe, which are coming next month, so stay tuned for that. Some of these same measures that you see in this report we will present that data from Western Europe so you can see how Americans stand internationally.

So with that, let me get started. The other advantage, of course, of doing it this year is that you have a fairly boring presidential campaign to look at and you can see how the candidates' supporters view these issues. (Laughter) So let me get started and, hopefully, this works.

These are some core measures of engagement. As you can see, the public is wary. Now on some other measures that we have trends for it's not quite as reluctant in, say, 2013. That was a particularly low moment for international engagement. Nonetheless, you see a great deal of reluctance here. Fifty-seven percent said that let other countries deal with their own problems as best they can. We need to focus on the U.S. problems.

This question in the middle, does the U.S. do too much, too little, or the right amount in terms of solving world problems, you know, more say too much than too little. But there's a little bit of downtick since 2013 after the NSA scandal and some other developments then and, of course, before the rise of ISIS.

And this is a new question for us and a very interesting one in the current campaign context. Is U.S. involvement in the global economy a bad thing because it costs jobs and wages or a good thing because it opens up new markets for the United States? Pretty close division there, but more say bad than good, which is interesting when you see how that breaks down.

AMERICA-2016/05/05

You see the partisan difference there, 55. This is a very different Republican Party than the one Bob may know in terms of Republican support for global economic engagement, but look at where that's coming from. These are people who supported Donald Trump in the primaries, 65 percent say U.S. global economic engagement is a bad thing. You know, far more -- you see a little signal on the Democratic side, as well, with Sanders supporters being more skeptical of economic engagement than Clinton supporters. But look at that, among all the candidates who were still running as of when this study was being conducted it's Clinton supporters who stand out, 55 percent having a positive view. And that's the only group of candidate supporters in which there's a majority saying this is actually a positive thing, so that's very interesting.

We asked about a number of global threats and how to deal with them, and you see huge divisions. Some of these aren't new, but the magnitude and scope of them, especially on ideological grounds, very interesting. This is the list.

You know, no surprise here that ISIS is the top threat, 80 percent calling it a major threat to the United States. Cyber-attacks have gotten a lot of attention in recent years, also seen widely as a real danger to the United States' global economy instability.

The surprise perhaps for us is the refugee exodus, which is a relatively new concern for Americans, 55 percent calling it a major threat. And you'll see, this really divides along partisan and ideological lines even though it's a relatively new concern.

This is probably a little bit hard to read. Read the legend along the bottom and you can see liberal Democrats on the left, conservative Republicans on the right. And there's a lot going on in this graphic, so take some time with it. It's very interesting.

Liberal Democrats, 81 percent call climate change a major threat, far more than say that about anything else, including ISIS. They're the only ideological group in which ISIS isn't the top threat. Now go over to the right and see the conservative side. Of course, not surprising perhaps that global climate change, 18 percent. I mean, you know, this is something we've been seeing in our surveys, domestic surveys, for quite a while, this massive ideological divide over the threat of global warming.

But also, look up at the 93 percent of conservatives who say ISIS is a threat, again, no surprise, but 80 percent say the refugee exodus from Iraq and Syria constitutes a major threat to the

AMERICA-2016/05/05

United States. This has really come on the radar in the past couple of months. And you see only 30 percent of liberals. I mean, as we set up the 2016 presidential campaign, you can see these massive gaps across many of these issues; others, not so much. I mean, there are some that there's relative agreement on, even on things like China and Russia and things like that, although liberals tend to rate most threats as less important than the other groups.

This was one of the surprising, I think, findings from the report that there's this sudden desire for an increase in defense spending. You know, we've been tracking this measure for quite a while now. That's the highest percentage, 35 percent saying increase defense spending, among the general public, the highest share saying that since October 2001, which is a month after 9-11. And, you know, again, still the status quo is the plurality view, but it's gone up from 13 percent in 2011.

And look at where it's all coming from. You know, what you can see here is the degree to which Republicans and especially conservative Republicans are motivated by security concerns, especially in the wake of the emergence of ISIS. I mean, this has just skyrocketed, the support for higher defense spending among conservative Republicans. And really, much more modestly among all other ideological groups.

This is a question we've also been asking for a while. You know, what's the best way to deal with the threat of global terrorism, not necessarily ISIS specifically, but global terrorism generally? An even divide again, the public evenly divided on the best way to deal with this threat. And this actually adds more detail, not just saying overwhelming force, but overwhelming force the best.

The other side, relying too much on force creates hatred and, therefore, more terrorism. You see an even divide and you see this ideological split that we've been seeing, partisan split that we've been seeing in our polls for quite a while. Not much difference on the Republican side based on candidate supporters there. A little bit of difference on the Democratic side, but as you look forward to a general election of Trump versus Clinton, you can see this is going to be a fundamental area of disagreement.

This is a very interesting trend that we've been tracking for a while, again since after the 9-11 attacks. Is your bigger concern that terrorism policies have gone too far in restricting civil liberties or not gone far enough in protecting the country? And these views have fluctuated over the past decade.

AMERICA-2016/05/05

What you can see there in that 2013 period is about a 50-50 split. You see the lines even cross there, that more said the policies had gone too far in restricting civil liberties. This was in the wake of the Snowden revelations and the NSA surveillance issue, the emergence of that. And even Republicans, you know, this had some powerful resonance with Republicans in the 2013 period. Very little partisan difference at that time on the percentage saying the anti-terrorism policies had not gone far enough to protect the country. There's almost no partisan divisions for the first time since 9-11.

Now look at what happened since ISIS. Sixty-four percent of Republicans now are worried that these policies haven't gone far enough. The concerns, I think, that many Republicans, and you saw this in the Republicans in the Congress, as well, had over the overreach of some of the NSA programs, I think, has kind of gone away in the wake of the emergence of ISIS. Still there among Democrats.

And here the divide is clearly on the Democratic side, it's the Sanders supporters who are more worried about these policies going too far and restricting civil liberties. This really shows you how long this campaign has gone. I think if Rand Paul's name was up there, you might see a little different result among the Republicans. But the Republicans, regardless of who they support, are pretty much in lockstep on this issue.

Now, views of Israel and NATO. These are other issues that have come up in the current campaign, so I'll just walk through them pretty quickly. I mean, what you see on Israel, this question has been asked since the late 1970s and consistently more Americans have said they sympathize with Israel than the Palestinians by wide margins, and that remains the case today. But you see these views becoming more partisan over time, especially over the last decade, decade and a half. Current poll, 75 percent of Republicans, 43 percent of Democrats sympathize more with Israel. Not a big change from recent years.

But look at the ideological, and there's a lot going on in this, but look at the liberal Democrats in the lower right-hand corner. The lines have just about crossed there. There's about an even split between the share of liberal Democrats who say they side or sympathize with Israel as with the Palestinians. And all of that growth has come on the Palestinian side. It's not so much a loss of support as it is for Israel.

What people do, what liberal Democrats have done in polls in the past have sort of volunteered either both or neither, you know, they didn't really take a side. And so those people in particular now are sympathizing more with the Palestinians. If you go to our report you'll see a big age gap on this issue, as well, where young people, millennials in particular, sympathizing more with the Palestinians than in the past.

NATO, despite the GOP nominee's rhetoric, 77 percent say it's good for the United States. I mean, you see this across party lines. It's on of the issues in this survey where you do see some bipartisanship actually. You know, Trump people are little bit more skeptical than others. Thirty percent say it's bad for the U.S., which is about double the share among the general public, the highest among any candidate's supporters, Democrat or Republican. But still this large, overwhelming share saying NATO's a good thing for the United States.

Now, this other question shows a little more nuance. Is NATO more important to other NATO nations than it is to the United States, about as important or more important to the U.S.? You know, there's something going on there with NATO, I think, and that reflects a little bit of Trump's rhetoric. If you take the Trump supporters on that question, about half say NATO is more important to other NATO allies than it is to the United States, so, you know, stay tuned for this issue also emerging. But right now, I mean, there's no doubt about the benefits for the United States from NATO.

