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STABILITY AND SECURITY FOR THE NEXT DECADE

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. WRIGHT: Good morning everyone, and thank you for joining us for today's discussion, both those of you joining in person and those following the webcast on line. My name is Tom Wright, I direct the Center for the United States and Europe here at Brookings, and I am delighted to welcome you all to this event on the 10th Anniversary of the European Union's Eastern Partnership to consider its achievements and the evolving challenges it faces. I'm especially honored to welcome several of our friends and colleagues from the embassies of the Eastern Partnership Countries, along with the Ambassadors of Sweden, Poland, and Albania. We are delighted to have you with us today. As most of you know well, the EU launched the Eastern Partnership in 2009 to advance democracy, economic development, stability, and cooperation across its eastern neighborhood. It aimed to make both the EU and the six partner countries, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, more resilient and capable to address internal challenges and external threats. In many ways it has succeeded in deepening connections with its partner countries. However, amid growing geopolitical competition, new threats to the global order and security, much work remains in the decade ahead.

We have gathered an outstanding panel here this morning to consider what the Eastern Partnership has accomplished, where it has fallen short, and how it can be updated to achieve its goals in a shifting global environment. We have with us Michael Curtis, who is the Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to the United States. Jan Hofmokl, I hope I pronounced that correctly, apologies if not, Director in the Eastern Division of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Polish Ambassador for the Eastern Partnership. And Anna Westerholm, the Swedish Ambassador for the Eastern Partnership. So welcome all and thank you for being with us today.

My colleague, Molly Montgomery, who is a nonresident Fellow here at Brookings and Vice President in the Euro Practice of the Albright Stonebridge Group, will moderate the discussions. So thank you, Molly, for joining us today to moderate.

We are grateful to the assistance and support we have received from the Embassy of Sweden and the Embassy of Poland in putting this event together. We'd like to thank them, and at the

same time reiterate Brookings' commitment to quality, independence, and impact in all of its work. Activities supported by donors reflect this commitment, and the analysis and comments expressed today are solely those of the individual speakers.

Following the conversation, the moderated conversation, the panels will take questions from all of you in the audience. As a reminder, this event is on the record, you can see the cameras in the back of the room, so definitely on the record this morning. And we encourage you to tweet about it, using the hashtag #EasternPartnership.

So thank you again for joining us today, I look forward to a lively conversation. And, Molly, let me pass it over to you.

MS. MONTGOMERY: Great. Thanks, Tom, and thanks everyone for being here. Michael, I'd like to start with you since this is a topic that isn't an everyday discussion here in Washington. Can you set the stage for us? What did the EU set out to do with the Eastern Partnership, what has it accomplished, and what do you hope to see from it in the future?

MR. CURTIS: Well, thanks, Molly, and good morning to you all. I think it's great that Brookings has taken this initiative, because as you said, this is not a discussion which we have every day here in Washington, DC, so I think this is a great opportunity for us to also explain a bit better what the Eastern Partnership is about, where we think it succeeded, where there's still work to do, where there are shortcomings.

I mean basically to address your question more specifically, in Prague in 2009 28 EU member states issued the Summit Declaration on what the Eastern Partnership is about. We celebrated the 10th Anniversary of that in May last year. And as Tom said, we basically set out to develop and accelerate the political development and economic relations between the EU Countries and the six countries in the Partnership, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine, as well as contacts between the peoples. And this is something which I would also like to develop a little bit. We wanted to make the countries more resilient, exploit the opportunities they had, and do that in partnership with the European Union.

On the whole we think we've fulfilled those promises. This is testified by the new agreements and formats of engagement, notably the association agreements, and the deep and comprehensive free trade agreements we have with Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova, as well as visa free travel, which is very important. We've also developed a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with Armenia, the CEPA. We're negotiating a new agreement with Azerbaijan, and with Belarus we've identified a new positive portal, so critical framework for engagement.

And then in Brussels in 2017 at the Summit we developed the 20 deliverables for 2020. I'll come on to those in a little bit because I think it's useful then to measure where we've made progress, and there is where we've made less progress, and this also impacts a little bit on how we will take this forward in the future.

When you ask what we set out to do, I think it's also important to underline what we didn't set out to do. The European Partnership isn't so much about geopolitics or spheres of influence, it's not asking countries to choose, it's not a binary choice. This is something about making a positive difference in the lives of peoples. Yes, it does foster bilateral and multilateral relations, but most of all it's there to design, deliver for citizens on the economy, on trade, but I think most of all on democracy, human rights, rule of law, civil society and people to people contacts.

So what is next? This year is going to be a key stepping stone in the relationship. There will be a Summit in June this year between the European Union and the Countries of the Eastern Partnership. To prepare that Summit, until the end of last year with our member states, with the six countries, civil society, business, stakeholder citizens, we had consultations on the progress made so far. This will help us to find the next set of objectives going forward beyond the Summit after June.

I can't really pre-judge at this state what the Summit may say, it's going to take place in four months' time, but I think I can share a few broad ideas that came out of this consultation. On the whole it's seen as a successful policy which delivers for people and needs to be continued, but the current agenda remains valid. But the agenda has not been completed. We need to be clear about that. We have to continue addressing in particular persistent shortcomings on human rights, rule of law,

freedom of the media, and also governance questions. So these are areas which we will have to develop going forward.

I think there's a consensus that the basic architecture we have in place where we have the collective multilateral tracks as well as the six bilateral tracks needs to continue. And also that the fundamental principles underlying the Eastern Partnership, the inclusiveness and the differentiation are there to be maintained. This is a way basically where we can reflect the different needs and aspirations of the six countries, but also take the relationship forward in a collective manner. So this is also based around, and I think we'll hear more about this this morning from the panelists on the principles of more for more and less for less.

We do, however, hear calls for more emphasis on people, mobility, the digitalization and youth, issues like education, training exchanges. Also these are areas where I think we will be working more. Also for sustainable economic development, creating jobs, tackling the brain drain, some of the challenges which are faced in the six countries. And also I think, you know, there are areas which are more, say important today which are more topical, such as tackling hybrid and cyber threats and countering disinformation.

So sorry if I've been a little bit long, but I would say a lot has been done, but there's still a lot to do. We need to update the agenda, but we won't be throwing the baby out with the bath water, as we say. But it's not more of the same either, it's doing more and doing better.

So perhaps I'll leave it at that and just to add also that the work of course doesn't stop with the Summit. This is an ongoing process with continued high level of engagement.

MS. MONTGOMERY: Thanks, Michael, I think that's a great overview of what the partnership is.

Next I'd like to turn to Jan and talk a little bit about why the Eastern Partnership exists. And one of the things we've seen over the last few years in a lot of parts of the West is that there is sort of increasing skepticism about levels of engagement overseas, and this is I think an issue we've seen on both sides of the Atlantic. And so how do we make the case that this is still important when there are

politicians and publics often on both sides of the political spectrum that are saying maybe we need to pull back from doing quite so much overseas and really focus on problems at home.

