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WEBINAR

TRANS-ATLANTIC COOPERATION AFTER THE U.S. ELECTION: PERSPECTIVES FROM FRANCE AND GERMANY

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. WRIGHT: Good morning. My name is Tom Wright. I direct the Center for the United States and Europe at the Brookings Institution and I am delighted to welcome everyone here today for a virtual seminar on the future of trans-Atlantic relations from a French and German perspective.

Today's event is being held in partnership with the Robert Bosch Stiftung. It's part of our ongoing Brookings Bosch Trans-Atlantic Initiative. So we really appreciate the continuing partnership with Bosch and look forward to more events in the future. You can tweet about today's event, tweet questions or comments that we'll address throughout the course of the discussion using #BBTI.

So I'm particularly delighted to be joined by two friends from Europe and one friend here in the U.S. for this discussion. I couldn't imagine better people to really analyze what has happened over the last few months and then to look ahead to next year as a critically important moment in the trans-Atlantic relationship.

Sebastian Groth is the director for policy planning at the German Federal Foreign Office. He previously held the titles of deputy director for policy planning and director of the state secretary's office. He previously served as an advisor on foreign policy and Franco-German relations in the cabinets of three French prime ministers and is an expert in energy, climate, global economic questions at the policy planning staff in the Foreign Office.

And, Sebastian, I know you've worked with us very closely over the years, so thank you and welcome back.

Manuel Lafont Rapnouil is the head of policy planning at the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs who was previously in the think tank world with us as a senior policy fellow and head of the Paris Office of the European Council on Foreign Relations. Prior to that Manuel headed the political affairs division for the Department of U.N. Affairs at the French Ministry and International Development, and had various postings in the French Diplomatic Service.

And, Manuel, thank you so much and you've been a real force in this debate over the last couple of years in your position and, of course, previously, so we really welcome your perspective here today.

And then, last but not least, and my colleague, Toria Nuland. Ambassador Nuland is the nonresident senior fellow at the Center for the U.S. and Europe and a senior advisor to the director of foreign policy at the Brookings Institution with us. She's also a senior counselor at the Albright Stonebridge Group. She served in many senior positions in the U.S. government, including assistant secretary of state for Europe and ambassador to NATO.

So, Toria, welcome as well.

So let's dive right into it. Maybe to start out with – and we're going to keep this fairly conversational and free flowing I think throughout the course of the hour. But both – if I could turn to maybe Sebastian first and then Manuel, both of your bosses, the foreign ministers of France and of Germany, recently published an op-ed in the Washington Post, a joint sort of statement, calling for a new trans-Atlantic agenda next year now that we have a new administration. Obviously, the last four years have been particularly difficult. There is a sense this moment is maybe an unprecedented moment for — if not a reset — for really a deepening of cooperation on multiple fronts and that if we don't avail of it, it may not arise again. And that we're seeing sort of similar challenges domestically and internationally, and, of course, with the pandemic as well, that need to be addressed.

While all of that is true and the U.S. is also, you know, increasingly focused on China, and there's the issues in the Middle East with the JCPOA. So I'm wondering if from both of your perspectives — and maybe, Sebastian, we could start with you — if you could just tell us a little bit about your thinking in the German Foreign Office about the historical significance of this moment and the opportunity, and maybe some of the challenges that await next year.

MR. GROTH: Yeah. Thank you, Tom, first of all for the invitation and for this format, and for the long-standing cooperation between also Brookings and the German MFA.

I think you're right, you said that the four last years were not a very easy ride, especially for Germany. We somehow felt a little bit in the limelight of the Trump administration in a negative sense. And that was a new experience for us after seven, almost eight decades of a very trustful and constructive friendship and alliance. So I think by the end of the day we managed somehow to limit the damage as much as possible to the trans-Atlantic relations. And we still had a chance to maintain very,

very solid and good relationships also between the administrations. I can't talk for the political level though, but on our level it was still very functioning.

But I think still now it's really the time to turn this page and look forward. And the mood in Berlin in general, in the Foreign Office but also in parliament and in the other ministries, is very, very forward looking, very positive. We are ready to open a new chapter. Both ministers, Le Drian and Maas, wrote in their piece about the new deal. That means it's a give and take. And we are also ready to invest in this partnership. And I think there's a lot to do, a lot to tackle together. You talked about COVID, talked about climate, but there is a lot of I think very, very important foreign policy dossiers that go beyond the call for trans-Atlantic relationship, though the proof really is — of the trans-Atlantic relationship will be beyond the core of the trans-Atlantic relationship, but on very, very important issues that are on the table and I'm sure that we will tackle in the course of this discussion.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you, Sebastian.

Manuel, if we could turn to you. And France I guess had a little bit of a better relationship with the Trump administration, at least for part, than Germany did. I guess I'm slightly tempted to ask you if there's anything you'll miss. So maybe you can address that. But also just give us your perspective I guess on in terms of next year, the opportunity, but maybe also some of the challenges or the things that you think it's important for the Biden administration to know that it's not just sort of a reversion to the status quo ante. You know, what has changed over the last four years from where you sit in Paris?