This is something we found in our last report, this kind of -- and you see it in the Obama era in particular, this large percentage saying the U.S. is less important and powerful than it had been 10 years ago. It's a relatively new phenomenon, again a very partisan issue. You see Republicans in particular saying this. It's really been a critique of the Obama foreign policy, you know, that we're weak around the world. And it's something, I think, that Trump, again, if you were to just look at Donald Trump supporters, it's over 70 percent saying that.

But, and the big but is, in a separate survey so we can't crosswalk these two findings, the United States still, despite all of its troubles, seen as the top economic power, in fact, by a little bit of a bigger margin than a few years ago. Now, that may reflect the public's recognition of China's economic problems, but still, that's a 20 point gap on the economic side, 54 percent saying the U.S. is the top power economically and 34 percent China.

AMERICA-2016/05/05

And the military power is even more lopsided with 72 percent saying the U.S. and 12 percent China. So, you know, in the view of a lot of Americans, especially Republicans, the United States may be less powerful, but not less powerful than other nations. Less powerful than in the past perhaps. So, you know, not all is doom and gloom.

And this is just a little information about the Pew Research Center. With that, I'll wrap it up and we can talk about the findings. (Applause)

MS. BRENNAN: Well, Derek, you know how to make an entrance. So while we all get mic'ed up I'll go down the line and introduce for you Derek Chollet here just came up on stage with the crutches. He just recently -- or I guess --

MR. CHOLLET: A year ago.

MS. BRENNAN: A year ago now left the Obama administration, had been at the Pentagon. We've traveled some miles around the world together. He's now at the German Marshall Fund and recently wrote the book "The Long Game," about Obama defying expectations. He's going to explain some of that.

Bob Kagan here, who you all very well know from Brookings, is right next to me. Carroll you just hear lay out all this information, he's going to help us sort of make sense of what this means to give us some perspective. And Laure Mandeville is from Le Figaro. She has been covering here in the U.S. the Obama administration since its inception. She's the U.S. bureau chief for that paper and she's going to give us a little bit of the view of what the rest of the world thinks about America, so we can all keep that perspective.

So to all of you, we just saw what is assumed to be a degree of change in terms of America's place in the world. And I actually want to start with you, Laure, because this is something I constantly hear when I travel the world, whether I'm in Europe, whether I'm in the Middle East, is that something has fundamentally changed, whether it's how America interacts with the rest of the world or that America doesn't want to have the role it once held. What is the perception of the U.S. right now?

MS. MANDEVILLE: Well, I guess there has been, of course, a big change since Obama came to power. But it's interesting, I mean, if we take, for instance, Europe. I think if you take different countries in the world probably things would be different, but if we take Europe for a start when Obama

AMERICA-2016/05/05

comes to power there is this view in Western Europe, and especially I would say in France, that the U.S. has been overreaching in terms of overusing its power abroad. And there is this famous expression by the former minister of foreign affairs, Hubert Védrine, of the hyper power, *hyperpuissance*, which was that America had gone too far, that there was this vertigo of success and of the unilateral -- the single superpower trying to shape the world the way they wanted, and exporting values, democracy, and going too far. I mean, trying to eat too much or do too much.

SPEAKER: Which he said during the Clinton administration.

SPEAKER: Yeah, I was going to say, that was the 1990s is when he said that.

MS. MANDEVILLE: Yes, during the '90s, you're absolutely right. It started in the 1990s, after 1991. But I think the big moment when there is this idea that it's going too far comes with Iraq. And Obama comes at this period and in Europe he's absolutely -- in France they are under the spell of Obama. They think he's going to be the best friend of Europe and they are very excited. And actually, Obama disappoints Europe I would say pretty much from the start because he starts his presidency from a trip to Europe, but it is perceived as not the most important thing. Nevertheless, you know, that he sort of pays the due and then moves to other things.

And there is this famous concept of pivoting to Asia, which is going to traumatize the Europeans. And Bob would say what do you want, you Europeans? When we are very present, you think we are too present. And when we withdraw, you're complaining, so you're never happy. Right? Like in a marriage. (Laughter) And there is some truth to that. When I arrived here, it was very fascinating that a few months after Obama came in, the Europeans started complaining that he was not paying enough attention, that he was not sufficiently aware of what was going on. And so it was very interesting.

What I would say from my own point of view when I arrived in this town is that when I arrived in December of 2008, I was actually covering before for 20 years the post-Communist world in Russia, and I had just come from the front in Georgia. So for me, what was going on in Europe was pretty tough and I knew, you know, because I had followed Russia for many years, that Russia had entered a very aggressive kind of revisionist period and that we would hear from Russia a lot. And I was very struck when I arrived here that Russia had disappeared as a threat. It was the time of reset, of the

AMERICA-2016/05/05

sort of great expectations of a kind of friendship with the Russians.

And, at the same time, there was a total underestimation, I would say ignorance, of the Islamic issue here. It was not seen at all as a problem. And I'd also been covering Islam in Europe since 2001, and you could see that the question of identity in Islam in Europe was a rising question, extremely important. And the Americans didn't want to see it for different reasons that we can explore later on if you want. But this was the sort of context in the beginning of what we saw of Obama.

And so there is this kind of situation that goes on, you know, some frustrations. And Obama, at the same time, saying actually things that Donald Trump is saying now, telling the Europeans take your part of the burden, you're not doing enough in defense, et cetera.

And then comes August 2013, which is I think a very important turning point when the French, for instance, are ready to do something in Syria. They are ready to go and they're nearly in the planes, the French pilots. And Obama decides that there's not going to be any kind of intervention after the red line had been broken by Assad. And at this point, I think there is really a very important moment for understanding the Americans. Something is happening in America that it's not going to be the same America now.

MS. BRENNAN: Bob, do you see that as a turning point? I mean, you hear America, when you've traveled the world, defined in either the post-World War II sense or the post-Cold War sense. Is there a post-red line America? I mean, is that moment that Laure just described in terms of changing the U.S. view of the world?

MR. KAGAN: Well, I think that moment sort of epitomized and sort of crystallized what had already been occurring. I mean, clearly, the United States has been in -- the experience of Iraq and Afghanistan and the financial crisis, I think it's not surprising that the United States decided that or many Americans decided that they were -- you know, dealing with the rest of the world was not their problems right now, a great degree of feeling that American power was not effective in the world, et cetera. We had the books about the post-American world. So I think that the decision in the summer of 2013 was sort of the symbol of what had already been occurring.

What I think we see in these polls and what we've seen for quite some time is a real questioning of a long period of relatively bipartisan consensus on America's role in the world that began

AMERICA-2016/05/05

at the end of World War II. And I think it had sort of been on strategic fumes after the Cold War, but a series of presidents had nevertheless kept the United States in that role. But I don't think it's surprising that Americans are having real questions about that role. It's a huge burden, it's a moral burden, it's a physical burden, it's an economic burden, and that's what's happening now.

And the only thing I would say is the other thing you can tell from these polls, which you can see all through American history, A, Americans tend to follow what their party leaders are suggesting is correct; and, B, a lot of what Americans feel bubbles up to the top, but they also sort of respond to and take direction from what the president and their political leaders are saying. This president has been saying since he came into office that we have got to turn from nation building abroad to nation building at home. That has found a receptive chord. Trump has played into that. And so I think, you know, it's not only what the American people have done, but what their political leaders have decided to do that has set the tone.

The only person who has been out there sort of representing -- the only person who currently has been a plausible candidate representing this bipartisan consensus is Clinton. And I think in her own party it's a weakness.

So let me just end by saying if you look at the broad sweep of American history beginning at least in the late 19th century, American attitude towards engagement and involvement in the world has gone up and down in a kind of sine wave: periods of extensive engagement have generally been followed by periods of disillusionment, a sense that it's too expensive, and a desire, sort of movement toward retrenchment. And you can see this, I won't bore you with it, but you can see it going up and down all the way through this period.