MR. HOFMOKL: Thank you very much, Molly, and thanks very much for putting this show together with us.

That's a very good question which I pondered on a bit. And I found three elements of an answer. These are the three selves. Self-determination, self-interest, and self-preservation.

On self-determination, I think that especially in Poland we do feel we have a moral imperative to be involved in that region. We received a lot of help ourselves when we were fighting for independence. We think we were an investment from many of our allies of today, including the US, with a very high return, so there's a moral duty on our side to do more to help the others. And to do it through a way we truly believe in, which is the multilateral system of the European Union. And in that respect, the Eastern Partnership is everything the EU is standing for. It's an open offer, it's inviting everyone to participate, and it sets the ambition as high as the partners want it to be set.

And of course we want to stand for independence, we want to stand for territorial integrity, we want to stand for self-determination so that everyone can choose his or her friends without being forced to do that. So that's one prerogative of ours to be involved.

Then self-interest. It's a big market, it's a market with a very skilled labor force, it's a market with people who are very well educated and they are Europeans. And it's a market where we can sell, where we can invest, we can export and import from them, but also we can expand our own economic values. It's a market or an area with resources like Azerbaijan or like Ukraine. So we can only gain by teaming up together and by bringing the six partners closer to the European Union they gain, but we gain as well because we can do things together.

And the third self, the self-preservation, we all face common challenges. I mean we could name a lot of them, but let us take just a few examples which are very concrete. Climate change and environment. I mean if a fire starts in Belarus, fires are very telling right now so that's why I'm using this as an example, it will not stop at the border no matter what fence we will put. So we need to work

together to face challenges which are not national anymore. If we take organized crime, if we take money laundering, if we take migration issues, these are all challenges we face together, and we can fight them or address them much more efficiently if we are teaming up. So that's the offer of the European Union.

This is what my predecessor said, the European Neighborhood Policy, which is the base for the Eastern Partnership, said we want a ring of friends around you. We want to create an area of stability, prosperity, and peace. And we can only benefit from that.

So the three selves for me are self-explanatory, as a way to answer your question.

MS. MONTGOMERY: Great. Well thank you. There's a lot to unpack there but I think it's clear that this is a project that's based not just on values, but also on self-interest. And I think that answers a lot of the question.

Anna, I'd like to turn to you next. I mean the reforms that are required to get to a place where these countries have healthier economies, more well-functioning governments, have been difficult in many cases. And corruption and oligarchy have proven particularly tough obstacles to overcome. And so we've seen in some places, Moldova for example, that what was once really strong enthusiasm for European direction has waned somewhat.

And so I'm wondering, how can the EU and Eastern Partnership Countries work together to solve this equation and to make sure that citizens really feel the benefit of integration and of closer ties, and not just the pain?

MS. WESTERHOLM: Thank you, Molly, and good morning to you all. Well your question actually could be answered with a very long and elaborate answer, but let me just with a few words try to sum up and be a bit self-critical. I think that at the outset of the Eastern Partnership, we focused a lot on structural changes, structural reforms. And as important as they are, and they're absolutely necessary, I think perhaps we didn't pay enough attention to the fact that people need to see immediate change or very rapid changes in their everyday life in order to continue to believe in the policy and to continue to support it.

We have done a lot, partner countries have done a lot to improve the standard of living

for people, but perhaps not consistently throughout the countries. So I think we need to put much more emphasis on what is beneficial for the everyday person in his and her everyday life. Not just in the capital, but throughout also the regions and local levels.

So with that, I think that going forward now we put people first, put citizens at the center and focus more on local and regional levels.

We must, and partners must, do much more on corruption. I mean that's the fundamentals. If you want to build a resilience society and if you want to build trust from the people's side in your government and in your reforms, you need to make sure that you can have well-functioning institutions and the governance that is not corrupt, that people can see deliver.

But we also need to focus more on jobs. I would say job creation and decent jobs, jobs that people can live off, need to be put at the center. And here also comes of course enabling the, you know, the environment for entrepreneurs, all the medium-sized businesses.

Jan was mentioning that the education level is high. That's true, but we also need to focus more I think on vocational training to make sure that we have also filled those sectors.

Then other issues that are very important, particularly to the young people, are environmental concerns, climate change. So more focus on things that have a direct impact in people's life, like waste management, water purity and access to potable water. I know regions in Moldova where you don't have that actually. And air pollution. These could be examples, infrastructures, roads.

But I think it sounds now like we never did this before, and we have done it. I think we need to do it more, but I also think that the European Union, together with partners, must also make more visibility out of the investments that we make. I think sometimes we are a little bit too humble. We invest in these areas but we don't always advertise the investment that we make. So a little bit self-critical here as well.

MS. MONTGOMERY: I think that's a great point. Jan, coming from a country that achieved many of these similar reforms over the last couple of decades, I wonder if you have anything to add on how to successfully fight corruption and some of these other issues.

MR. HOFMOKL: I think the most important element is that it's not a one-way street, we can all learn from each other. And frankly speaking, looking at some achievements of our partners, let us say digitalization in Georgia, we can learn a lot from what our Georgian colleagues have been done. Looking at Ukrainian colleagues fighting disinformation and interference in media, we could learn from them how to tackle malign influence in the media sphere.

So again, it's a two-way street for us where what we think is the basis for success is to concentrate on youth. And then it may sound like a cliché, but it's very important that we focus today on the leaders of tomorrow that will be ruling our countries and these countries when the time arises and we will be again ready to discuss, for instance, future European enlargements. So we can't lose them. And we need to have a longer perspective in our investment.

A very quick example, we are still, for instance, funding independent media broadcasting in Belarus. I remember mid-80s, probably our US colleagues were thinking the same, is it worth still funding those small outlets who are not working? Who would think that years later Radio Free Europe would not be needed to broadcast in Poland anymore and could shift to another country. So I think we are in the same situation right now, that we need to stay firm and do what we're doing and see what benefits we will have in the future.

MS. WESTERHOLM: Yeah. May I add a little bit to that? And that is, at the outset of the Eastern Partnership, and actually long before that when we started to support these six countries and, you know, we labeled them transition economies or societies. The idea was that we were here and they were there and we are going to support them to transition to one side. So we devised this whole policy with all the instruments and whatnot to support them to transition towards us. But what's happening now and what we need to focus on, I believe from a Swedish perspective, going forward, looking into the next phase or the next decade of the Eastern Partnership is the fact that we're moving. We're no longer here. The new priorities that the European Commission and President von der Leyen has laid out for the European Union will move us from here to here. We are going to transition. We ourselves are now transitioning economies. Because we are going to a low carbon or no carbon economy in the European

Union, which has very stiff goals.