MR. RAPNOUIL: Thanks. Thanks, Tom. Thanks also for the opportunity. This is obviously a good moment to have this discussion.

And, as you know, a policy planner's job is to contribute to the ministers' strategic thinking. So one of the consequences is that what I will say does not necessarily represent French official positions. I need to state that out from the start. But clearly I think that the coming period is an opportunity that we need to seize.

And I'm not sure I will miss some things, because the things that we have enjoyed, if any, in the recent period, I don't see any reasons we don't still enjoy them in the coming period. So we are not going to miss them, but we are going to be able to build on them and move to another step. And

obviously working collectively with our European partners, including Germany, is part of the things that are going to be important.

I concur with a lot of what Sebastian said, so not to repeat and paraphrase. I think we are aware in Europe that not everything is going to change, that some patterns were already there before the Trump administration. That's the focus on China, the people to Asia, that's the insistence on burden sharing, the reshuffling of trade policy, etc. But these patterns will probably take a very different form and there will be some important differences on substance. I can think of climate, I can think of human rights. And in terms of methods. I mean the idea that diplomacy needs more space, that allies are important, that multilateralism matters, and the fact that EU will not be considered as a foe or that NATO will not be obsolete are really key changes.

And these create an opportunity that it's all the more important for us to seize. That the polarization also in the U.S. seems to stay, with the uncertainties that it brings in terms of the consistency of U.S. foreign policy over time. And this is already anticipated by others. And ourselves as allies and partners, we need to anticipate that too, which means that we need to make the most out of the coming period to put the trans-Atlantic relationship on the right track.

And you did mention the op-ed by our two ministers, and I want to mention the op-ed by the Benelux ministers, Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg, which was more or less along the same lines. The idea is that this is a testimony of our willingness to come to the next administration with a number of proposals. Because our sense is that Europe needs to continue to be more proactive. And so in the op-eds you have identified a number of possible venues for a renewed and reinforced trans-Atlantic cooperation. And, as Sebastian pointed out, this is not just for renewing the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Europeans, but also to work on more global issues — the current pandemic, the post-COVID recovery, the climate, preserving the global order, reinforcing European security, engaging, competing, and rivaling with China, Iran, Turkey, terrorism.

There's a lot to chew on today, so thanks for the opportunity to discuss all this.

MR. WRIGHT: Great. Thank you.

Toria, you know, you've been involved really as a driving force on U.S. policy to Europe

for some time. You know, I guess you've all sort of argued the U.S. needs to have a very engaged position, but you could you maybe tell us a little bit about your thinking, about what makes this moment different, if anything, and how do you think these proposals from European countries will be received, you know, at this point in sort of the process here in terms of a transition, and the early months of the new administration?

MS. NULAND: Well, thanks, Tom. And it's great to be here with Sebastian and Manuel, who are the big brains of their ministries, and at this extremely important moment.

First, just to make the same disclaimer, I can't speak for the incoming Biden administration. Lots of friends already named, but, you know, my comments will be based on what the president-elect and his key advisors have already said publicly.

I think the first thing to understand is that in Joe Biden you have a lifetime committed Atlanticist. You also have a leaders who starts from a premise which is 180 degrees off his predecessor, namely, that the United States is strongest when it works in tandem with its allies and the Europe is the core of that alliance system, and that all of the great challenges that our nations face can only be tackled together.

And then I think there's what's new now. Two things. First of all, I think the Trump term has proven that when the United States goes it along and takes an America first unilateralist approach, the results are not better for the American people. We've had to — we took on the China challenge all by ourselves. The American farmer took the entire burden of sanctions and the results are not necessarily any better than where we started. Similarly, Iran continues to gallop off, now on nuclear, but also on its regional agenda. And the examples of that just go on and on.

But by the same token I think you have a Biden administration that comes in feeling like the moment is existential. It's not only existential in terms of the need to rebuild, revitalize, build back better as Biden says, in our own spaces and ensure that the money we're pumping into our economy for revitalization is greener, is more innovative, brings the middle class along. But I think he will also come into office feeling like we're in an existential moment vis-a-vis the challenge from the rising autocrats. That they have had China and Russia in particular for years to deepen their hooks, not into our alliance

system, but also into changing the global rules of the world. And that we've got to, as liberal countries, work together, not only to defend our free and open and secure system, but our values at home and abroad, as well as strengthen global rules of the road that favor freedom.

So that's going to create a very, very ambitious agenda I think. And it is very welcome that we have positive signals already coming from France and Germany, traditionally the engines anyway of the European Union, but increasingly after Brexit needing to work even more closely with them. But I think the agenda is going to be so ambitious that we may come on a little stronger than Europe is ready for. So not simply the global health agenda, but economic renewal, how do we harmonize our investments that are greener, more innovative, etc., to strengthen our liberal economies.