We're clearly in one of those trenches now, a sort of low part of the sine wave. And for me probably the only question is, how long and deep is that trench before it starts to go back up again? Well, during the Cold War they were brief and shallow. After Vietnam, five years later it's Ronald Reagan, let's go back into the world and lead. After World War I it was 20 years and even Hitler rampaging across Europe was not enough to convince Americans that they ought to engage. I don't know which trough we're in, whether we're in a brief, shallow trough or a deep and long trough. My gut tells me it's the latter.

MS. BRENNAN: Speaking of troughs, Derek?

AMERICA-2016/05/05

MR. CHOLLET: So, first, apologies about the foot. I know this is not the most pleasant thing to look at for everybody.

But I agree with a lot of what Bob said about kind of the overall trend and, as we've seen through the history, the back-and-forth. I actually -- when I look at this data, I see us as coming out of a trough in some ways. I looked at some of the trend analysis. You didn't present it here, but the question of should the U.S. be globally engaged was down in the single digits in 2011/2012 and is now climbing up out of that.

And, look, I think there's no question if you look at what President Obama inherited in 2008, this wasn't just kind of he as a leader decided it's time for us to do nation building at home, so, therefore, as an ideological matter that's what we should be doing. That was what he confronted. I mean, it was the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. We were shedding 800,000 jobs a month. There were entire sections of our economy that were in jeopardy. And part of the reason for that, not the only reason, maybe not even the most important reason, part of the reason for that was the way we had conducted ourselves in the world in the 2000s, mainly by going to war without paying for it. Anyway, doing it on a credit card without a limit. So we needed to right-size that. We needed to steady the ship and I think that's what he did.

What's interesting, Bob, is you're right because, eight years ago, if we were sitting here it would have been all about the post-American world, the rise of the BRICS. Actually, that's not what we're seeing now. Goldman Sachs closed up its BRICS fund last year because it's not making any money. I think there's some renewed confidence of America in the world.

What I'm struck by, this is where I totally agree with Bob, is there's a lot more partisanship about American foreign policy generally. It won't come as much of a surprise to you all given that I served in the Obama administration that although both parties are complicit in that, and, Lord knows, on the Democratic side in the 2000s there were no badges of honor earned in the way the Democrats handled the critique of the Iraq War oftentimes, but I think there's no question that the Republican Party has become more partisan and more corrosive over the last eight years for a lot of reasons that have nothing to do with foreign policy. And it's affected all parts of our political debate, particularly our foreign policy debate.

AMERICA-2016/05/05

So, therefore, it's made it harder for President Obama, who has tried to pursue what I believe is a sound strategy for the future. It's been harder to implement that given the fact that he has a political environment here at home that is extremely difficult to manage. It's not going to get any easier for Secretary Clinton, unfortunately, although I think Bob's absolutely right, she is the best prepared in terms of her experience and the policies she supports to navigate this. But it's not going to get any easier for her.

MS. BRENNAN: Derek, can I challenge you? In terms of renewed confidence of the U.S., is it that or is it lack of confidence in the rest of the world right now given the instability that you see certainly still in the Middle East and the rise of Russia in terms of new efforts in Russia to expand into Eastern Europe, with China and the questions of what's happening in South China? I mean, there's a lot of instability --

MR. CHOLLET: Sure.

MS. BRENNAN: -- that Obama will hand off to Clinton or Trump or whoever.

MR. CHOLLET: And the question is not, is there instability? Because there's always instability. We could pick out -- I mean, look at 1968 and what Richard Nixon inherited from Lyndon Johnson. That was pretty --

MS. BRENNAN: These numbers to you say renewed confidence.

MR. CHOLLET: It seems to me we're on an uptick. I mean, Bob's right, this goes back and forth. And if you look at the overall trend it's always kind of lukewarm support for U.S. engagement globally, anyway. I mean, for a foreign policy person it's always a little humbling to look at these numbers because what we consider as an uptick is going from 7 percent to 19 percent, which at the high point over the last 20 years might have been 21 percent. Right? It's not as though we were at the glory days of in the '90s and we've fallen back.

But it seems to me we are trending upward, but it's very hard to make that case given what's going on in the world, given the political environment that we're in, given that we have a candidate now who is in charge of one of our political parties whose campaign is based on fear and anxiety and demonizing the other. I mean, that's going to be a very hard case to make.

And if I could just say on Europe, I mean, I know Pew in the next few weeks will be

AMERICA-2016/05/05

having your polls from Europe coming out, no question Obama has not met expectations in Europe. But, of course, those expectations were ridiculous. I mean, this was the idea that he was going to come in and magically wave the wand and all problems would instantly disappear, which, of course, Bob knows better than anybody else and has written more eloquently than anybody else about kind of the structural differences in world views that many in the United States and Europe have. And I think the fact that Obama -- the world is hard and he's worked very hard to improve U.S.-European relations, it hasn't met the overly inflated expectations Europeans had on him.

That said, my guess is, I'll be interested in seeing the polling data when it's out in a few weeks, if you compare to where we are with Europe today, 2016, to where we were eight years ago in 2008, you're still going to see a very significant difference for the better.

MS. MANDEVILLE: If I may say something. I want to say very clearly that I find it absolutely normal that the Americans have been reevaluating their foreign policy and the way they were intervening in the world. I think it's common sense and a good instinct that they have questioned the post-Iraq scenario. Let's be clear, I mean, Obama was right when he said that Iraq was a disaster. It has been a disaster and I think it's good that the Americans are totally aware of that.

At the same time, I've been traveling a lot throughout the U.S. for the campaign, talking to Trump supporters, but also Hillary supporters and Sanders. And I don't have the feeling that the Americans are very confident about what the American U.S. foreign policy is doing in the world. I think they have a huge worry about the world. They have this very right instinct that they're not controlling anything, that nothing is controllable.

And I think the emergence of someone like Trump, or in France someone like Marine Le Pen or the other populist leaders which are emerging throughout Europe at the moment, are sort of testimony to the fact that the people are searching in a nervous and nearly desperate way for some kind of shoulders or force that would protect them from the world. Because they see a Middle East where everyone is fighting against everyone. They see a Europe which is becoming merely mortal, as Le Monde has put on the front cover a few days ago. And so they see a world which has an impact -- San Bernardino, November; or the Bataclan in Paris; Belgium recently, you know -- extremely real geopolitical threats that they're not able to handle.

AMERICA-2016/05/05

And concerning Europe, I think that you cannot actually compare what happened when Obama arrived and what is happening now because you have actually sort of the super position. You have two things happening. You have a total flux and change of the political scene of all countries. We're actually, like in the '30s now. You know, everything is changing. All the assumptions that we had about the elite, about what's going to happen in terms of elections are destroyed.

You're seeing it with Trump. And the Europeans think that if Trump gets elected president, it's the canary in the mine and we have to expect similar processes could happen in Europe, in 2017 in France. So this situation is extremely tense, the people are super nervous, and they don't take anything for granted.

And what I wanted to say is that what Bob Kagan very famously compared the structural differences that had existed between the Europeans and the Americans in terms of foreign policy, I think this is changing and these assumptions should not be taken for granted. I think there could be some kind of reversal, paradoxical reversal, with Mars being now Europe and Venus becoming the U.S. Why? Because we are in an existential crisis in Europe.

And I think one of the big grudges that the Europeans have maybe towards this administration is that they haven't been sufficiently aware that this Syria crisis and this migration crisis is existential for us. What is happening is changing the whole game. It's the game political and it's the geopolitical game because the European populations are ready to change alliance. And they're starting, you have huge segments of the population in France, in Germany, in the Netherlands, in I would say, you know, northern countries, which are starting to think, okay, should we really stick with the Americans? The Americans seem to be withdrawing.

We are faced with this huge political threat of radical Islam. President Obama doesn't even want to name this threat, and that has been an incredible surprise for the Europeans who just don't understand that he wouldn't name the threat. And then you have the Russian --

MS. BRENNAN: Well, Carroll, I want to ask you to pick up on something right here. Can I just have Carroll jump in here? Since you were looking at pulling data in Europe and you've gone through this process here, how do you account -- I mean, you have some binary choices here, Republican or Democrat, in terms of you split down an opinion.

AMERICA-2016/05/05

MR. DOHERTY: Right.