So here we have this group of countries which are now on the trajectory to transition towards us, and we're moving. So what we need to do, I believe, for the next phase of the Eastern Partnership, is to devise and adjust the policies and the instruments that we are supporting these countries transition with so they can change their trajectory and move along with us.

If the end goal for some of the countries is membership, some countries not, but at least political association and economic integration, they cannot fall behind. So there has to be a readjustment of the policy, partly I think in line with the Green New Deal that von der Leyen is laying out for the European Union. We need to use elements of the priorities that we set for ourselves now and to incorporate that into the next phase of the Eastern Partnership in order to make sure that these countries don't fall behind our transition, so that they come along, and at some point in the future, I'm looking, I could answer for instance now, partner countries will be ready to knock on the door.

MS. MONTGOMERY: Some really great points from both of you, but I want to pick up on in a moment, but, Michael, I think you want to jump in as well?

MR. CURTIS: Yeah, just very quickly, Molly, thank you.

I think just to point we have to make it more relevant, it has to be adjusted. We are, as you say, Anna, entering a new era ourselves. But also, you know, it's a choice that the countries themselves have to make. It's something that they want to do, that they want to want to do. And I think we have in some ways the tools, they're already in association agreements, in the trade agreements, which aren't fully exploited, aren't fully implemented, where more progress can be made. So I think we need to build on what we've done, but I think it's clearly that we do need a sort of a bit of a shift in the direction.

And also picking up on the point made by Jan, making it more relevant also to young people. You mentioned climate, I mentioned education and training. One issue which hasn't been mentioned so much but is linked also to the climate issue is also energy and energy security, energy supplies. So I think there's a lot of work to do but it's something we need to do continued in partnership.

And using the experience. Using the experience of the last 10 years, but also, as Molly pointed out, using the experience the member states of the European Union have had in their own transition, in their own development. This is a two-way street. It's not about us telling countries what they should and need to do, it's a conversation.

MS. MONTGOMERY: All right. Thank you. Well Jan mentioned the E word, enlargements. And I know you talked about how some European Partnership members, you know, that is something that they are hoping for and working toward, whereas some not. And I guess two questions that I'll put to all of you related to this.

One, is, you know, with such different desires in terms of what that future relationship looks like with the European Union, how do you make the Eastern Partnership work for all of these countries when there is that clear differentiation in terms of those who really are seeking membership and those who aren't.

And then the second question related to enlargement. Obviously, we've been talking for years about enlargement fatigue, but I think we're in a new place right now given that the French have rejected, temporarily, hopefully, opening a session talks for North Macedonia and Albania, countries that have been on this path for quite some time. And so how do you reconcile the expectations and the hopes of those countries like Ukraine that very much do want to join in, are putting a lot of eggs in that basket, with the mood at the moment in a number of member states?

MR. CURTIS: It's an excellent question, it's a difficult question for us to answer. We know the Eastern Partnership is in a pre-decompression chamber, and countries remain free to express their levels of interaction with the European Union. But, you know, the principle aims do remain stability and approximation to EU standards. In some ways if the point I made earlier, if some of the elements which were fully implemented, it would in some ways be akin to taking on a lot of the EU acquis, that means the rules of standards by which we operate.

But it's clear that, you know, we have our own challenges inside the European Union at the moment when it comes to enlargement. We're still debating on North Macedonia and Albania.

Hopefully we'll see some progress on that in May in Croatia, who's holding the presidency of the European Union. It's a discussion that we need to have with each of the countries. I don't see so much of an issue that they have different aspirations because I think there where the Eastern Partnership is very good that it is tailored, it does try to address the different levels of development and different wishes of the countries.

But then I think enlargement is [not] going to be happening any time soon. I mean even when we're talking about North Macedonia and Albania is talking about discussions to open negotiations. But this is a process, so we're in it for the long term, the commitment is long term, and I think there will be developments in years to come.

MR. HOFMOKL: Okay, thanks so much. I'll try to be a bit provocative for the sake of the discussion. And then there's always a long-standing discussion in the European Union that it was labeled very nicely by Professor Neil Nugent is that is there a tradeoff between an ever wider and an ever deeper European Union. And I come up to the conclusion that maybe there is none.

Look at this moment. In a few days we might most probably lose the United Kingdom as a member of the European Union. Then look at some of the -- we're not a federation in the European Union, we are a group of national countries who want to cooperate together on certain areas and in certain sectors. Look at our Schengen Area, so the common area we have for some of the countries. Because not all EU member states are part of the Schengen Area. Bulgaria and Romania are not. And some non-EU member states are part of the Schengen Area, like the state Switzerland, for instance. Let's take the eurozone; sadly neither Sweden nor Poland are having the common currency of the European Union, while a lot of countries do have it. And we are still part of the same European Union.

Let's take the common defense area, which is being built right now by the European Union, not all new member states are part of it, so I can imagine myself negotiating with the UK a new form of cooperation that will serve as a basis for anyone else later willing to have intimate relations and enter into very deep integration sectorial one with the European Union. It might happen Ukraine will be at the same level of integration as the UK. And then happily so for both.

Again, I have the impression that we are already having certain concentric circles of integration in the European Union whether we like it or not. Right? We might dislike it, we are discussing the future of the European Union at this point of time in the EU constantly, but this is a fact, that we have certain policies with opt outs. So it might happen, we are testing new form of integration right now with the United Kingdom.

MS. MONTGOMERY: Anna, do you want to jump in, or shall we move on?

MS. WESTERHOLM: Jan pretty much stole my arguments, or I wanted to steal his. Just to add to what has been said here, I think that one of the reasons why the Eastern Partnership is in fact one of the European Union's most successful foreign policy initiatives ever is I think because it is built in within it this dynamic flexible mechanism with the bilateral side and the multilateral side, and as Jan has pointed out also, you know, in various sectorial sides, it makes the policy adaptable to change. It makes it, you know, dynamic and very well suited for a continuous, long-term development. So I think that the reason why we are here today, after 10 years, and with this consolidated policy, is that actually when it was initiated not everyone believed it. It is because it has those features of dynamism and flexibility that allows countries to choose the level of engagement that they want.

I think going forward here, as Jan pointed out also with the analogy with the European Union, it is interesting to look at those programs and agencies that the European Union has that are open to non-members. So, you know, for those who aspire to become members one day, to look deep into those programs and agencies and to see if they can already seek membership there now.

MR. HOFMOKL: I'll share with you another argument. Just to sum it up, we have this famous treaty of the European Union. According to the treaty the EU has adopted for itself, and its Article 49, and its Article 2, if you are a European country and you fulfill the criteria, you can always knock on the door. No one tells you that we are closed, I mean a club of close friends that you can't access. You just need to fulfill the criteria. Plus you need to convince the members that it's worth taking you in. But besides, this is the beauty of the game, that you need to strive for it, but also that you have a very good excuse to implement heavy and painful reforms.