The China challenge, in all of its elements, and pieces of this will be in the nation state relationship, pieces of this will be in the U.S.-EU relationship, and pieces of this will be at NATO. So having to restructure so that we are creating unity of effort in the way we deal with the trade challenge together, the technology challenge together, the investment challenge together. Not to make a permanent enemy of China, but ensure that the rules of the road protect us from being abused.

And then the whole, you know, securing our technological future in a way that favors freedom. And that's going to be hard work. And will Europe wait for us as it marches off to do all kinds of rules on privacy and competition and these kinds of things. I think there's more energy now in the United States for doing the same, but we will do better if we can do these things together. And many, many other issues.

So I think it's extremely welcome, but we can't just go back to where we were, we have to build it back better. The agenda has changed and the challenges to the way we live have changed, internally and externally.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you, Toria. And please feel free to comment on Toria's remarks or each other's remarks as well.

But I'd like to turn to one thing Toria mentioned, which is on the pandemic. And, you know, when President-elect Biden takes office, by some estimates there will be possibly 4,000 people a day dying here from COVID in late January. We're looking at a pretty dark sort of winter. Germany, of

course, has gone into I guess another stage of lock down now and, you know, the situation in Europe is difficult. We do have hope on the horizon in the form of the vaccine, but all of that will sort of take its course I guess with the public health experts and the infrastructure put into place. The job of diplomats will really — to be — try to piece together the international part of this equation, whether it's through a G7 or G20. You know, we can expect Biden to rejoin COVAX and ACT and recommit to the WHO, and do all of that stuff probably in the first few weeks.

So I guess my question is that looking beyond, you know, that initial re-engagement, what are the lessons that your governments — or that you personally — have learned, I guess diplomatically and geopolitically and on public health, from this crisis? And how do we — to use Toria's and the president-elect's phrase — how do we build that back better? You know, we had 15 years of cooperation with China after SARS and it didn't really yield all that much. When COVID hit, we had the U.S. and U.K. ranked as the world's most prepared countries for a pandemic a month or two before the pandemic hit. And that didn't matter at all.

So many of the things that we tried over the last decade or so didn't really seem to have the desired impact. So as you think about this from I guess the perspective of, you know, someone might have looked at post war Europe after World War II, we're in the post-pandemic world thinking about global public health architecture, what do you think the big sort of lessons are with that?

Manuel, maybe we could start with you and then go to Sebastian. And then I'd love to get Toria in this as well.

MR. RAPNOUIL: Sure. So in Europe I think one of the things that was very striking at the very early stage of the crisis is that whereas the theory seems very clear that this is something that is global and therefore we need to tackle it together, because we can't really fight it unilaterally or on the national basis, The initial impulse was more of border closing and everyone dealing with its own paths or aspect of the health crisis. But we pushed against that quite quickly and effectively. You had coordination to keep the borders open to the extent possible within the EU, you had trans-border cooperation between hospitals. For inference, Germany hosted a number of French patients because the French hospital in eastern France, the hospitals — the ICU were full. We had actually a lot of

cooperation in terms of providing masks and equipment, even though maybe we were not as good as the Chinese to communicate about it. But if you look at the figures, I think there is no comparison possible. And we learned from that for the actual second wave, where I think we've done a much better job at not going through these kind of uncoordinated first phase.

More than that, we actually worked together also for the economic part. And this is big stimulus plan which is kind of a sea change at the EU level. And clearly this is something that we are aware that doing it at the EU level is good, doing it at the global level would be even better. And that's why you have seen the Europeans and France — and I'll let Sebastian speak about Germany — but Germany was there very much too pushing so much for this so called ACT initiative to prompt, accelerate access to the various tools and equipment that you need. And there is in that — the COVAX mechanism, which is to facilitate access to the vaccine itself. And part of it was her health consideration, health concern, that the response to the pandemic is not going to be through vaccinating all the people in some countries, it will be through vaccinating some people in all countries. So we need to make sure that access is as widespread as developed and as effectively targeted as the health policy, the health priorities go. And it will be very important, indeed, that not only the U.S. do not leave WHO, but actually participate to this mechanism.

But there is also a political concern I think in that, because we've seen in the first phase that it was not just competitions, including between partners, but it was also some countries trying to leverage. You've seen what people have called mask diplomacy, you've seen info-demics. And so we need to work together also to make sure that the collective response is guided by health concern and is not on the other hand used for political purposes.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you.

Sebastian, maybe you could come in here and just — you know, Germany, obviously the chancellor is a leading figure in dealing with a lot of this. But how do you think maybe we can — what in essence should we learn from this episode and how can they be sort of operationalized into a diplomatic effort next year?

MR. GROTH: Yeah, thank you very much.