MS. BRENNAN: I mean, it seems like we've got other layers to that now. Right? You did separate out Trump. You talked about some of the nuances within even people who self-identify as Democrats.

MR. DOHERTY: Right.

MS. BRENNAN: How do you account for this and the rise of some nationalism within Europe, as well? I mean, can you keep two columns anymore when you do these kind of surveys?

MR. DOHERTY: Well, I mean, part of this is it's conducted during an active presidential campaign, so you're naturally going to see some differences among the parties. I think Trump has added a new layer to that with his rhetoric. I think he's touched on the two themes that do resonate with Republicans these days, which is keep us safe and, also, pull back. I mean, those aren't entirely inconsistent and I think he's hit on both themes. And as you can see from the data, both resonate with a large number of Republicans.

I think on the Democratic side you see a little bit more of a traditional kind of liberal-moderate split on some of these issues, like civil liberties or how deeply to get involved. It feels like the Democrats may come together on some these issues in a general election campaign.

It's hard to know about Republicans because these divisions on, say, economic engagement, pretty serious. I mean, this is a pretty significant difference within the Republican Party on things like trade and economic engagement.

MS. BRENNAN: Well, when you describe Trump as keep us safe, but pull us back, you have 68 percent of Republicans favoring sending ground troops to fight ISIS in Iraq and Syria, pretty substantial percentage.

MR. DOHERTY: Right.

MS. BRENNAN: Seventy percent of Republicans say military force is the best approach to defeating global terrorism. I mean, you are seeing still a hawkish view in terms of engagement on those levels.

MR. DOHERTY: Keep us safe on that side, and those are the reflections, keep us safe. You know, this is very interesting.

AMERICA-2016/05/05

MS. BRENNAN: The pull back --

MR. DOHERTY: Pull back on the economic side.

MS. BRENNAN: You're talking on the economic --

MR. KAGAN: There's actually a way to understand that, but we're just not used to this kind of America, if I may say so.

MS. BRENNAN: What do you mean?

MR. KAGAN: There's an engagement that says, as we created after World War II, we have this alliance structure, security comes from the fact that we have maintained stability with allies in East Asia, maintained stability with allies in Europe. There's another approach that American could take, which is the nationalist, power-oriented approach, which says we don't care about what's happening in Europe. We don't care what's happening in Asia. If we feel that there's a threat out there, we will go and blast it to smithereens.

MR. CHOLLET: The Jacksonian thing.

MR. KAGAN: Well, I don't --

MR. CHOLLET: Yeah, I know, sorry, sorry. (Laughter)

MR. KAGAN: Poor Jackson never fought a war as president, but nevertheless, no, this is a model. That's why I would slightly disagree with Laure is that it's not that the United States is going to stop being inclined to use force. It's that it's going to use force for very narrow, selfish reasons when it feels like doing so as opposed to -- and I hate to say this, even Bush was not unilateralist in this sense. He still believed in allies. We can have an America that doesn't believe in allies, that is essentially a kind of rogue state that uses force when it feels like it wants to use force. And that is what, I think, Trump stands for. Yeah, we'll blast the hell out of them, but not because it has anything to do with anything else except our security.

MR. DOHERTY: Self-protection. And I think the thing about ground forces is some of this, as you say, hawkishness I think comes as a critique of Obama that he hasn't done enough. There's an oppositionalism or whatever among Republicans that he hasn't done enough to deal with the threat of ISIS, and I think that's shared by many, many Republicans.

If the question becomes a real question, large numbers of ground troops against ISIS, it's

AMERICA-2016/05/05

hard to know where Republicans will come down. I don't know the answer to that based on this data, I mean, an actual full engagement against ISIS. I think a lot of what you're seeing is a critique of Obama's handling of ISIS on the Republican side.

MR. CHOLLET: And if I can just say, it's fundamentally political. I mean, there's a great Bill Clinton line: Strong and wrong always beats weak and right. And the world is complicated and you see there's a lot to be fearful, of course, it's natural to say, well, what we should do about it is go schwack them. It's satisfying, it's measurable, it's something that feels decisive, it feels strong. And what President Obama's been trying to do, and it's still very much a work in progress, is redefine what it means to be strong.

And, I mean, Trump represents a very -- almost like a pure form of what Obama is against. Right? In some ways, Trump is a lot like Vladimir Putin in terms of how he defines strength, how he defines strength on the global stage, how he defines strength in his personal life.

MR. DOHERTY: That's why Putin likes him so much.

MR. CHOLLET: Bingo, exactly. You don't differentiate between the self and the state.

MR. DOHERTY: Russia is rooting for Trump, I just want you to know. Seriously, it's very clear.

MR. CHOLLET: And Obama has a very different view of strength. It doesn't mean that military power isn't important. In fact, it's very important for President Obama, but it's not the sole measurement of how you define strength. Politically, that's hard to translate, no doubt about it.

MS. BRENNAN: I remember you said to me once, you never get credit for coalition building.

MR. CHOLLET: Right.

MS. BRENNAN: And that seems to be something that the administration's leaned very heavily on or tried to emphasize, coalition building. But that's something that seems -- Americans don't swallow that as a leadership to be --

MR. CHOLLET: But, you know, some of it goes to this allies --

MS. BRENNAN: If no one's in charge, then no one's actually getting us anywhere.

MR. CHOLLET: Right, and its allies are free riders, right, you know, they should be

AMERICA-2016/05/05

paying for more of things, although that's belied by the amazingly high number on NATO, which I was surprised by. I mean, as someone who thinks a lot about Europe and transatlantic security that was a real piece of good news.

But if you think about, say, then the climate change numbers, I mean, if you just play this out. If a Republican gets elected in November, and this is not just Donald Trump or Ted Cruz, it would have been the same if Marco Rubio had been elected, they would have denied climate change is a problem. They would have not wanted to close to Gitmo. They would have wanted to keep it open and add detainees to it. We would have brought back torture.

MR. KAGAN: Because it's so closed now.

MR. CHOLLET: We would have brought back torture. You know, the first act in office is to unwind the Iran deal. Well, that's going to boost your numbers in Europe much. So whatever one thinks of Obama right now, you know, there's no question what the Europeans would want a year from now. And it's also not a way you're going to build an alliance or get coalition partners to do more of the work.

MS. BRENNAN: Can you explain the ideological difference you're also seeing among Democrats? I mean, you pointed out some change particularly measureable with Israel and --

MR. DOHERTY: Right. Some of that is, again, impossibly something of a campaign effect. I mean, Sanders has been talking differently about Israel and of --

MS. BRENNAN: Is it that? Is it the J Street versus APAC?

MR. DOHERTY: Well, I think there are a lot of factors. Our data, when Netanyahu came to the United States, liberals in particular had a very negative reaction to Netanyahu, that's clear. And I think some of it is the rhetoric you're hearing in the 2016 campaign from Bernie Sanders.

MS. BRENNAN: The Bibi-Bernie effect is changing.

MR. DOHERTY: The Bibi-Bernie effect. (Laughter)

MS. BRENNAN: Democratic self-identification on this. It's interesting, but I want to get back to an idea you were tapping into, which is that it's not about geostrategic positioning. A lot of this is about fear among the populace and underestimating that. Eighty percent of Americans say ISIS is a major threat to the U.S. I think there are people certainly within the security establishment who would say

AMERICA-2016/05/05

that's overinflated versus threats from elsewhere in the world from perhaps more traditional players. But that is absolutely reshaping the political dynamics here and in Europe, particularly with the refugee crisis there.

And there are people within the counterintelligence -- or, excuse me, counterterrorism community who would say the refugee problem if not now, will become a security threat. But you're saying right now in Europe that's being viscerally felt right now.

MS. MANDEVILLE: Absolutely.

MS. BRENNAN: Do you think that's the way you see the U.S. going essentially? I mean, is that something that's just of the moment in Europe and that will pass as these integration programs get built up?

