



# The Ambassadors Series: The Romanian Presidency and the European Union

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- Walter Russell Mead, *Ravenel B. Curry III Distinguished Fellow in Strategy and Statesmanship, Hudson Institute*

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## TRANSCRIPT

*Please note: This transcript is based off a recording and mistranslations may appear in text. A video of the event is available: <https://www.hudson.org/events/1652-the-ambassadors-series-the-romanian-presidency-and-the-european-union32019>*

**KENNETH WEINSTEIN:** Good afternoon and welcome to Hudson Institute. I'm Ken Weinstein, president and CEO of Hudson Institute - delighted that you could be here at the Betsy and Wally Stern conference center as we hold another installment in our Ambassadors Series featuring leading lights from Embassy Row in conversation with Walter Russell Mead on critical foreign policy challenges. Walter Russell Mead is, of course, the Ravenel B. Curry III distinguished fellow in strategy and statesmanship here at Hudson Institute. He is the dean of observers of U.S. foreign policy and the most widely read regular U.S. foreign policy columnist. In his Global View column in The Wall Street Journal, Walter, a few weeks ago, announced that he was going to be going to Fiji - raised some eyebrows at the office. I was thinking, what kind of junket? But if you read his outstanding article today on the security challenges that the Pacific Island nations are facing, you realize that Walter was actually one of - was actually busy at work in Fiji.

**WALTER RUSSELL MEAD:** I need to get back.

**KENNETH WEINSTEIN:** He needs to get back immediately for the snorkeling and to expand his examination of the strategic environment and the challenges facing there. Walter, today, is in conversation with a good friend of Hudson Institute, a good friend of mine, His Excellency George-Cristian Maior, who is the ambassador of Romania to the United States. Ambassador Maior has a long and distinguished record of service as a diplomat. He served as state secretary and head of the Department for Euro-Atlantic Integration and Defense Policy within the ministry of defense during the critical moment of Romania's accession into NATO. He has served also as a senator in the Romanian Parliament, where he held various positions, including chairing the committee for defense, public order and national security. He spent eight years as director of Romania's intelligence service, a time at which the service deeply expanded its intelligence cooperation with democratic nations and strengthened its reputation at home as the intelligence service of a democratic nation following a brutal dictatorship. And he is here today to talk to us about Romania's presidency of the European Union Council.

There is a major European Union summit coming up May 9 that President Iohannis is going to chair in Romania. He's also going to talk to us about trans-Atlantic relations and NATO's critical - and Romania's critical role in NATO Black Sea defense and its partnership with the United States. I should also note, in closing, that we have - one of your predecessors is on our staff, ambassador - former ambassador to the U.S., Sorin Ducaru, the former assistant secretary general of NATO for emerging security threats. And one of our colleagues, Seth Cropsey, did his doctorate work at the University of Cluj. And I noticed that you also did your doctorate work - but I believe not at the same university - in Cluj.

**GEORGE MAIOR:** Same university.

**WEINSTEIN:** The same university. I got to take that back. And you're - also hold a master's degree, an LLM, from George Washington University. Without any further ado...

**MAIOR:** The same because it's only one, yes.

**WEINSTEIN:** There's only one, OK. I imagined there were two. So should have known better.

**MAIOR:** Thank you.

**WEINSTEIN:** But I'm happy to turn the microphone over to you. Welcome. Thank you very much, Ambassador.

(APPLAUSE)

**MAIOR:** Thank you very much again, dear Mr. Mead, dear ambassadors, members of the diplomatic corps, ladies and gentlemen. Indeed, Romania has taken up, for the first time since its accession in 2007, the presidency of the European Union Council under the motto, cohesion, a common European value. It is an honor, of course, and a responsibility that we are committed to fulfill at the highest standards. It is safe to say, however, that we have a stronger mandate also to strengthen the EU not only from the EU and its member states, but also from our own population. Romania remains, in fact, one of the most pro-European countries in Europe - and the world, of course - with 70 percent of the Romanians in favor of the European Union. And this is a strong, let's say, popular mandate for having a presidency that is capable of strengthening the cohesion of the Union.

As if to ensure that our first EU presidency is interesting enough, however, and that we will be excited to assume the presidency next time, we have been dealt an eventful six months at the helm of the EU, rife with important events or processes inside and outside the EU such as elections for the European Parliament at the end of May, the Brexit - big, big issue and problem, probably we will discuss this for hours and hours; I'm here only until 1 o'clock - the negotiations for the EU budget for the next seven years, which is dubbed by connoisseurs of the European Union internal processes the mother of all negotiations in the EU, to name just a few of those challenges. You might ask, what does all this have to do with the United States? For us, the answer is, of course, self-evident. The European and American destinies have always been and need to remain closely intertwined and connected. When the EU is strong, the trans-Atlantic partnership is strong and beneficial for both the European Union and the United States. Again, the Romanian people agree. Not only is pro-EU stance among Romanians at 70 percent, pro-U.S. sentiments are polling just as high.