I'd like to make three observations. I think we have to rethink our concept of security, we need a really comprehensive concept of security. What we've seen here in this pandemic is that sort of external shock, which was not in itself the black swan event, because we had a lot of warnings before. Even in Germany, we had the pandemic preparedness plan from 2012. But actually we were not very good prepared.

So I think this is something that will be discussed and has to be discussed in all the international for more intensely how shocks, pandemics, but other external effects also on the society, could destabilize and lead to a fragmentation and destabilization of — by the end of the day of stability and even peace.

The second point I would like to make is the importance of state craft and trust, the importance of trust into institutions and into the capacity of the state to answer to some of these challenges that are connected to the pandemics. And I think in this regard it is extremely important that we somehow prove that our model is functioning. So if you read this whole pandemic as a systemic competition also — so how do state institutions, governance systems respond to it. I think also the west, so to speak, has to really do some homework and to win the next round. And it's extremely important in terms of soft power, soft power of our model, but also in terms of hard power I think.

And in this regard, I would like to come back also to what Manuel mentioned, which is the experience cycle of the European Union, where we started really with dynamics of retrenchment and re-nationalization. And my feeling is that this was really a shock for all of us to see how fast the construction that was built within 60-70 years is, or was put into danger within weeks or days. And I think we drew some lessons from this.

And when you look now to the result of last week's European Council, Europe now put together a financial package which has combined the multi annual framework and the EU next generation fund, the recovery fund of €1.8 billion, so around $750 billion for the recovery fund, which is the biggest around of money and investment in an international context as an answer to this crisis. And I think this is a very, very big chance.

So never waste a crisis. In this regard I think the Europeans finally found a very, very

convincing answer.

My third point would be the relevance of international cooperation. And you made the point about WHO and vaccination and G7 and G20 and the IFEIs. I think we should not underestimate this. We have to prepare the multilateral body now for the next crisis. And WHO plays a very, very important role in this regard, and France and Germany put some reform proposals on the table with regard to financing, to mandate, to prevention, to the local structure of the WHO work in the field. And I think this is something where we need also a strong American voice and participation and we are very much looking forward to U.S. rejoining –– actually you never really left –– but coming back to the table and being a strong player in global health issues.

Second point in this regard is vaccination. I think we are running the big risk from moving from mask diplomacy to vaccine diplomacy and we should get our act together, as the West, as the liberal free world, to play a significant role here. And Manuel mentioned the instruments that were built in the last weeks, COVAX and ACT. We have good products, even a German-American product, Pfizer BioNTech corporation, that we could –– should offer and should put into this portfolio.

Last point on G7, G20, and the IFEIs. We will run into a very difficult situation with regard to the developing world next year and the time ahead, not because of the first (inaudible) effects of COVID, but the second (inaudible) effects, poverty mainly and the economic cycle that will be downgraded constantly. So I see also this as a chance in a way to reconstruct G7, G20, and the IFEIs to move ahead with some of our discussions with regard to special drawing rights in the IMF with regard to debt restructuring, if there is need. But also a very, very big chance to insert China into this discussion because China is a stakeholder in all of these questions. They are a very important financial actor in Africa and they are not playing a role as a humanitarian aid contributor, as they should, with regard to their geopolitical, geo-economic importance. So I think when we move into a very difficult new year, 2021, with regard to the humanitarian and economic situation, this could be a chance also to strengthen and enforce international cooperation in this regard. And also there U.S. and European cooperation is extremely relevant. It's the core I think of the international efforts that we will have to undertake next year.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you, Sebastian.

Just before I bring in Toria, if I could press you at one point, and then maybe Victoria could pick it up as well, just on China. I mean you mentioned sort of the WHO piece of this and reform. And I did see those reform proposals. And I think there was a non-paper at one point that was circulating. But, you know, the core — one of the core problems of course was sort of the lack of transparency and the lack of access and the lack of information sharing. And it's impossible to me to see Beijing sort of agreeing to reforms like that, certainly under this regime.

And so I guess my question, just to push you a little bit is, you know, we can talk about — and we should — you know, engage with China, with other countries on this, but should we also be realistic about maybe the limits of that cooperation? And what should we do, you know, to compensate or to hedge against sort of a lack of cooperation? I mean you see now, like basically a year of empirical evidence about how countries have behaved. The U.S., granted, has behaved very nationalistically, but there's been a change obviously in government, so that has changed. But what lessons have you take from the empirical record from Beijing?

MR. GROTH: I think the most important lesson is there's a void, China is ready to move in. You see this in WHO, you see this in the vaccination question, you see this with regard to personnel that they try to position very strategically in very, very important postings. So the first I think task for us is to avoid these voids and to be an active player. I mean China now has a number of bilateral agreements with regard to very big vaccination programs. And I think it is not in our interest to at least give them the monopoly on this. So we should offer our own programs to the world and to the countries in need.