MS. MANDEVILLE: I think the situation is going to get worse in Europe. I mean, I'm very pessimistic because the people who work on migrations in Europe, there's a woman who used to be one of the big-shots of the World Bank here. She had a big position and went back to Europe and is working on the migrations from Africa. And the numbers she's announcing of migrants coming from Africa because of wars, drought, water issues, radical Islam are absolutely staggering.

What is going to happen, you know, the problem of Europe is that we are geographically placed at the center, at the crossroad, of the conflicts and of the migrations, so our situation, we are in an extremely vulnerable situation. And, of course, the Americans are much further. I mean, they're across the pond. They are, in a way, protected from this absolutely incredible seismic earthquake that we are actually seeing coming.

So I understand that in the U.S. you cannot have the same perception. And also the question of Islam in the U.S., it cannot be perceived in the same way because you don't have the same percentage of the Muslim population.

MR. KAGAN: But that's what's so odd about how successful Trump has been in -- and this is an instance of I really believe a political figure creating an issue before the issue actually exists. I mean, the Europeans are being flooded with hundreds and thousands, if not millions, of refugees.

MS. MANDEVILLE: Exactly.

MR. KAGAN: This became a scandal in the United States when the Obama

AMERICA-2016/05/05

administration agreed to take how many?

MR. DOHERTY: It's like --

MS. MANDEVILLE: Ten thousand?

MR. DOHERTY: -- 5,000.

MR. KAGAN: Five thousand? And how many have actually come?

MS. BRENNAN: About 2,000.

MR. KAGAN: In the hundreds. Moreover, as the Washington Post recently did a kind of -- to try to discover the known terrorists or the known people accused of terrorism who are they? They are not refugees. Most of them are citizens, naturalized citizens, who have been here for years and who were radicalized in the United States not sent from others.

MS. BRENNAN: Is that because it became conflated with immigration, period?

MR. KAGAN: I think that, as someone has said, Trump is doing what demagogues do, which is not only playing on existing fears, but actually creating fears. And, you know, it's easy to --

MR. CHOLLET: Well, but one thing, though, the media environment had something to do with this. And so the media people are --

MR. KAGAN: You are constantly blaming yourself for everything that's going on. I think it's very charming. (Laughter)

MR. DOHERTY: In one statistic, in August, August of 2014, we didn't ask the question, I wish we had, the Wall Street-NBC asked, were you aware of the ISIS beheading videos? Ninety-eight percent. You don't see that figure in a public opinion poll. I mean, ISIS emerged on the scene in a way that just has dominated.

MR. KAGAN: Right, but it required somebody to say -- and by the way, because the American Muslim population, as Laure has indicated, is in an entirely position than the European Muslim population.

MS. MANDEVILLE: Yes, but not because the Americans are better at doing it.

MR. KAGAN: I'm not saying it is.

MS. MANDEVILLE: Because that's what I've been hearing.

MR. KAGAN: No, it's because who can afford to get all the way to the United States?

It's a self-selecting group.

MS. MANDEVILLE: (inaudible), exactly.

MR. KAGAN: No, no, no. I know, god forbid it should be anything the United States did that was good.

MS. MANDEVILLE: Because apparently it's the common view in this town.

MR. KAGAN: No, I know, and now you've successfully rebutted it, Laure. (Laughter) But whatever the reason is, it's a totally different situation in terms of Muslims in America. But Donald Trump has actually gotten tremendous support from people that I know that I'm very surprised to hear them say these things, but, yeah, we really do need to keep all the Muslims out until we find out what's going on with them.

And, I mean, to me this is just -- again, it's classic demagoguery creating really something bordering on hysteria, which has nevertheless been extremely successful.

MS. BRENNAN: But according to this poll three-quarters of Republicans view it as a major threat to the U.S.

MR. KAGAN: Well, sure.

MS. BRENNAN: That's not just the Trumpian polling data.

MR. DOHERTY: Right, no, it's --

MR. KAGAN: Well, but, I mean, first of all, I didn't see any Republicans dissenting from this view because they're afraid. Look, the rest of the Republican Party has been running scared from the Trump voter throughout this entire period, so who's going to dissent from any of that.

MS. MANDEVILLE: But there is also the threat itself. I mean, you cannot deny that the threat exists, I'm sorry. I mean, San Bernardino was not invented by Trump.

MR. KAGAN: No, but it was not a product of refugees.

SPEAKER: It was not a -- yeah, it was not a refugee.

MR. KAGAN: Or even, you know -- I mean, what law would you have had to set up to keep those people out of the country?

MS. MANDEVILLE: No, I'm not talking about the migrant crisis, but the terrorism crisis and the question of radical Islam is a question that is bothering the Americans because it's a real

AMERICA-2016/05/05

question. Because radical Islam is waging a war against part of the Muslim world that doesn't agree with it and also with the West. And that's why, you know, the people in the U.S. are worried and I think they should be, personally.

MS. BRENNAN: Well, one thing that surprised me because, yes, it's really obvious where the fear is, and that's ISIS. Refugees come up, as well. But on Russia and China, no sign of growing public concern here. I mean, 23 percent it's not negligible, but it's certainly not as high as one would think given the amount of if you want to blame the media, media coverage of Vladimir Putin and what you have seen, not just in Syria, but in Ukraine. Why isn't that higher on the list of threats?

MR. KAGAN: Because the threat that Putin poses is to his neighbors, not to the United States. And that's what I'm saying, we're moving into this very, you know, it's about us mood. And so Islamic terrorism can strike in the United States, as it has obviously, and, by the way, much more dramatically than San Bernardino. There was the 9-11.

MS. BRENNAN: But China didn't --

MR. KAGAN: Right, but, I mean, those are long-term -- again, China --

MS. BRENNAN: But cyberterrorism was up there as one of the top concerns.

MR. KAGAN: Well, I don't know what Americans think (inaudible).

MR. CHOLLET: I don't know where they think they're coming from. China, it seems to me that's explained by just their own economic crisis and, again, where we were eight ago was a China that was universally seen as ascendant. I'm surprised, though, that those numbers weren't higher just because of the coverage both countries, particularly Putin's gotten here. But actually it's been kind of consistent is my recollection. I mean, there's not an appreciable dip. They've always been about the 25 percent or so as seen as a threat.

MR. DOHERTY: Yeah, those numbers have been -- both the threat numbers and this separate question we ask about China as a "adversary" have been remarkably stable over time.

MS. BRENNAN: You have to go to a lacrosse game. You're unhooked, right?

MR. KAGAN: Okay, now you've spilled the beans. Yes, (inaudible) has a lacrosse game. (Laughter)

MS. BRENNAN: Good luck to him and thank you. Thank you, Bob.

AMERICA-2016/05/05

Well, one of the things --

MR. DOHERTY: So now that he's gone we can talk about him, right?

MS. BRENNAN: Yeah, exactly, and what really happens here, right.

MR. DOHERTY: Exactly, right.

MS. BRENNAN: The polling data also doesn't show a lot of confidence in what's actually being done to fight ISIS in terms of the actual -- the war without combat that we are engaged in right now, Derek. Why is there not more confidence?

MR. CHOLLET: Well, it's a good question. I mean, I think part of the problem is, in terms of just from a messaging point of view, that there's two things going on. First, the incremental way the campaign against ISIS has unfolded has meant for most of us, even those of us who watch it pretty closely, means these incremental changes, while significant, they kind of wash over us in some ways.

I mean, if you added up everything the United States is currently doing against ISIS, if you had said to me in September 2014 by May of 2016 we will have conducted nearly 12,000 airstrikes, we'd have 5,000 guys on the ground in Iraq, we'd have special operators in Syria, we would have killed an estimated 25,000 ISIL fighters in Iraq and Syria through our air campaign, that's a pretty significant body of work there. But the way it's been sort of incrementally staged means we don't see it and it just kind of washes over us the fact it's every day that American pilots get in a plane and go bomb something in Iraq and Syria. Right?

MS. BRENNAN: Do you think that's a political choice?

MR. CHOLLET: No, I think it's just the way the campaign has unfolded, I mean the military campaign has unfolded.

MS. BRENNAN: Really? I mean, even with the death of the Navy SEAL this week brought this question to the fore once again in terms of there not being a fair understanding of the level of engagement that the U.S. has --

MR. CHOLLET: Sure.