I will say at slightly higher at 75. Yes, and this is ongoing and traditional for the way our population perceives U.S. as our best ally and friend. That is why we have made the trans-Atlantic link the cross-country priority of our presidency. We want to change the current, I will say, inaccurate and unfair narrative about the trans-Atlantic partnership that focuses sometimes exclusively on differences of opinion between the European Union and the U.S. on many issues. We aim to highlight and remind everybody that the trans-Atlantic cooperation is based foremost on shared values, not only on common goals or common interests. Trans-Atlantic cooperation is also a daily occurrence at the wide range of levels and on a broad array of issues. It's a cooperation that has an enormously positive track record and still great potential and that has made a difference for the better to people around the world. For a country like Romania, I mean, we celebrate now practically 30 years since the fall of communism.

I think our historical experience, in a way, is even more inclined to support and to project such a concern, such a narrative. Let me point out we see the relevance of this cooperation - how we see the relevance of this cooperation when it comes to the priorities we have set as presidency of the European Union. Ken mentioned that Romania will organize the summit on the future - the future of Europe in May this year in Sibiu. It's a very nice town in Transylvania, multicultural - Romanians, Germans, Hungarians live there for centuries. And I said that just for the symbolic aspect of the relevance of this interesting location. So we'll organize this summit which will constitute a strategic discussion on the future of the EU in the context, of course, on

Brexit and all the challenges I've mentioned. It is our belief that this debate, the trans-Atlantic partnership should feature as part of the conversation on the future of Europe despite the fact, of course, that we consider the U.K. leaving the EU to be a great loss, including in global strategic terms. The trans-Atlantic partnership should remain just as strong in the European Union without the U.K.

We will celebrate also 10 years of Eastern Partnership in 2019 with a high-level conference in mid-May and some other sectoral events on youth energy, transport, et cetera. We have achieved a lot during these 10 years - association agreements, of course, deep and comprehensive free trade agreements, visa liberalization and a lot of other measures that have changed the lives of peoples in these areas for the better. I'm speaking about Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, countries that really want to get closer to the European Union. We will also launch the reflection on the way forward and how we can see and use this framework to advance relations with our eastern neighbors. Our desire to make the eastern partnership successful is very much in line with the U.S. objectives and the efforts that both the European Union and the EU has dedicated to making these countries more resilient, more secure, more democratic and more prosperous. They are mutually reinforcing. The Western Balkans is another area where the European Union and the U.S. have not stopped working together since the 1990s.

Romania has always been a staunch supporter of EU enlargement. And we hope that the commission's report on the progress of the Western Balkans countries will allow for positive developments in taking the enlargement process of the European Union forward. You see, we speak also about the enlargement extension of the European Union, not only about countries leaving the European Union. We hope to see a positive decision about opening accession negotiations with Albania and, now, North Macedonia. The future of EU enlargement also depends on youth, which is one of the area of focus in Western Balkans to keep the new generation committed and involved in the end objective of this process. The Black Sea area - also very significant, strategically. As you know for years now, since the war in Georgia in 2008 and, more recently, the illegal annexation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine, the region has been in turmoil. I cannot underline enough that the Black Sea is a test case for regional and global security and economic architecture, freedom of navigation, principles of international law, promoting economic opportunities, mentioning those vital strategic aspects. What we do in the Black Sea, how we respond to the challenges and threats, but also promote economic opportunities will reverberate at regional and global level, we believe.

The EU and the U.S. have been, for the past decade, investing heavily in the resilience of these countries, but we still see a lot of potential to do more. Transatlantic unity and solidarity is essential in facing threats. And just last week, we had a show on what that means with the new sanctions over the Kerch Strait incident of last year. We will launch a new EU strategy for Central Asia, and we'll generate a reinforced focus on the interconnectivity in Central Asia with the conference on that topic in mid-April in Romania. The U.S. has long grasped the key importance of Central Asia and its pivotal role in geostrategic connections, also in terms of energy, of course. This is another area where the EU and the U.S. can and should work together. We need more, not less, in our opinion, U.S. involvement in Europe on the basis of our

transatlantic partnership. In our region, one excellent venue for practical involvement of the United States has just opened up a few years ago.