MS. MONTGOMERY: That's a great point I think that, you know, the best thing that aspirant countries can do is push as hard as they can to meet the standards and sort of force the argument with member states once they're ready.

A lot there, and I hope we have a lot of questions from the audience. I'm going to ask one more quick question to give you a bit of time to come up with yours, and then we should have plenty of time for questions.

Ideally, we would have had an American official here with you on stage. But since we don't, I would just like to ask, quickly, what can the United States do to support the Eastern Partnership and to support the path of those countries that do wish someday to become members of the European Union?

MS. WESTERHOLM: Should I start? In one or two sentences, to continue to cooperate with the European Union and its member states on this very long-term and very strategic support to the European region as a whole, including the cooperation that the US is already doing with EU members, but also with, so far, non-EU members and Eastern Partnership countries. To remain present, to remain visible and to show clearly the commitment and the engagement that the United States has on the European continent. To really be there and to partner with us. That, I would say, is the most important thing. This is a joint priority.

MS. MONTGOMERY: Anybody else?

MR. CURTIS: Yes.

MR. HOFMOKL: Yes.

MS. MONTGOMERY: Excellent. Great. Well first I want to open it up to members of the embassies from the Eastern Partnership countries. Ambassador Bakradze.

MR. BAKRADZE: Thank you all. First of all I'm so happy to see the colleagues that I had a pleasure to work with in my previous capacity. And I'm really grateful to Brookings and all the panelists to take a time and discuss this, very important for our part of the world, issues and dynamics.

I think to continue on the arguments that has already been presented, first of all I would

like to mention the reasons for the Eastern Partnership to be so successful I think was that at the beginning it was visionary, it was bold, and it was very much political. And that has demonstrated the eagerness of the countries concerned, the Eastern Partnership countries to live up to the standards and achieve what we have managed to achieve. That was named, I won't go into the details, but it has really demonstrated transformative effect on the countries like Georgia. I want to talk from Georgia's perspective.

As we look back on the 10 years of successful cooperation we look of course ahead for the coming 10 years, and we want to see more progress, we want to see more countries being more closer, the goals are the same. We want to bring countries closer to the European Union, and through approximation, through good practices, through good standards.

In this I think we should also remain visionary, we should remain political, and not only concentrate on the technical exercises. Although there are a lot of areas where we should see the possibility to advance the integration of the countries. Which was named briefly, but this is CEFTA, which Moldova is a part of, and other countries can be part of, which is digital single market, which is euro payment here, etcetera, etcetera, exploiting the possibilities of the Eastern Partner countries, including Belarus and the partnership that is covered, environment, energy, and many other IT and many other dimensions.

In all that, if I would single out one, it would be gradual and full integration of the countries into the common market. Given the appetite, and I would like to ask, especially the visitors from Europe, do they see the possibility of that? And very briefly to follow up on Molly's last question, which was US engagement. I think that last several years have really demonstrated how complementary the work of the United States and EU can be on the country on bringing higher standards, bringing better practices, good governance, and I think Georgia is one good example of that. Thank you.

MS. MONTGOMERY: Thank you. Great. Any comments from the panel? Let's take another question and we can go from there.

MR. NERSESYAN: Thank you. My name is Varuzhan Nersesyan, I am ambassador of

the Republic of Armenia. Thank you to all the panelists for this wonderful presentation on Eastern Partnership. And this is indeed a great occasion for all of us members of Eastern Partnership, together with European Union Countries, and especially together with Sweden and Poland, who are the two co-chairs of the Eastern Partnership, to celebrate this wonderful occasion.

Since its inception, Armenia has been an active participant of this great process. And although Armenia didn't sign the CFJ or Association Agreement, Armenia signed with the European Union the CEPA Agreement that the panelist mentioned, the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, which is a great tool, and now we know that only five EU countries haven't yet signed, ratified the agreement, we're very much looking forward to the end of this process. However the agreement is already in its temporary application, and we are in the process of its implementation. So Eastern Partnership has been a great tool and supporting reforms in Armenia.

For us this has been first of all about shared values. Armenia sees itself as a part of Europe, as part of European civilization, and we have utilized this opportunity, at least in partnership together with all six countries to participate in one common process and to work out common mechanisms. I appreciate very much saying that this has not been a geopolitical project or a project of putting the countries, you know, in front of choices. Armenia, being a member of the Eurasian Economic Union, has signed up tenuously and equally developed strong partnership with European Union and we are looking forward to continue the same path of compatibility.

We see these processes not at the expense of each other, but rather in a mutually supplementary way, and we believe that one day or another in future this current contradictions that exist in Europe, they are going to be resolved and Europe is going to be united around common values. So for us this is rather a process. We do not have prejudice toward the final, you know, and we do not pursue at this stage, a membership, but we rather see this as a partnership, as a process, as a format for us to continue this with European Union.

I wanted to ask a question about the principle of more for more because I remember from my time in the capitol when I was dealing with the Eastern Partnership, by the way I was also in the

negotiating process of CEPA Agreement when I was in the administration. I wanted to ask what is the current approach on more for more? Armenia has been especially, after the Velvet Revolution in Armenia, implementing robust reforms and combatting corruption for better protection of human rights and deepening democracy. Of course we appreciate very much the EU fundamental support and assistance to Armenia, but I was interested what is the current approach on more for more. Thank you very much. Thanks for your presentations.

MR. BRISIUCK: I am Yaroslav Brisiuck, deputy chief of mission at the Embassy of Ukraine. I want to continue what Ambassador of Armenia just said, the principle of more for more. We really value the Eastern Partnership mechanism and see it as very important and practical to bring our countries closer to the European Union.

But ambitions among our countries differ. Ukraine, for example, we have stated from the outset that we want to knock on that door, according to Article 49, we want to become a member of the European Union. It's actually written in the constitution of Ukraine that this is our goal. So we've talked with the European Union about establishing the Eastern Partnership Plus Project. It was first mentioned in 2017 during Statement of the Summit, and once again it was mentioned in the Joint Declaration of the Foreign Ministers of Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova in December in Bratislava.

We're looking for a stronger cooperation and stronger sector of cooperation in a number of areas, like transport, energy, digital, and so on and so forth. And this is the purpose of this Eastern Partnership Plus initiative.

So I wanted to ask you what are your thoughts of formally establishing this new step, new mechanism at the upcoming Summit. Thank you.

MS. MONTGOMERY: Great question. Our Moldavian colleague as well.

QUESTIONER: Hello. Carolina Perebinos of the Moldova embassy. First of all, thank you very much to our colleagues and to Brookings for putting this event together because not often in DC you are talking about Eastern Partnership, and we are very grateful that this is an opportunity.