MS. BRENNAN: -- particularly those who are in combat situations.

MR. CHOLLET: They are in harm's way, but they're --

MS. BRENNAN: That that hasn't been --

AMERICA-2016/05/05

MR. CHOLLET: They're not on combat missions, which is --

MS. BRENNAN: But they are in combat.

MR. CHOLLET: They are in extremely dangerous situations, training and advising and assisting forces that are in direct combat, but it's not Iraq during the surge where every day they're running combat missions. Right?

MS. BRENNAN: Right.

MR. CHOLLET: Are they in situations when a city, as happened the other day, when a city gets overrun by ISIS fighters there, they're going to defend themselves and they're going to have direct contact with the enemy.

MS. BRENNAN: But arguably, one of the problems on messaging has been explaining things in the past tense of what it's not rather than what it is, is the argument. And not a fair understanding of the level of engagement. I mean, 58 percent of people polled said the campaign's not going too well. So they don't know that there are folks on the battlefield involved in firing artillery that are engaged, but why not explain that and message that in more detail? Would it not help?

MR. CHOLLET: So, again, I look at this, I think the administration's trying. I mean, as you know, over the last six months they do these NSC meetings at various other agencies, which is the first time I've ever seen them do that, where they go to the State Department or the Pentagon or CIA to do NSC photo spray. But because it's, of course, often hard to show, you know, meetings don't present well in terms of you're actually doing something, but it's pretty important to do that, right?

I see the administration trying to talk about this a lot, being very specific on the number of air strikes they've conducted, being very open with the press. The press has been reporting on this a lot, I think. Why it's not breaking through, I don't know.

MS. BRENNAN: Well, the airstrikes are different than the question of boots on the ground, which is, I think, what you were comparing it to.

MR. CHOLLET: But it's not a secret that we've got up to 5,000 boots on the ground in Iraq. But these are folks who are -- since they're not on combat missions, these are people who are doing the hard work behind the scenes, so to speak, thankfully there's not a lot of folks coming home and going to Walter Reed, it's harder for people to see that and I get that. So it is a messaging challenge for

AMERICA-2016/05/05

this administration.

The other challenge the president has, which he's admitted to, is because he does not believe that ISIS presents an existential threat to the United States, it is a threat, no question about it. But is the future of the United States hanging in jeopardy because of the ISIL threat? No.

And he's tried at times to put this threat in context to everything else that is going on to the world: the huge economic challenges we face, the rise of new powers, alliances that are in question, global climate change which is over the long term a huge threat to the United States. That sometimes, as the president has admitted, that has not risen to the moment of the emotion that people feel and the fear that they feel, fear that is being pumped by political adversaries who want to use the fear for their own advantage.

So after San Bernardino or after the Paris attacks there was a sense the president didn't emot enough about this, right? And he admitted, in some cases he should have done more to sort of reach people and address their fears. But I think if we try to think of this as a long-term effort, an effort where the United States is going to be militarily engaged in the Middle East for quite a long time, and I believe doing the kinds of things we've been doing in terms of direct U.S. action, U.S. support on the ground for our partners in the region, we're going to be doing this for a while. We need to make it sustainable.

This is not something where we're going to invade Iraq and Syria and solve this problem and it's all going to be done. And that's the challenge for all of us. It's going to be huge challenge for Europe, too, because we've all got to saddle up and be ready to keep doing this for quite some time. And so the president, I think, is trying to set expectations in a way that allows us to be able to sustain the support to do that.

MS. BRENNAN: I want to also get to audience questions.

MS. MANDEVILLE: Can I just say one thing?

MS. BRENNAN: I will. Can I just get ready for that? If you have a question, is it a microphone that's going around?

SPEAKER: Yes.

MS. BRENNAN: Okay, and it'll come to you. Sorry, Laure, do you want to --

AMERICA-2016/05/05

MS. MANDEVILLE: Yes, I'm just wondering whether the fact that the message hasn't been received as the administration would have liked is not due to the fact that people don't understand the strategy. I mean, they don't see the endgame. They see these bombings, you know, this sort of very gradual, incremental approach, but there is no -- the military side of this operation doesn't make sense, in a way.

MR. CHOLLET: What doesn't make sense about it?

MS. MANDEVILLE: I mean, it doesn't make sense; you have two strategies at work. You have the Russian one where you have a very clear, very cynical, I would say, pretty horrible approach which is to support the regime which has actually unfolded and contributed to the mess, but they are relying on a government and on a state to pursue their objectives, which is to regain control of Syria. And on the other side you have the Obama administration and the coalition around, which are trying to support nobody knows exactly who to fight against ISIS and, at the same time, keep some space open for the political future of Syria.

And I think the people in this situation, I mean, it's just an extremely, very difficult, I would say even terrible situation to defend. And we know that the administration has been trying to negotiate a political settlement with the Russians at the same time. But I think the skepticism and the pessimism of the public opinion and of the people in Europe and in the U.S. is that we're seeing the Russians playing the U.S. on this battlefield, doing exactly the things as they want, and actually using this Syria question to regain some ground, but major, I would say, focus to win in Europe. And that's one thing we haven't discussed with his absolutely central is that and the perception --

MS. BRENNAN: Pushing out the refugees into Europe?

MS. MANDEVILLE: -- of the U.S. foreign -- of the world and of the foreign policy of the U.S. in Europe is the fact that people are disappointed, disillusioned in a way. They are worried. They would like the U.S. to be there, some of them, or they are anti-American. There is a growing wave; you probably will see that in your future polling, against the Americans. And you have this pro-Russian wave growing and it's very worrying. I mean, for someone like me who knows what Russia is about at this moment, but they are gaining ground in a spectacular way. The battlefield is not only military, it's, of course, informational, propaganda, it's kind of a post-truth space in Russia. Right? You can say things

AMERICA-2016/05/05

which are not true, but if you say them with --

MR. CHOLLET: Sounds familiar.

MS. MANDEVILLE: -- it works. Right? Yes, it sounds familiar.

MS. BRENNAN: Can you raise your hand if you have a question here? Okay, can we bring the mic here, this gentleman on the aisle and then here in the middle.

MR. GIZZI: Thank you very much. John Gizzi, chief political correspondent and White House correspondent for Newsmax. So much has been said about Donald Trump today. Yesterday Steve Hilton, the former campaign manager for David Cameron, criticized his close friend and one-time boss Mr. Cameron for saying that Trump's remarks on foreign policy were "divisive and stupid." And those remarks, of course, came on the heels of Foreign Minister Steinmeier's criticism of Mr. Trump's foreign policy approach. Mr. Hilton said that it's a mistake for world leaders to criticize Donald Trump in those terms because they may well be working with him in terms of international policy. So no matter how outrageous they may think is remarks are, they shouldn't criticize in that way.

What is the attitude of the panel? Does it help or hurt if foreign leaders criticize the presumptive Republican nominee for president on his statement on the international front?

MR. CHOLLET: I mean, look, as you know, American presidents try to stay out of other country's politics as much as possible unless invited, as President Obama was.

MS. BRENNAN: Like David Cameron.

MR. CHOLLET: Yes, as David Cameron invited President Obama a few weeks, which actually belies the point that Obama's sort of in the basement in terms of Europe. I think in many ways he's more influential and respected today in Europe than any European leader is in their own country, certainly in France.

MS. MANDEVILLE: Well, in France, you know, the level is very low. (Laughter)

MR. CHOLLET: But I'd say the same right now for the U.K. or Germany. I believe it's hard to think of any country where the leader's particularly popular right now and Obama's probably the most popular leader in Europe.

And that said, look, I don't know the context in which the prime minister made these remarks, whether he was asked a question. I mean, clearly, when one of the candidates is talking about

AMERICA-2016/05/05

an alliance like NATO and saying, you know, we will get out of NATO or our allies are ripping us off and don't do anything for us, it seems to be perfectly justifiable for that leader to say, well, I disagree with that. I don't think that's in our country's interest if the United States, which is our most important partner, were to have a policy that would actually pursue that, that seems to be very reasonable and perhaps unreasonable for us to expect that that leader would say I have no comment on this.