The Three Seas Initiative - the so-called Three Seas Initiative - Romania hosted the summit last year, and the first-ever business forum was launched, opening opportunities for business involvement from U.S., also. The Three Seas Initiative is a grouping of countries from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea to the Adriatic Sea trying to generate more projects in infrastructure, energy, interconnectivity. But it has, also, a strategic value because this is the, let's say, eastern frontier of the European Union and NATO. Finally, going back to our national view on all of this, let me underline that we feel a responsibility to make the transatlantic partnership a success - also because of our recent history. That's what I mentioned earlier. A hundred years after the great union of all Romanians and 30 years after the fall of communism, Romania has returned to the community of free, democratic and prosperous nations. It's also a result of transatlantic cooperation and solidarity. I thank you for your attention, and I look forward to a discussion, which clearly will be more interesting than this speech. Thank you.

**MEAD:** No, thank you, Ambassador Maior. That was actually very helpful and comprehensive. I am now going to reveal a secret about the United States, which is that I think nobody in this country really quite knows what the presidency of the European Council is. So we're hoping that you - now that your country is holding it - can tell us what this is and what it does.

**MAIOR:** Well, that's a very difficult question. Well, the presidency of the European Union Council - it's a position assumed in rotation but - by all member states. It has a duration of six months. And practically, the country in charge with this position is, first of all, capable of promoting the necessary files for legislation in the European Union, but also, put on the agenda of the council issues related to the evolution of the European Union in terms of internal revolutions, but also foreign and security policy of the Union, relations of the Union, external relations, et cetera. So a country has to be anonymous broker with all the nations at our part of the European Union. So be neutral. Be intelligent, if possible. Be - in terms of negotiating the agenda and implementing those priorities. I hope it was useful as an introduction.

**MEAD:** And by the time you've learned it, your six months are over. And it'll be...

**MAIOR:** Yes. Yes.

**MEAD:** ...Thirty - what? - 15 years before it comes around again.

**MAIOR:** Now with Brexit, I believe...

**MEAD:** It'd be faster.

**MAIOR:** ...It will come sooner.

**MEAD:** (Laughter) All right. So you've explained the European Union to us. And I should say that for Hudson, it was actually very significant that Romania held the presidency because part of our identity, really, as a think tank is our belief in American alliances and partnerships. And so

we - it's very fitting that the country holding the presidency should be speaking to us, and we're very grateful to you for coming.

**MAIOR:** Thank you.

**MEAD:** And so as Romania is dealing with all of these, does this mean that you understand Brexit and can explain it to the rest of us?

**MAIOR:** No (laughter). Really - so many discussions on Brexit, and I assure you that there will be many more discussions on Brexit. And everybody's trying to understand better, even sometimes the British. It's, as I said in my speech, a great loss for the European Union in many aspects - economic aspects, commercial aspects, but also strategic aspects linking this with British - Britain historical expertise. For example, I mentioned the eastern frontier of the European Union and also, loss in terms of a strong and historical voice connected to the transatlantic project. So for all this, I believe that countries in Central and Eastern Europe really consider this a great, great loss. And - but that being said, this is a reality we have to face, and we have to face it, of course, pragmatically. And that means to have an agreement in terms of U.K. - EU relations without U.K. because without such an agreement, so many positive accumulations will be lost. And this will mean a lose-lose situation, both for the U.K. and the European Union. That is why our main preoccupation now - but of course, not only us will - the presidency of the European Union in this very difficult time, but also other countries in the European Union - would like to see such an agreement and order, as we say, withdrawal of U.K. from the union a predictable situation. Now...

**MEAD:** That would be new predictable, I think.

**MAIOR:** Yes. Yes, but at a certain point, we'll have to reach that stage because this is in both - I insist on this - both the interest of U.K. and the interest of the European Union.

**MEAD:** When Mrs. May decides, presumably, to come and ask for some sort of extension, the European Union - is it to the Romanian presidency that she - where does she lodge that request?

**MAIOR:** Well, she lodges that request, also, with the presidency, with all the member states, of course. And this is a very difficult and sensitive question. Everybody speaking about predictability had certain dates in mind. Plans were made. Negotiations took place. An agreement was assumed by the European Union. And now we have to deal with this problem. But we will see how the discussion goes on in terms of this request because, again, at the basis of all the great, great interest is to have an agreement, and that will come to luck.