For Moldova, as one of you was mentioning, Moldova used to be a front runner in this

initiative. However, a couple of developments in our country kind of pulled us back on the track. But we were always, you know, thinking about that we need to adjust this forward at some point. There's been 10 years, great years, of doing different interesting things, projects, receiving big amount of assistance from our colleagues in the EU, but this definitely needs to refresh it, as you were saying.

And from our point of view, of course, during the consultation process we also presented a paper with how we would think it should shape. Besides we are also supporting and sharing visions of our colleagues from Georgia and Ukraine on these. Again, adding some new dimensions on this Eastern Partnership cooperation, bringing a new level of political cooperation first of all, for the countries who aspire on the European integration path.

I was wondering if you could comment something because I was reading recently an article regarding a document that was also circulated in the consultation process by France concerning the, you know, that again, the Eastern Partnership is not about enlargement, it's about just bringing the countries closer to you, which not necessarily means an enlargement. And we know the recent transposition on this subject. They were saying also that in the view of the Green Deal that was announced last year, there would be, and their focus and their request, would be for Eastern Partnership, you know, to put more money for assistance concerning the projects on the climate change and environment. I mean how would you see that? Because right now I think it's roughly about 25 percent of the assistance that comes to the Eastern Partnership countries on this particular matter, like environmental and climate change, and France was saying it is considering that it used to be at least half. So half of the assistance going to Eastern Partnership should be on this particular project. So how would this shape the future assistance that would be rendered by you to Eastern Partnership countries?

MS. MONTGOMERY: Great. So that's a great, I think, set of questions to kick us off, and I will let each of you address various pieces. Who would like to start?

MR. HOFMOKL: Green -- you want to answer, sir?

MS. MONTGOMERY: We'll have another round of questions. Let us unpack some of these first. I think there's a lot there, and then we'll start with questions from the audience.

MR. HOFMOKL: The more for more equals less for less. Right? So those who have not declared bigger ambitions but fulfill bigger ambitions, should receive more. But those who don't fulfill and then they don't implement commitments, like for instance contractual arrangements that they have signed up to, might receive less. So it's a double-edged sword that one needs to take into account.

Just to say that I have the impression the European Union reacted very quickly after the Velvet Revolution by increasing its financial support to Armenia. So I think that we are trying to put much more flexibility in the instruments that we have at our disposal in order to react to challenges but also to reward those who are more ambitious. But that's my private opinion. And I'll try and say a few words on the Green Deal and France's proposals to assign more money for environmental projects.

Let us say energy efficiency, insulation of houses, is it green or is it not green? I would say it's pretty green, and it fulfills the requirements that France is setting. High speed trains or infrastructure, is it green or not? I have to say, but now I don't want to enter into a European/European discussion here in Washington. I sense that we shouldn't be scared of the proposals which are circulating right now because if you look very much into what is already happening through the investments financed by the European Union and by EU member states from the bilateral development corporation envelope, I would say that we exceed 50 percent easily of things which could be labeled as falling into the Green Deal.

MS. MONTGOMERY: Michael, do you want to take a couple of these?

MR. CURTIS: Yeah. I'd just like to come in on one thing Jan said in particular. He said energy efficiency is green. Yes, it is green, but it's also strategic. If you're becoming more energy efficient you may be less relying on imports of energy from neighbors. I think you understand what I'm trying to say. That's important, so in that respect it's win/win.

And I agree with Jan on more for more. It's basically conditioned by concrete reform steps. I mean it's an incentive-based approach which should continue to benefit those partners most engaged in reforms.

And coming back to the question from our Ukrainian colleague about what more can we

offer into the new mechanism. And we are very much aware that some of the partner countries would like to see special new formats of cooperation, you know, we hear about European Eastern Partnership Plus, AA Plus, for example. I think that's something that merits really further consideration, it's something we're grappling with. I think we need to look at the areas where we could expand our cooperation. We've mentioned energy policy, green policy, digital economy, who knows, customs. We did have a meeting on trade where the commission announced from under the last commission. So I think it's, you know, we need to have that discussion and see what we can come up with.

But of course this is a dialogue, this is a two-way process, and as with the contributions which was mentioned for France, something that we need to continue having that conversation on.

MS. WESTERHOLM: Just very quickly, and since Jan already commented on the French, I will leave that aside.

The EAP Plus, or whatever, you know, name that has been circulated when discussing what more to give ambitious partners. I think here, and this connects a little bit to the "more for more" principle as well. I think here it's important to also view all countries individually, separately, since we do have the policy of differentiation, which is a fundamental principle to the Eastern Partnership, and to admit that ambition can be defined in different ways. And I think needs to be reevaluated progressively.

It is not only about having signed an association agreement or a DCFTA. It is not only about just implementing these agreements, although that is the centerpiece. But for those countries who opt for other contractual arrangement, take Armenia as an example. Armenia is a very ambitious country right now. And doesn't that warrant also some consideration when we discuss what does ambitious mean. So when we want to package something more for those who are ambitious, personally I don't see us excluding Armenia from such a discussion. I'll buy it of course, it cannot be based on a DCFTA.

So I agree with Michael here, it warrants, you know, careful consideration but it cannot be designed, subject to discussion, cannot be designed in such a way that we exclude other ambitious countries. So it cannot mean, for instance, that we cannot also discuss with Armenia, you know, what could be the next opportunity for Armenia.

Also, sir, I would like to thank you for reminding us that at the core of the cooperation that we have within the Eastern Partnership, lies the fundamental values that we share on human rights, on democracy and good governance, on rule of law. This is the fundamentals.

So going forward again, to tie up a little bit what was said also by Ambassador Bakradze here. When we are now discussing, you know, what would be the future, the big areas that we look at, and the city headlights, words that we are using are Green Deal, which if you unpack it, will include a lot.

Digitalization and youth. And at the core of this centerpiece the strong emphasis on, we call them European values, but actually they are universal, they are common values.

MS. MONTGOMERY: Michael, a last word.

MR. CURTIS: Yeah. I would just like to, sorry to intervene again, but also to thank for the questions and the comments because I think that is also important, and this shows that on the eve of one member state deciding to leave the European Union, the European Union still exercises the power of attraction to its friends and its neighbors. And I think that's an important message also to pass.

MS. MONTGOMERY: And I think as well the dynamism between member states and Eastern Partnership states as well is that what does this look like and how do we move forward. So thank you.

All right. Questions from the audience. I saw a hand in the back first, sir.

MR. KIRISCI: Thanks, Molly. I'm Kemal Kirisci from the Center on the United States and Europe. I have one quick comment and a question.

My comment is the way in which Ambassador Westerholm responded to your question about the US, and the verb she chose. Present. The United States presence is important in this exercise. I would have expected to hear United States leadership. And we must not forget that the initial treaties of the 50s and what happened in the 90s with the enlargement would have not been possible without the US.