The second point on WHO, I totally agree that there is a lack of cooperation and behavior that is absolutely not acceptable with regard to information sharing and transparency. But on the other hand, I think when we really talk about health and vaccination as a global public good, we should try our best to bring in also the important players, like China is, and press. We did this during the last world health assembly with a resolution that was tabled by Australia, but also the Europeans supported this approach. And we have to be very clear in our messaging with regard, for example, to this WHO task force, that should go also to Wuhan and analyze the root causes of this outbreak and look into the history of this pandemic.

So without any naivete, my feeling is that — and I think also President-elect Biden wrote this in his piece in Foreign Affairs — that it is in our interest also to engage China as much as possible in the fight against the pandemic.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you.

Toria, if you'd like to come in and — either the pandemic or China, or a combination of both, but where do you see this sort of global public health diplomacy headed next year?

MS. NULAND: Well, first of all, I agree with virtually all that's been said by Sebastian and Manuel.

You know, from a U.S. perspective, we, in advance of this, had dismantled most of our own tools of the federal level. And I think what's most important — and I can't remember which of the guys said it — but that health security now needs to be understood as a matter of national security and international security. And it has to be treated as such.

You know, with regard to China, just a few examples. When we dealt with SARS, when we dealt with Ebola, we used first of all our bilateral health relationship with China. We had advisors on the ground who were part of helping the Chinese manage the epidemic for SARS in their own territory. You know, it is conceivable that if that team had — that U.S. team, which could have been internationalized when we first saw COVID emerge, if it had still existed, the Chinese might not have had such a bad outbreak.

Similarly, as the guys have said, in all these major shock events the previous global health challenges that we talked about, but also the financial crisis of 2008, we have always as a democratic community started at the leader level in the G7 to work together on a response. So if we had, way back in December when this was first emerging in China, collectively pressured China to be transparent, to let us in, if we had collectively begun then on the stockpiling and managing of health supplies, of the investment in vaccine, talked about distribution, not just for ourselves but, as has been said, as a global good internationally, we might well have been able to get ahead of this. And if we had spoken at that time as a strong collective free world voice in the WHO about needing to have more information about the virus.

So what I take from this is similar to what the guys have said, we now need to institutionalize the structures that have worked, but — you know, COVAX and ACT, and be stronger ourselves in the WHO in getting into these issues earlier. But we also need to use NATO and the U.S.-EU relationship to stockpile preparation materials, stockpile rosters of expertise, we need to use the G7 and the G20 to coordinate distribution and response — all those kinds of things. Which is not to say that this might not have been as deadly, but it certainly could have been handled better in terms of the — how many people got sick and all of those kinds of things.

So I think you'll see all of those things come back to the fore when Biden comes into office. He'll reestablish the structures at the federal level. And remember that in the United States to the federal government abrogated responsibility and this became something that the states had to handle themselves. And, interestingly, the U.S. states went through the similar process that European Union countries went through, that they first tried to go it alone and then they began to cooperate with each other. But in our system, the federal government should obviously be leading domestically, but also internationally.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you, Toria.

Manuel, I want to bring you in on China, but also maybe introduce a new topic as well, which we've had a few questions on from our audience. So Andrej Novak and Katrin aus dem Siepen both ask a version of the question on the alliance of democracies and, you know, would France and Germany be on board, how does this, you know, shape in with the alliance and multilateralism that, you know, the German foreign minister created a few years back?

So I'd love to get your thoughts on that. I mean this was a proposal by President-elect, then candidate Biden, you know, at a very early stage in the primaries. And now that he's elected, there's some discussion about whether or not he should go for a major summit of democracies or if should be more sort of a series of small initiatives working with other democracies. And clearly a big piece of this is sort of responding to China as well.

So could you maybe offer us your perspective and what would you like to see on that from the Biden administration?

MR. RAPNOUIL: Yes, of course.

So first, on China, and I think the question you just asked on WHO and transparency is a good example, because actually China has already agreed on transparency. And that was the reform in 2005 after the SARS crisis, to transparency, to a reform of the international sanitary regulation, which creates transparency mechanism. What we need is to strengthen the implementation of this transparency mechanism, and that is to support and strengthen the WHO secretariat. So we'll get to the kind of transparency that we need on global health if we support the secretariat rather than leave WHO. And including provide the funding that he needs rather than let others provide some funding, and strengthen it from within. And that was the idea of the Australian initiated and European backed resolution at the World Assembly.

On China in general I think there's a lot that we can do together, a lot more than what we've done for the last four years. In a quick word, trade seems to me the perfect example. We have an assessment of the issues, of the challenges posed by Chinese behavior on the economy which are very similar in terms of level playing field, in terms of state subsidies, in terms of intellectual property. And we've not managed to work together to address them jointly, and we've not managed either to reinforce the World Trade Organization and its dispute settlement body as the leverage precisely to help us in addressing this, not just in our bilateral commercial ties with China. Because what we want to do is to make progress on all the fronts that I've mentioned, and quite a few others, not just in our bilateral trade, but also in third markets, like the Middle East, like the rest of Asia Pacific, like Africa, obviously.