But, again, I don't know the specifics of those instances you mentioned.

MS. BRENNAN: Merkel basically said no comment when she was asked in Germany last week. And it was actually interesting to watch President Obama's laugh when she said no comment.

MR. CHOLLET: Well, I mean, she doesn't --

MS. BRENNAN: Do either of you want to weigh in?

MR. DOHERTY: I think a lot of Republicans right now are saying no comment.

MR. CHOLLET: Yes, exactly. I mean, you've got 150 Republican colleagues of mine who've all said they're never going to work for the guy.

MS. MANDEVILLE: Well, I was talking to a friend of Donald Trump yesterday night about Donald Trump's approach to politics and to life, and he said, well, Donald Trump, actually he's capable. He's been saying these horrible things about his adversaries, about Ted Cruz, about Marco Rubio, but he's a sportsman, so that means he's in the ring and when he gets out of the ring, it's going to be okay. So maybe these foreign leaders can say exactly the same thing. While he's not president they can say whatever they think because they think some of his propositions are outrageous, maybe they can say what they think, and when he's out of the ring and if he's president they can say, okay, now we are going to talk.

But more generally about Trump, I think that some of the discourse of Trump on foreign policy doesn't strike me as being so different. I mean, when Trump talks about using strength and restraint, it reminds me of Reagan. But, of course, some other points of Trump's, propositions, are more worrying like, you know, his lack of --

MS. BRENNAN: Giving nuclear weapons to European countries?

MS. MANDEVILLE: Exactly or the NATO -- indeed this apparent lack of awareness that NATO is absolutely crucial for the U.S. and even for the U.S. power. Even if you argue as nationalist, I

AMERICA-2016/05/05

mean, the importance of the West --

MR. CHOLLET: A forced multiplier, yeah.

MS. MANDEVILLE: -- and having NATO is absolutely huge. But, at the same time, I wonder, and you would know probably better than I do and that's what I'm trying to figure out, because I'm sort of trustful of the Americans' political system and its resiliency, I'm asking the question if he gets to the White House who is going to shape his brain on foreign policy? Probably not only his instincts as we see them now and you're going to have the whole Washington community working to change his views. Isn't (inaudible) going to happen?

MS. BRENNAN: We'll see. So here, this gentleman in the middle and then we'll come to the other side of the room.

SPEAKER: Hi. My name's Dmitry. I don't have an affiliation. Thank you. Very interesting discussion. My first question's mostly for Mr. Doherty. I was wondering if you during this survey or any others have measured the degree to which people feel like they're well informed about what's going on in the world. Is there any type of question like that? And do you feel like the issues have become more complicated in the last 20, 30 years? Because maybe try to say, but people probably feel like the fear and anxiety that Trump uses comes from ignorance.

And the other question I had was, it shows that the United Nations support has gone up 10 percent over the last decade, so I'm wondering if you have any thoughts or comments on that.

MR. DOHERTY: Yeah, that was a little bit surprising given, you know, what's been happening. We do do knowledge surveys of what people know about international affairs and it's mixed. I mean, you know, Americans probably aren't as well informed as Europeans either because of their geography or history or whatever. It's not a high priority for some people.

I do think things have -- the issues themselves have become more complex, as you say, especially within the Middle East, you know. I mean, we've had findings -- I remember when the Syrian crisis, this was four or five years ago, first erupted and the American public, a large majority, saying there just aren't any good options over there. I mean, this was a sense of almost --

MS. BRENNAN: I think that's still a talking point. (Laughter)

MR. DOHERTY: Exactly.

AMERICA-2016/05/05

MR. CHOLLET: Anyone's got good options, show me.

MR. DOHERTY: Almost a sense of futility and confusion. Which side should we support? Can you support any side in some of these conflicts? So it is confusing for a lot of Americans. I think that's right.

MS. BRENNAN: Over here on this side of the room and then we'll go to the back.

MR. SOLOMON: Dick Solomon, RAND. My question in some ways is directed at Pew, Mr. Doherty, but to what -- well, Bob Kagan talked about the sine wave quality of America's approach to the world, et cetera. How vulnerable is this country to some external shock, strategic surprise, however you want to characterize it as, catalyzing a certain direction or a certain approach to the world? It seems to me that since we are in a period of turmoil and unexpected changes abroad that the patterns that were described in terms of foreign policy held in this country are pretty vulnerable to some external shock: 9-11 obviously was a major one, the economic crisis, ISIS.

It seems to me there's potentially a lot of instability in our approach to the world. And as the comments earlier made about Obama trying to create a broader context for what are the real threats and relative priorities, that the danger we face, and you could say that the reaction to 9-11 was a good case of that, that we were hit with a shock and we react in the wrong way and what turns out to be a much more costly way.

MR. DOHERTY: Well, I think you see a little bit of that in the reactions to the San Bernardino and Paris attacks. I mean, one of the questions the pollsters track is the most important problem facing the United States, a classic question, goes back decades. And, you know, for a long time, even with the rise of ISIS, it's a volunteered response, so people didn't really volunteer terrorism much even with the rise of ISIS, you know, prior to those. It became number one, the top problem, almost overnight after these two attacks in December. And it subsequently eased off, but I think you see from that that this is something that's there right under the surface and these concerns over terrorism are ready to really surge.

MS. BRENNAN: Can we go to the back here?

MR. YU: Thank you very much. Dangquo Yu with China (inaudible) News Agency of Hong Kong. My question is for Derek. I'm wondering, the possible presidency of Donald Trump, how the

AMERICA-2016/05/05

presidency of Donald Trump will affect the U.S. policy towards China and the U.S.'s now competitive position with China in the world. Thank you. What's your take?

MR. CHOLLET: Well, obviously I do not speak for Donald Trump, so I have really no clue. I wonder if he even has a clue about how he would handle China. So I don't know. I don't even want to go there. (Laughter)

MS. BRENNAN: I think in the poll, I have it written down here, 50 percent of Americans view its rise as a major power, as a major threat. But if I remember correctly, I think that was in the economic context.

MR. DOHERTY: Right.

MS. BRENNAN: Not necessarily the --

MR. DOHERTY: General context, China's emergence as a global power.

MR. CHOLLET: I mean, look, my argument would be China, there's no country I can think of that benefited more from the policy decisions that we made in the 2000s than China. In 2008, where you had the United States bogged down in Iraq, fighting the global war on terror that wasn't going well, and in a complete tailspin economically. That was China's moment. In fact, my sense is Geoff Dyer was here, so he wrote a book about this, that was the moment that many in the Chinese government decided this is when we make our move because the U.S. is going down.

President Obama saw that, so he wanted to try to arrest that decline, put us on a more stable footing, not just with China but vis-à-vis the rest of the world; get us out of sort of a perpetual war footing where war was the single prism with which we looked at U.S. power in the world; and obviously renew our economy at home. I think although we have huge economic problems still, we're a lot better off today than we were eight years ago. Right? The U.S. auto industry just had the best year on record last year. It was on the brink of nonexistence in 2009.

MS. BRENNAN: But what's the trajectory with China? Because if you have all these incidents that are bubbling up, the South China Sea and the like, is it --

MR. CHOLLET: Sure. So China's rise, even though China's rise has plateaued a bit recently because of their own economic challenges, demographic challenges, certainly their environmental challenges, it is unquestionable that China is continuing to rise. And the U.S. needs to

AMERICA-2016/05/05

adapt to that rise, push back with necessary, and seek to work with China where we can.

I don't see how anything that Donald Trump has talked about puts us in a better position to do any of that. I think we are better off today under the leadership of President Obama vis-à-vis China than we were eight years ago and I think the same would be true under Secretary Clinton.

MS. BRENNAN: But you don't see us headed towards conflict?

MR. CHOLLET: Well, oh, no, no, no, no. I mean, the South China Sea gets pretty sporty, as you know.

MS. BRENNAN: Yeah.