The quick question follows. I don't want to sound like I'm picking on you, Ambassador, but the gestures you made about how there's a movement upwards in certain areas. There is a

movement that is downwards, and I'd like the panel to reflect on, that's the movement away from democratic values, universal values you made references to, within the European Union. Now how does that reflect on the Eastern Partnership's performance?

MS. MONTGOMERY: Thank you. And we'll take two more questions and then get some responses. Here, sir, in the blue.

QUESTIONER: Good morning, my name is Damion, I work for Georgia Media in Washington, DC. I would like to stress more on enlargement, the topic of enlargement, and ask you about the two documents that were seen by my colleague, saying Radio Free Europe in Brussels two days ago. According to those two documents, France has rejected the suggestions that Eastern Partnership Program could lead to the EU membership, and it excludes all mechanisms and all the instruments for any possible membership.

Do you share that outlook that it indeed excludes all the mechanisms of the enlargement? And also the second question is, what do you think how this outlook and the viewpoint can be translated to the ordinary people by the governments of those countries? Thank you.

MS. MONTGOMERY: One more. Sir, here.

MR. LITTLE: Hello, David Little from the media. My question is about well, the elephant in the room, Russia. Do they see this as a choice? Earlier you guys said it's not a choice between two different groups, but do they see it as these countries having to make a choice between the EU or Russia? And that's my question.

MS. MONTGOMERY: All right. So we have quite a buffet to choose from. US presence versus US leadership, democratic backsliding within the EU, enlargements, Russia, and how to translate all of this to citizens. So I will let our panelists choose from the buffet as they wish.

MR. HOFMOKL: Okay. I'll say something quickly and then maybe I'll come back.

Enlargement. I also mentioned the E word, as Molly said. But first I should ask whether we have someone from the French Embassy here because maybe I don't want to step into their shoes, but I'll try, having studied in Paris.

I think there's a misunderstanding of what France means, because actually the DCFTA, so Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement that are signed with three of the EAP Partners, are allowing for the taking of 70 percent of EU acquis coming out, which, as Michael said, are the EU rules and standards.

Does it lead to enlargement or does it lead to nowhere? In my view if you implement the Association Agreement, which are the legal, contractual political relations with EU, and the trade part of this agreement under the DCFTA, you're getting pretty well prepared to work according to European standards and rules. Again, is the European Neighborhood Policy an enlargement policy? No, and no one said so. From the beginning this is a neighborhood policy, not an enlargement policy.

Does fulfilling its criteria and following its path bring the partner closer to the EU? Yes. And the moment, as I said, you fulfill the criteria, if you are a European state, you can knock on the doors. So actually you can't say that the EAP or the Neighborhood Policy are an enlargement policy, but equally you cannot say that this is not an enlargement policy. It's just something completely different that prepares yourselves for the moment that you and the Union will be ready to start discussing something different, which might be enlargement. And I tried to point out to various ways we can see future cooperation evolving.

MR. CURTIS: On that point, I mean as a rule we generally don't comment on leaked documents. I haven't seen those documents. All I would say is that we are in a consultation process. The high representative and the Commission will bring out their communication to prepare the summit in the next few months. It's perfectly natural, the 28, soon to be 27, member states and partner countries are all inputting into the processing of the consultations that we had last year.

What I would like to maybe address is the movement away from democratic values in the EU. I mean the way I would put it is this is a two-way street. It's not about the EU coming to tell these countries what they have to do, what they have to think. Hopefully it's a choice they make themselves. I mean we're not perfect in the European Union. I mean we make mistakes. I mean why not, you know, we should learn from our own mistakes and hopefully in the same way that partner countries will also

draw their conclusions from the mistakes we've made, from the progress we've made.

So, you know, it's something which on the democratic values, we address it entirely within the European Union, but also I think, you know, we would also point to the great strides that we've made over the years and the progress in the individual member state.

On the Russia question. I'm afraid perhaps my colleagues are better placed to answer that more specifically. I think it's a good question, but in the end it is what it is. It's not a binary choice, it's what the countries choose to do.

We have examples where, you know, countries in the region have agreements which involve Russia, which involve the European Union. We're not asking countries to choose, and we don't see that as a way for them. I can't speak on behalf of Russia if that's how they see it or not.

MS. WESTERHOLM: So I would try to answer a few of the questions.

On the democratic development in Europe, European countries, and partners in the Eastern Partnership, and I mean we're not immune to the developments of the world. There is a trajectory right now, there's a trend right now in the world away from democracy in many countries where we had previously been rock-solid about the integrity of the democracy. So of course we are not immune.

But we are tackling it, and we're working together within the European Union based on the rules and standards that we have, to uphold democracy. And we are supporting countries that are neighbors to the European Union who ascribe to do the same. So I would say that, you know, it's very dangerous, and I think we're doing ourselves a big disfavor if we are looking at this as the everyday, you know, stock market. This is a long-term process, and transition is never linear.

I have spent many years working with development corporations, apart from security policy in Eastern Europe. And one thing that you quickly learn is to be humble about how long time things take. So if we evaluate, you know, this as the daily market, like the tradings like this, we're going to lose sight of the real trajectory. Because what we have to remember, sir, is where we would start. Not where we were yesterday, but where were we 10 years ago and 20 years ago.

So I would say that even though we are having challenges right now within the European

Union itself, I think the democratic development of the European Union is still positive.

Commenting on U.S. leadership, I would actually leave that to the Americans to comment on that. I think that the Europeans should be taking leadership, and if the U.S. want to take leadership, they are welcome to do so.

Let me also, when we talk about Russia, let me also say, maybe a little bit provocative, but unless you are a country that is afraid of being surrounded by democracies, you really should welcome the Eastern Partnership and the work that we do with the partners. Eastern Partnership is not a zero-sum game. And as Michael was pointing out, it's not about geopolitical competition. It is a policy for the countries that are involved, not a policy against anything.

And let me just for the sake of the argument, bring us back to before we had the Eastern Partnership. Because one of the things, Jan and I have been touring around the last year within the framework of the 10-year anniversary discussing, you know, the pros and cons and the developments and where do we come from and the achievements and what not. One thing that I reflected on was that the Eastern Partnership was not born out of desperation. The Eastern Partnership was born out of aspiration, for wanting something.

If we remember what it looked like back in 2006, 2007, we had pretty good relationship with Russia at the time. We had a Partnership Agreement with Russia as signed. There was movement on the southern sector of the EU neighborhood. And the discussion, I know in Poland you have told me you started even long before this to think about what can we do also for the other countries that are neighboring the EU, not just Russia. We had an agreement with Russia.

And we had a successful enlargement process already completed in the European Union. And based on this positive wave, the ideas of the Eastern Partnership were born. Then actually it kicked off in 2008 with the war in Georgia. That's really, you know, when it kicked off. But the plans were there before.