So that's a good — another example of the things that we can do together in terms of trans-Atlantic cooperation.

Democracy summit — because I hear a lot of people speaking about (inaudible) democracies, but if I read correctly the article by President-elect Biden, it's about democracy summit. And I agree that as democracies we share a number of challenges these days. The fact that rules and institutions are undermined is not just true in the international arena, it's also true in the domestic arenas. And we need to tackle manipulation of information, we need to address the root causes of the social divisions that we are facing. We have in Europe a big issue when we discuss the financial package that

Sebastian mentioned. Had to do with rule of law issues. And clearly cooperation between our countries and without democracies is important in this regard because part of the answers should be how we cooperate. It's not just about best practices or everything. But I don't think that everything is about democracies versus authoritarian regimes. We know terrorism also strikes non democracies, we know that it can threaten our interest from some of these countries, we know that the challenges posed by 5G and any other example of weaponization of technology also exists for non-democracies. Climate change, as Sebastian was saying, is not going to be addressed only between democracies.

And part of what happens in the world now is that there is actually a big part, a big number of countries which can't really be called stable democracies, but which clearly are not authoritarian regimes. And these are probably the most important players and places where we need to work precisely to progress on human rights, rule of law, stability, prosperity, etc.

So that is I think the kind of spirit through which we would look at the proposal coming from the next U.S. administration.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you, Manuel. And, yes, I did — if I said alliance I definitely did mean summit.

So, Sebastian, how do you feel about the summit of democracies? And do you think sort of that's the best way to proceed, or are there other ways of operationalizing sort of cooperation amongst free societies?

MR. GROTH: Yeah, thank you very much, Tom.

Yeah, we try to understand it better. You asked if we are on board. We don't know the ship yet, but I think generally we like the idea very much. We are I think in a period where we have probably to defend a little bit more rigorously our values and our models. We have to cooperate better also within the multilateral institutions. We lost a little bit the spirit of agenda setting. We were very much in a defensive mode the last years. Toria talked about the autocracies that challenged us so often. And I mean we tried our best during the last four years as Europeans. You mentioned the alliance for multilateralism. So we also tried to reach out beyond our normal scope of partners and partnerships and tried to develop new ones with countries all over the place, so to speak. Middle powers that felt also a bit

eliminated and alone, first of all, between the U.S. and China, but also in this modus of deconstruction. I think that was the overall feeling during the last years.

If a summit for democracy helps to re-establish this framework, we are fully on board I would say. But I also share absolutely the analysis of Manuel that there are a lot of problems that you won't solve only with democracies. And this is the old catalog of global public goods where we need — where we have to work with other governance models that are not Westminster or U.S., German, or French democracies. But there is surely a value added in cooperating better amongst ourselves.

I also would like to come back to what Manuel said about the rule of law and the discussion that we have in Europe. I think that this democracy agenda by President-elect Biden could also help to steer this discussion that we have here in Europe about it, because he's talking a lot of the rule of law about anti-corruption, about transparency, about the free judiciary, about free media. So this is all very, very important subjects that are even subject to discussion in very well established democracies.

So I think this is also something for our homework, to do in our countries, in our own regional institutions. So we welcome this initiative very much.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you Sebastian.

Toria — and I know you need to leave I think a few minutes early as well, so I'd love to bring you in on this. You know, in recent days there's been a number of articles over here, including one by Bruce Jentleson and Jim Goldgeier, saying maybe a summit of democracies is not the way to go, there are alternative mechanisms, there are people arguing it should be more action oriented than a meeting.

So how do you sort of see this? You know, obviously everyone agrees that the goal of working more closely with democracies, but how do you see it in terms of the summit versus maybe other approaches?

And then any closing thoughts you have as well on what Sebastian and Manuel have said would be very welcome.

Thank you.

MS. NULAND: Thanks, Tom.

Well, I think, you know, one shouldn't get hung up on the word summit. I think there's a

lot of thought now going into exactly what form this would take, both at leader level, but also as an ongoing project. But I think the instinct behind the call for such a summit is that it's been a long time since the leaders of the great democracies stood up, both at home and together, and reminded their populations what our system brings us in terms of security and prosperity and defense of the individual in societies that are tolerant and strong and resilient. And that we've got — as both guys said, we've got problems not only dealing with the autocracies out there, the defined ones, we've got backsliding countries all over the world who may have elections, but they're not behaving like democracies in terms of protecting free press and free judiciaries and upholding the rule of law. And we have problems inside our own societies. I mean I look with horror at some of the challenges to democratic institutions that have gone down, including from the White House, in our own country over the last four years.