MR. CHOLLET: And a lot of this is going to depend on decisions that are going to be made in Beijing and clearly the relationship -- you know, David Sedney's here in the front row and knows a lot more about this than I do, but I think the relationship is one that will be fought in the future. We're going to bump up against one another, there's no doubt about it.

The question to me is how can we be in the best position militarily, politically, economically to prevail in the event that happens? I feel pretty good about our position today. If we were to make other policy choices I would feel less good about our position.

MS. BRENNAN: I think we have time for about one, maybe one and a half questions, depending on how short we are here. Right there.

MR. TEVASHVILI: Thank you very much. Georg Tevashvili, visiting scholar from Georgia, Georgetown University. So my question, even though the issue was raised by Bob before he left the room, I'm sure that all panelists are perfectly knowledgeable to elaborate on it. It's about the periods, about the waves of engagement into world affairs and this current trough.

So historically, the events which woke America up into international engagement of the magnitude of the Lusitania sinking in World War I or Pearl Harbor or Sputnik or the Soviet missiles 100 miles from the shore. So significant international event developments which shows that some power is very hostile and they might be after us and, therefore, the United States got engaged. I believe the 9-11 doesn't fit the bill because it was obviously not by the state, but by some crazy people which not necessarily means that they are an existential threat. Therefore, actually it didn't translate into U.S. involvement. And for me personally, I speak not as a scholar, as a citizen of a small country, Georgia in

AMERICA-2016/05/05

the Russian vicinity, this is very important whether the United States is engaged in the world or not. It's (inaudible) for my country.

So do you think that something of this -- event of this magnitude might happen so that the United States is like woken up again? So approximately when will it happen and whether it will happen. Thank you.

MS. BRENNAN: So how hard does Russia have to poke before the U.S. pokes back I think was sort of the question?

MR. CHOLLET: I get frustrated by this mythology of U.S. disengagement. I'm just trying to figure out how one gets to that conclusion. I mean, I look at Asia, where we are far more engaged today, again, than we were eight years ago. We've been famously rebalancing Asia, putting more military posture there, doing a lot more diplomatically, joining Asian institutions, like the East Asia Summit.

I look at Latin America. We are in a completely different place in Latin America than we were a decade ago with the opening of Cuba. Whereas we were kind of an outlier country within the hemisphere eight year ago, now we are a leader in the region.

I look at Sub-Saharan Africa, that's arguably an area of bipartisanship where George W. Bush did a lot of good in Sub-Saharan Africa; President Obama's continued that. Probably tens of thousands of West Africans that are alive today, not dead from Ebola because of what the U.S. did several years ago.

I look at Europe. I concede the point Europe is in a whole mess of crises, not by the U.S. making. And I would argue and I'm going to bet that the Pew polls in a few weeks are going to show that we're still in a pretty good position in Europe in terms of the U.S.-European relations, despite Obama not meeting the wildly high expectations that were forced upon him. He's still, as I said, the most popular leader in Europe today.

So the part of the world where there's the most sort of uncertainty and fear and this argument of disengagement is the Middle East. So how do you measure engagement? Is engagement 150,000 troops in Iraq? Is engagement rather than 11,000 airstrikes, it's 110,000 airstrikes? I mean, we've got more military posture today in the Middle East -- in fact, this was actually the case before September 2014 and the ISIL fight started -- we had more military posture then post-Iraq than we did

AMERICA-2016/05/05

before 9-11.

So where is it the U.S. is disengaged? I mean, what international meeting occurs that it's not the United States driving the agenda? So there's this kind of mythology that I think a lot of it's politics, right, because it's easy politics to say Obama's weak, Obama's a failure, Obama's not tough enough, he's not strong.

SPEAKER: (inaudible) radical Islam, that's (inaudible) something.

MR. CHOLLET: Yeah, I don't buy that. I don't buy that. I mean, where is this lack of engagement. So explain that to me.

MS. BRENNAN: Well, I think we have one more question here. I think you also were sort of chomping at the bit. Was it a comment or a question?

MR. CHOLLET: You want to (inaudible)?

MR. SEDNEY: No, it's a question. David Sedney with CSIS. Secretary Defense Carter, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have been very strongly saying recently that Russia is the number one strategic threat to the United States. The poll here says the American people think that it's ISIS. Europe thinks that it's the refugees. Is that discontinuity something to be concerned about?

MS. BRENNAN: ISIS.

MR. CHOLLET: Yeah, I mean, David, as you know very well, actually I think if the military had been asked that question three years ago, they probably would have said the same thing because they look at capabilities, so Russia because of its nuclear arsenal, because of its conventional capabilities that's been modernizing over the last decade, there's --

MS. BRENNAN: I think Dunford said something recently.

MR. CHOLLET: Oh, no, no, he has. I'm just saying they would have answered it the same way three years ago. I mean, I think there's -- having worked on Russia at the Pentagon I can say that there's always been a sense, if you just look at the math, China's certainly up there and maybe it's Russia and China competing for who's the baddest on the block in terms of the military. What we've seen happen in the last two years, of course, is the question of their will, so the matching of the capabilities and the will and watching Putin, what he's willing to do in his own neighborhood, but then also the reckless behavior of the Russian military vis-à-vis the U.S. military at sea and in the air.

AMERICA-2016/05/05

So there's no question we just look at the numbers Russia presents. If Russia were to go all in and choose to invade a Baltic country or launch a nuclear strike against the United States, it's a pretty big threat.

MS. BRENNAN: Not just belly rolls over U.S. fighter jets.

MR. CHOLLET: No, right, that's not just that. I mean, if you look at the numbers they've got a significant military arsenal, so a military leader would say that. I personally don't believe when I think of the threats to the United States that that is -- Russia's not what keeps me up at night, a head-to-head confrontation with them. I worry about an accident. I worry about an unintended conflict. But there are other things that keep up at night other than that.

MS. BRENNAN: Very quick thought from the two of you on why that divergence.

MR. DOHERTY: Well, what keeps Americans up at night, I suspect, is probably more terrorism-related. There's no love for Putin in our polling. I mean, you know, he's certainly very unpopular in the United States, but the concern just isn't there after the experience of terrorism over the last 15 years.

MS. BRENNAN: And it's that threat of putting your kid on the school bus to school and not knowing what happens next versus a territorial invasion, right?

MR. DOHERTY: Right.

MS. BRENNAN: And that's the polls.

MS. MANDEVILLE: I mean, I would say that the threats are different, but they are both real. And what is interesting in Europe is that they conflate -- that Russia is using the radical Islam to change the European game. And since the U.S. has been underestimating this radical Islam issue for several years, the Russians have just used -- it was like a boulevard for them, that they went through saying, okay, we are here. We see the threat of radical Islam and we're with you. If you want to be with a Christian, big country aware of your problems, come to us, come to us. And I think this has been a leitmotif of the Russians is to weaken Europe and weaken NATO. If they can, they will destroy the Article 5 --

MR. CHOLLET: Collective (inaudible).

MS. MANDEVILLE: Yes, exactly. And so these two issues actually are now extremely

AMERICA-2016/05/05

strongly connected. And what is really interesting is they have become factors of internal politics. I mean, what is absolutely striking is that Russia is now a topic of internal political divide in France between the parties, and Islam is, as well, because everybody has his own views of how to deal with it.

And in France, in Europe, the issue is, of course, terrorism, but it's also the question of Islam in our societies because this is somehow linked. I know that it's not totally politically correct here to say that, but actually after a while the question of how you are going to deal with Islam, you know, what do you allow? How much do you give to religion in the political realm, in the social realm in terms of -- it's becoming a real issue.

So I think that's why it's become existential because radical Islamists perfectly know that they can -- they're trying to gain some -- there is a battle of the heart and minds in other terms in the Muslim population of Europe. They want to divide West European societies between Muslims and the others, and they're trying to win them over and radicalize the Muslim population. So it's a huge game. It's a very, very, very difficult and tricky one.

MS. BRENNAN: Well, I think we have to leave it there, the clash of civilizations conversation. (Laughter) I'm sure if you can comments, you can have them separately on the sidelines here.

I want to thank everyone. Thank you very much. (Applause)

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