MR. HOFMOKL: Can I step in, with just a few elements about Russia. Now you got me started.

MS. WESTERHOLM: Watch out.

MR. HOFMOKL: Thank you. One, let's put it in context. Back in 2004, '05, '06, the European Union and the US are enjoying a completely different setup and relations with Russia. In the European Union we are building strong partnerships based on sectorial cooperation, and imagine that, few ministers from the European Union, including the Polish and the Swedish one, the mother and father of the Eastern Partnership, went to see Minister Lavrov and proposed him to join the Eastern Partnership. It's an open extended invitation to take part in the discussion on the future of the region and its cooperation with the European Union. Minister Lavrov, at that time, and I reviewed the reports from these meetings, said that we are enjoying a very strategic relationship with Europe, and we don't need the Eastern Partnership but we have nothing against it. I am not sure what he would say today, but this is what he said.

Two, Minister Lavrov repeated that now he understands why some of his raucous neighbors do want to team up under this umbrella, allowing them to have multilateral relations with the European Union a few years back. So it was reiterated.

And the most important element I want to emphasize, and I will do it, I apologize for using the example of Armenia. I mean we are not mad at our Armenia friends that they didn't want to sign an association agreement. It's their choice to be part of the Eurasian Economic Union for instance. I mean we put on the table half a billion customers, I mean extremely wealthy and willing to spend. Someone wants to enjoy from it, someone else doesn't want to enjoy from accessing this market. No problem. I mean we can negotiate a different way and different contractual relations, allowing us to team up and get closer.

The only important thing is that we are not mad if someone turns us down. Okay? And I want to emphasize that. It's an open invitation for discussion.

MS. MONTGOMERY: Thank you. Okay, a few more questions. Ambassador Fried, let's start with you.

MR. FRIED: Dan Fried, Atlantic Council. Of course Putin's Russia is afraid of being

surrounded by democracies, I ask rhetorically, why do we think he invaded Ukraine? Okay. But you didn't need me to tell you. We all know.

With respect to the question from our Georgian friends about enlargement, don't ask a question and start a theological fight when you're going to lose. I mean that's my rough way of saying what I think the panel answered. The Eastern Partnership allows everybody to advance toward Europe at the pace they can, and in doing so, to the degree they are successful, they will amass political capital, which then they can use to push on the enlargement process when the politics change, as they will.

All right. And I say this from experience. You know, in the very early days of NATO enlargement when it was a forbidden phrase even in the early Clinton administration, we made ambiguity our goal. And all there was, was a little crack of ambiguity, and later when things changed, we rushed in. So, you know, I'm not asking our European colleagues to comment or get into a fight, but a frontal assault on the French position isn't going to work. But amass the political capital of success. And then start the conversation when the opposition changes and your capital is at a height.

Okay. Sorry about that, but two brief questions. On the question of the US leadership, look, I mean, you know what you're dealing with. I don't know where George is, I wish he were here, and we all love him, but what can you do? We are where we are.

One element though of actual US leadership which is compatible with the European Union, which is a rare and welcome occasion, is the Three Seas Initiative. Whatever its origins and odd antecedents, it has moved in a consistently European EU friendly direction, and it overlaps significantly with what you're talking about. Green Deal, you know, and energy. Digitalization is one of the three pillars of the Three Seas. Is this an area for cooperation? Okay. That's one question.

Second question, is Belarus. How do you balance the different equities? And, you know, I've been going back and forth myself on this for 15 years. Where are we now, what do you think is possible, is Lukashenko's fear about being swallowed alive, losing his sovereignty and his job, sufficient basis on which to work with them? Good arguments on both sides. Sorry to go on, but this is just too good an opportunity.

MS. MONTGOMERY: Thank you. Okay. Two more questions. And we haven't had any women ask questions. You're here, so please raise your hand. You in the back. Thank you.

QUESTIONER: Hello. Voice of America Georgia Service. My question is about the ambition of the Eastern Partnership program, because their big concern is about how effective actually the program has been. Well I'll talk about Georgia, will it be destabilization or DCFTA. It has brought as much benefit as the program initially planned for.

But besides that, if you are now settling for less ambitious plan for future and the French initiative would represent that, I don't know if you would agree with me on that, but if so, then if you see backsliding and their concerns, for example in Georgia as well, what leverage do you have in case of Georgia specifically? Thank you. Or other countries.

MS. MONTGOMERY: Thank you. Okay. Sir.

MR. NIKURADZE Thank you. My name is David Nikuradze, I represent Georgian television station Formula in Washington, DC. I'd like to follow up on democracy.

I wonder could you give me your reaction, a growing concern in European Parliament and in Congress of the United States about, as they say, democratic backsliding. Since the Georgian Parliament voted down constitutional amendments on fully proportional representation, and we've seen numerous statements in Brussels and in Washington, critical statements. So I wonder if you give me your reaction of that statement? Thank you.

MS. MONTGOMERY: Thank you. And sorry, we have one more here in the front row, quickly. And then we'll get quick reactions and closing statements from the panel.

QUESTIONER: Good morning. My name is (inaudible) I'm from the embassy of Azerbaijan. Thank you very much for organizing this panel and greetings to the fathers and mothers of this partition.

At Azerbaijan, we have developed a partnership with the EU. In some fields we have such a partnership, energy, being relative example of that. And frankly speaking, as a matter of policy we prefer bilateral relationship. And with EU, as Azerbaijan and EU, on energy transport have been working

on various such issues, and that this building the backbone of the region. And I would encourage working on this fields which brings EU closer to the region and the region closer to the EU. So this is a very practical and strategic issue.

On the Eastern Partnership, Azerbaijan was participating on it, and as is written in the 2009 declaration, there are certain issues that are impeding cooperation with the Eastern Partnership and conflicts are mentioned as one of them.

Here I would like to thank EU for its position to the support of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of states. And on a broader Eastern Partnership question, to tell the truth, the broader question is about Western leadership in the region. EU Eastern Partnership is one, a manifestation of that. And, ambassador, thank you for that, for making the US role, the EU role.

So my question would be very philosophical, maybe very, you know, maybe not that concrete. But how the West is perceiving itself being in the region. Is Europe, the European Union and US, as you perceive as the West, in the region present these days? Or are it on, you know, a decline? And that has impact also on the Eastern Partnership, to tell the truth, just random speaking. And would just welcome your comments on that. How you see projection on that front. Thank you.

MS. MONTGOMERY: Thank you. All right. Well I've given you the impossible task. I think of answering all of those questions in the next nine minutes. But I'll give each of you a couple of minutes to respond, and if you have anything you haven't yet had a chance to say, please have at it. Michael, can I start with you?

MR. CURTIS: Thanks, Molly. I mean I would say there are a lot of things there, and thank you for the different questions.