So I think the idea here is to pull the great democracies together at the leader level to remind ourselves what we have here and to commit, with a work program I would guess, to strengthening within, to broadening the community of true democracies, and working together on common problems, and with countries that are backsliding, in our common interest. Because, you know, there's a lot of challenge to whether the model actually works. And it's time to stand up and defend it.

So I think that's the instinct.

Just to say that this conversation and all of the good feedback since the election from the other side of the pond has been really heartening, both in terms of everybody wanting to get back to business together, but I think it's also going to be challenging because the agenda is huge and it's going to take a lot of knitting and a lot of coordination to deal with the many things coming at us, from health to economy to China to tech, all of these kinds of things. But I think we are committed. I think the United States, frankly — we've been interested in the strategic autonomy debate on the other side of the pond. I am in the camp of Americans who think that there should be nothing to fear in Washington or in the U.S. from a more autonomous strong Europe. I think of that like marriage, you know. The stronger the two partners are, the stronger they are together. And the more Europe can do in its own defense and other things, the less we have to do together and the more energy we have to attack global problems. As long as we're not disconnected, as long as we're not going separate ways. And I think you will have a U.S.

who is no longer pushing Europe away, but embracing Europe tightly. Maybe too tightly, so we'll have to see how that goes.

And the last point is simply about the U.K. After Brexit, which we hope will be smooth in the next week or so, it's going to be very, very important for all of us to re-link hands with the U.K. and ensure that London stays a strong global player and is well docked into the U.S.-EU conversation, the democracy conversation, and is really the global Britain that they have said they want to be.

So, with that, it's great to see the colleagues. I apologize, Tom, and everybody that I have to jump and go talk to the Minnesota Business Council, which wants to do more with Europe. So I will go to that.

Thanks.

MR. WRIGHT: Thanks, Toria. Thanks to you and god speed in the next meeting you have and in further trans-Atlantic ties. I'm sure you're very welcome in Paris and Berlin as well, but thank you.

And so, Manuel, I have a question that sort of follows on from what Toria said. And obviously there's so much on the table and we only have 10 minutes left, so I will be pretty quick. But Derek Ratiker (phonetic), who is a colleague of mine here at Brookings, he asked a version of this, he said he would very curious about what Europe's reaction would be if the Biden administration were to take a leadership role in, you know, in spearheading an extraordinary meeting of the G20, or something like that. Are Europeans, he asked, ready to embrace American leadership, or are you sort of simply looking for engagement?

And this sort of gets to the question I think that is particularly pertinent in France about what the sort of status quo ante is, you know, if we're going back to sort of a U.S. led order in Europe, or if there's a need for a more, you know, unified European voice, or maybe sort of a different approach to doing this.

And so could you maybe talk to us a little bit just about how you see, you know, that dynamic of American leadership playing out and what is it that you're sort of looking for from Washington?

MR. RAPNOUIL: Well, I think that the next administration is going to be looking at ways

to exert more leadership, but it's not expecting just followership. It's also expecting others to take more responsibilities and that is exactly what Toria was saying about the importance of Europe and sovereignty.

And so I don't — on the particular idea that the U.S. would call prompt G20 summit, for instance, to coordinate better on what we discussed earlier, the vaccine issue and, more globally, the kind of reorganizing and giving more momentum to the effort for global recovery, and not just recovery, but actually, as the phrase go, rebuilding, building back better, that is going into green transition and going into digital transition and going into more inclusive economy. This would be very much welcome, if only because these are things that we've been trying to do — and I say "we" to mean Europeans. France clearly is part of this effort — we've been trying to do for the last four years. So these are things — it's not that we're waiting for the U.S. to take the lead, it's we've done already quite a few things and if the U.S. wants to lead into these areas, it will be very good, but I suspect that the U.S. will also want Europeans to actually do their part and take more responsibilities themselves. And that's the kind of partnership which I think will work best for both sides and will be more compelling to put the relationship back on more sustainable perennial tracks, which is really what we need to do right now.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you.

And, Sebastian, if I could ask you a different version of the question, maybe bringing more of the economic issues. You know, one thing we've heard from the Biden team is that they want to move beyond the old FTA model of sort of tariff reduction, regulatory realignment. It sort of sounds to me sometimes like ti's a little bit more French. You know, it's sort of looking at ways in which you can reform or regulate the global economy, make it more directly related to the interests of the middle class, you know, that they're focused on the international tax piece of this as well, which is obviously a big thing in Europe.

What is your perspective on sort of that changing foreign economic policy agenda? And do you see it sort of as a welcome development or would you like to sort of resurrect sort of TTIP and that model?

MR. GROTH: Yeah, thank you very much.

