

The Brookings Institution
5 on 45: An update on trans-Atlantic relations
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(MUSIC)

PITA: You're listening to 5 on 45 from the Brookings Podcast Network, analysis and commentary from Brookings experts on today's news regarding the Trump administration.

WRIGHT: My name is Tom Wright. I'm a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and director of the Center for the United States in Europe and it's my pleasure to speak with you today about the second edition of the Transatlantic Scorecard, which scholars for the Center on the U.S. and Europe have brought out. We are going to do this every quarter.

The first came out in September of 2018 and it consists of two parts. One that looked at a survey of scholars on issues on transatlantic relations and various controversies between the U.S. and Europe. And a second that looks at different types of data and different facts we've ascertained over the last quarter and how those may have changed.

The first scorecard came out with an assessment of U.S. European relations which was perhaps unsurprisingly relatively low. It was 3.7 out of 10 overall and then we disaggregated that by security, political, and economic. It was generally in that range. On dislocation, it's gone down marginally. Scholars felt that across the wide range of political security and economic that the transatlantic relationship had taken a downward turn and I think a large part of that was due to the resignation of Secretary Mattis in December and him confirming, really that there are substantial differences between him and the president on alliances, on NATO in particular. But also because of the fear that the trade war between the U.S. and the EU. May restart perhaps after a trade deal between the U.S. and China. So, the deal that was struck last summer between Juncker and Trump. Is still in effect but it may not last much longer.

So, as we look forward to the next quarter, we see NATO summit taking place at the foreign minister's level in April, on April 4th in Washington. What's notable about that is

that that is not taking place at the leader's level because European leaders are worried. That if they have a big discussion about NATO's 70th anniversary with President Trump and that he may blow it up or it may be controversial. So, they've decided to have it at the foreign minister's level. But we'll be watching that closely for any signs of a change in the U.S. position toward NATO after Mattis' departure.

We'll of course be looking at Brexit. We did ask a question on Brexit. In this edition of the scorecard and scholars felt that it was unlikely that Britain would leave with the no deal exit in March 29th. The answers to this survey were given before the dramatic events of recent days. But I suspect that that will not have changed substantially because the risks for Britain of a no-deal Brexit are quite high. And so, we're looking either at another referendum or at a softer Brexit whereby the Prime Minister reaches out to Labour for votes and compromises by having Britain remain permanently a part of the Customs Union and perhaps of the single market. So, we will continue to watch that and also. The relations between. The U.S. and the U.K. post right and whether or not a free trade agreement is likely to be negotiated between the two countries, and when that might take Place.

We also have a fun visual on the number of phone calls that the president has made to European leaders. And what we found on this occasion was that he called President Erdogan of Turkey vastly many more times than anyone else. And that of course, is almost certainly a result of the Khashoggi murder and the diplomacy that took place after that the U.S. and Turkey. Previously he had actually called President Orbán a couple of times, and Prime Minister May many times because of the Skripal Affair, which was of course when Russian agents attempted to assassinate a Russian dissident in England using a chemical agent. So, what we're seeing in a pattern. Is that really his outreach to European leaders is almost entirely a function of crises and problems. There's very little proactive outreach there.

Finally, of course there is Iran. And we will see in the coming months Secretary Pompeo has announced that he will organize an international conference on Iran and Poland. Iran of course is one of the big substantive differences between the United States and Europe, and we've seen that reflected in our scorecards. And the question I think that we'll be looking for in the next quarter is whether or not. European countries intend to participate in this summit at a high level, or if they send more lower ranking delegations to it. And what goes on at the conference could of course underscore and exacerbate the differences between the United States and the EU on how to approach Iran now that the United States has pulled out of the JCP.

So that's the scorecard. We look forward to issuing the third edition for the first quarter of 2019 sometime in April. Thank you.

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