On Belarus, I mean we see increase in engagement in the Eastern Partnership, which is positive development. But, you know, at the same time we still have our position dating back to council conclusions in February 2016, which says that we need tangible results in democracy and human rights in Belarus. Only then, basically, you know, do we see concrete differences that we can sort of start looking into tackling a sort of legally binding agreement. So I think my short answer to that question is

they will be judged on acts rather than words.

To address the issue of a lack of ambition. I think it was mentioned specifically with regard to Georgia, but I don't want to comment specifically on one country. I think what I would refer to in this is, as Anna said, this is not linear, this is like a river, there are twists and turns. Sometimes, you know, it slows down, sometimes it speeds up. But we need to look, as she says, where we were before, and we're making progress. But it's not a straight line.

And, you know, countries go through their own development, their own internal challenges, when at times, you know, there may be, you know, perhaps this ambition at other times. But I think the constant is still there, the agreements are in place, the partnership is in place. And, you know, they still need to be implemented fully. There's a lot of potential for development within the current context of those agreements.

But again, you know, in 2020 we'll have the opportunity, I think, what we will be developing is a more ambitious European partnership. I mean that's the aim. I think we take heart from the progress that has been made, but we're perfectly lucid about where there are still shortcomings. And hopefully we will have a level of ambition which will respond to those challenges.

Which brings me perhaps to comment from our Azerbaijan colleague about how does the West see itself in the region. I mean fully committed. I mean that level of engagement has grown over the years. I mean I think some point going back into the 2006, 2008, some countries in the European Union saw us as little bit more of their back yard for their historical ties and geographical proximity. What I've seen in my time in the European Union, having been based in Brussels, is that this is something which all members states are committed to, even, you know, whether they're new, old, West, East, South, or North. So this is of fundamental importance for the European Union.

I would leave it there, just maybe one final comment on the Three Seas Initiative from Ambassador Fried. I think there is perhaps an area of overlap, but overlap which could be used and channeled positively. I think it's something we would need to look at a little bit further. Thank you.

MS. MONTGOMERY: Okay. Jan?

MR. HOFMOKL: Ambassador Fried, you would like to know what we think about Belarus. As a direct neighbor and a European Union member, I'll try to be brief because we could discuss it the whole day most probably. But I think that right now we have a completely common goal with our Belarusian colleagues, and it is to have an independent Belarus, full stop, right?

And by saying this I want to acknowledge that the European Union is ready to support any attempt by Belarusian authorities to strengthen their resilience, to strengthen their nationhood. By saying this I want to say to strengthen the capacity of Belarus to decide by itself who it wants to team up with.

Again, there's a lot to do, not only on the economic level but also on the political one. The EU is there to assist, but it will not force anyone and will not save anyone against its own will. So it needs two to tango at that moment. And of course you need to be sure that you want to dance to the tune that will be played. So with this enigmatic answer I am ready to follow up afterward.

Just one element of comments concerning the level of ambitions, the leverages we have, and what the EU and the US can do in the region. My simple answer is to all my colleagues from the region, who are you doing these reforms for? They are not to please the European Union, they are not for me, or they are not for bureaucrats, they are for the people of these countries. And then it's up to the countries themselves to decide what type of reforms you want to implement.

And we are a certain model in the European Union, we are a certain reservoir of best practices, but also very bad examples that you don't need to follow because we've done these mistakes before. We stretch a hand, and we ready to help but, again, we are not there to save anyone against his or her own will, but to say whether we are in the leadership and who should be. My take is that President Trump said very clearly that he wants Europe to take the lead in the region. And I think through the policies implemented, including base of partnership, the European Union is trying to make a positive change. Or at least to offer a positive change.

But again, I agree with all my colleague, we need the US to remain engaged, clearly. Because we want to team up with anyone who can help.

And then my final remark on the proportional representation voting system in Georgia. I am not here to comment anyone's voting codes and electoral code, I just want to say we've been through this in many of our countries, including Poland, and a fully proportional system with no threshold resulted in like 20 something parties in the parliament not being able to agree on anything.

Again, the EU is a nice reservoir of best practices and very bad mistakes that have been done. So that's why in some of our countries we do have entry thresholds to allow a certain degree of workability in our parliaments.

MS. MONTGOMERY: Anna.

MS. WESTERHOLM: So I'm so tempted now to make a little bit of a joke on Poland. No, but actually, commenting on the threshold of parties in parliament. In Sweden we actually have a word for what that kind of system is, when you have no threshold and you have, you know, as many parties are there are parliamentarians. We call it a Polish Parliament. And it's a historical joke, and obviously it's also a way of saying a system that doesn't work. But this is long before you became an EU member.

No. But it's really, you know, we shouldn't look at, as I was saying before, we shouldn't look at this as a daily, you know, stock trading. But when we do, because we do that too, we support when there is a high, when it delivers. And when there are lows we're critical. And you can see from the statement that came out from the European Union after this development in Georgia. The European Union made it clear that this is what we thought about it, and that we were disappointed.

But again, it is up to Georgian politicians and Georgian parliamentarians to decide what system that they want to have, and that we're ready to support for whatever system that they choose. I will not comment more on the details of the Georgian proportional system.

I think that actually everything was commented on by my colleagues here. So can I say something completely different?

We talk very often when we analyze the Eastern Partnership and when we look back over the 10 years that has followed since its inception. And we talk about what has it delivered. You know, what are the results? And we could, you know, list them, and many of you could also, you know,

make long, long, long lists of all the response that the Eastern Partnership has delivered.

Did it give us what we expected? Partly it perhaps didn't, but maybe it has given us more than we actually assumed from the start. I went back to my then Minister, Colville, and asked him, did it give you what you had imagined, or did it develop the way you thought. And he said well actually we hadn't calculated on the Russia negative reaction. But given the challenges in the region during these years, the Eastern Partnership has delivered more than we expected. Because we also didn't expect the Association Agreement and the DCFTA's coming this quickly. So in a sense it has been a more profound transition and a more profound transformation that we've dared to dream of.

But again, we can list all the development that has happened in the region since the Partnership was initiated, but there is one result that we very seldom talk about. And that is the change that it has brought with it, within the European Union and within EU member states. Because back then I would say that the majority of my colleagues and our countries in the European Union would look upon the countries to our East, wondering about them, these really, you know, unusual to us, post-Soviet states. Ten years later we know each other. We know our weaknesses and we know our strengths, we have a pro-active agenda that we meet regularly on and discussed based on EU standards and EU policies, forward looking, strategic agenda. This was inconceivable 15 years ago.

But more importantly we talk about our East European neighbors, our East European Partners, as European, not as post-Soviet. And I think this is one of the most important results of this policy, the change in mind that it brought with it, among us in the European Union.

MS. MONTGOMERY: Thank you. I think that's a great note to end on. I want to thank all of you in the audience for your presence and great questions. And please join me in thanking our panel for their conversation.

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I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2020

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