We follow with interest the discussion in Washington and beyond about the foreign policy for the middle class as well. And I think that plays a little bit into what you are describing. I think there is a genuine European interest to strengthen trade ties across the Atlantic. And on the other hand, there's a shared interest to make these agreements more sustainable. Also to give a certain regulatory mandate to the state capacities in order to really at least reduce the negative repercussions that could have some of the agreements. And I think this is fully understood on the European side. When you look, for example, to the free trade agreements that were negotiated with Canada, the questions of sustainability and standards are playing a very, very important role. So this I would say plays very much into the general trend to make these sort of trade agreements more answerable to the demands of the home constituencies. This general spirit of totally free and, how we say in Germany, neoliberal globalization, in a way I think is behind us and we are moving into a more regulated sort of globalization. And I think what we should avoid is a scenario of deglobalization, which was also very much discussed at the early stages of the pandemic. But what we have to do is to manage in a better way, in a more sustainable way, the interdependencies that we are — all depend on in a way, and especially an open economy like the German one. So we have no interest in any trend of deglobalization, but we have a very, very strong interest in a better regulated globalization.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you.

We just have a couple of minutes left.

Manuel, I feel, since Sebastian ended on that note, that I'm obligated to bring you in, since this is such a — you know, it's been such a strong view from France on globalization over the last couple of decades. But do you feel like the world is — the U.S. is finally turning in the direction of power on some of these issues in Europe? Or how do you see sort of the globalization question playing out? And any final comments as well.

MR. RAPNOUIL: Yeah, of course, the French will always believe that the rest of the world is eventually turning to French ideas.

But if you take a more global approach to the issue, maybe there is a sense that it's also the end of what Sebastian called the neoliberal cycle. You used to have these questions and consensus.

And it was providing for a number of recipes on how to thrive in the global economy. And we now have a better sense of the failures and the dead angles of these consensus. The Washington consensus has died a long time ago. The thing is there is no successor to these consensus. And probably the current moment is a good moment precisely to work on such a consensus on what would be the principle for this kind of post-COVID era that we are working on, what people call this build back better.

And on that, certainly we need to work together. It's not just about negotiating bilateral trade between this region and that country or whatever, it's about having a more global consensus on the key principles, on how do we deal with environmental externalities. There's a big question for trans-Atlantic cooperation on climate issues, for instance, about what do we do with the carbon border adjustment mechanism. Should we make that a trans-Atlantic to the rest of the world? And I think not everybody will like it, but it clearly — if a number of countries adopt it, it will make a big change.

And since we don't have much more time, I just want to mention that it's a shame we didn't have time to discuss Iran first, because that's a good way to respond to what Toria was saying about the need to keep on engaging with the U.K. There is still this E3 cooperation between the U.K., Germany, and France, which has been quite important in the recent period to uphold the JCPOA. And so it's really good news if the intent of the next administration is to get back into the JCPOA in a kind of a compliance — for a compliance move, because that's an important first step. As President-elect Biden said, it's only a starting point for the much needed follow on negotiations. But that's an important dossier too, an important issue. And that's a good example of how we on the European side have been trained to keep on working with the UK. And so far I think it showed that it worked quite well.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you. You're right. You know, we had — I think we've covered a lot of ground, but there's a huge amount we haven't discussed — climate, Turkey, you know, Russia, Iran. I mean some of them come up —

MR. RAPNOUIL: We need to come back.

MR. WRIGHT: — directly. So we'll have to come back.

But, Sebastian, I'd like to give you the last word. In particular if there's anything in the spirit of Manuel raising sort of the JCPOA, if there's anything that you'd like to raise just for a minute or

two, and that has not yet been raised.

MR. GROTH: Yeah, thank you.

Very briefly, I don't want to extend the list, but the subject that you mentioned beyond Iran, so be it Russia, which is, of course, extremely important, not only to Germany but to the whole of Europe. And we are very much hoping that the U.S. and the next administration will rejoin or extend the New START. In February we need a new push with regard to Open Skies, to INS. We have to link together our efforts also to bring other actors into multilateral disarmament and arms control regimes. This is an extremely important point. Turkey was mentioned. The Western Balkans, extremely important. The Eastern neighborhoods, for Germany especially, very important, but for all of Europe. We had a lot of developments in the last months and years. Ukraine, Belarus, Nagorno-Karabakh; Look at the southern neighborhoods, Libya, North Africa, Middle East. So we could talk here for hours, but I think that's coming back to the beginning. What I said is the agenda, the call for the trans-Atlantic agenda, at least of course in foreign policy terms, will be beyond the call of the trans-Atlantic relationship. It is about our alliance, it is about consultations, about cooperation and common vision. And we are very much looking forward for re-engagement of the U.S. in most of the theaters.

MR. WRIGHT: Sebastian, Manuel, Toria, thank you so much. As you mentioned, as you both mentioned, we have more than enough to come back to discuss. So maybe around the time of the inauguration, in a month's time or so, we can reconvene and talk more about some of these issues. But thanks so much for your time.

And thank you again to Robert Bosch Stiftung as well for partnering with us in today's event. And thank you to all of you who joined us on line.

And with that, we're adjourned.

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