**MEAD:** And it will be - I understand it has to be a unanimous agreement now...

**MAIOR:** Yes.

**MEAD:** ...Among the...

**MAIOR:** Yes. Yes.

**MEAD:** ...EU - 27 seven remaining...

**MAIOR:** Yes. Yes.

**MEAD:** ...EU countries.

**MAIOR:** Yes.

**MEAD:** And is that Romania's job to try to create that consensus?

**MAIOR:** It's also Romania's job, yes.

**MEAD:** (Laughter) Good luck.

**MAIOR:** Thank you (laughter). Thank you. I said we can talk hours and hours about this, about British politics, about such situations. But I think everything resumes to this necessity of having an agreement.

**MEAD:** All right. And the summit in Sibiu...

**MAIOR:** Yes.

**MEAD:** ...Is in June. Is it - I'm not...

**MAIOR:** It's in May.

**MEAD:** May.

**MAIOR:** In May before...

**MEAD:** They were simultaneously planning the Brexit negotiations and for this summit.

**MAIOR:** I wish I could say that, yeah. But it's in May. It's before the European Union elections with - that's a great moment in the evolution - great political moment in the evolution of the European Union because, of course, the European Parliament has a great say in the legitimacy of the evolution of the Union, but also in terms of its strategies, policies et cetera. So we'll have this summit where we will discuss on the basis of several views related to the future of the European Union. Where do we go from here after Brexit in this new European and international context? That's a very difficult but very important and necessary discussion. And we hope that after the summit from Sibiu, we'll emerge with a much more clear, let's say, vision about the need for a strong European Union with a strong identity with clear objectives in terms of his role in the world.

**MEAD:** And so you'll - I guess there are two separate processes, as you were explaining earlier about this. On the one hand, there's a sort of institutional - reform may not be quite the word in the EU - but adjustment, as with Britain leaving, qualified majorities changed, seats in councils.

**MAIOR:** There are many implications.

**MEAD:** So all of this has to happen.

**MAIOR:** Including in terms of elections for the European Parliament.

**MEAD:** Yes, right. How many seats will there be...

**MAIOR:** How many seats. Exactly.

**MEAD:** ...In each country and so on.

**MAIOR:** That's, by the way, another aspect related to Brexit because we don't know, frankly, speaking of this moment, if the U.K. doesn't exit the union, if they will participate in the elections or not.

**MEAD:** Which will be an interesting delegation. So all of - but at the same time, the EU is now in the middle of its multi-year budget negotiations...

**MAIOR:** Yes.

**MEAD:** ...Because unlike the U.S., where we fail every year to have a budget, the EU sort of fails on a longer time frame to...

**MAIOR:** Yes, but we have a long-term budget when that is agreed. Well, yes, I mentioned this in my speech. We are doing our best to advance discussions on the future European budget. This is a vital aspect of related to the evolution of the Union in terms of funding for member states, for projects in the members states in terms of its entire activity as such. We want to push harder to have at least the basis for the agreement until - because the budget will be adopted in the next presidency. That will be in the responsibility of Finland. I wish them success also.

**MEAD:** (Laughter) Right. But as I understand it, there will be both - there'll be a reduction in the budget based on the British leaving, assuming they do, in fact, leave. And then there's talk of a shift in the budget of resources that had been going more to the east, going more to the south. At least this has been proposed by some. Is this...

**MAIOR:** The second aspect - it's always discussed on previous budgets. So each country has, of course - or each grouping of countries says a certain ideal or vision in the budget. For example, it's, I think, a common and legitimate interest for some countries in, let's say, central Europe to advance in terms of the discrepancies existing between the western part of Europe and the eastern part. But that's a political discussion. It's taking place all the time. Negotiations around all those issues, you mentioned, of course, with implications related to the Brexit talks.

**MEAD:** Yeah. I imagine Romania will be pushing for a southeastern focus to...

(LAUGHTER)

**MEAD:** This conversation. Well, this is all very helpful. I think, again, for Americans, it's important for us to try to wrap our heads around some of the complexities of EU political and budgetary issues.

**MAIOR:** You have your complexities also, yes.

**MEAD:** We glory in our complexities. And, again, I certainly don't want to indicate that here in America, everything is fine. But it does - when one looks across the Atlantic from the U.S., we seem to see a lot of deepening divides in the EU. I mean, forget the Brexit problem. But the north and the south, the east and the west - some countries seem to be going off on their own. Italy's interest in signing up with China on the Belt and Road Initiative. It's a complicated and changing place. From a Romanian perspective, how does this look?

**MAIOR:** It's a very interesting and difficult question. Of course, historically, the European Union and the European community - before, there were sometimes different visions, some different ideas. That's an aspect - a natural aspect of the polarity that defines the union in terms of membership. But common values, common interests of - in terms of integration have always been the core and identity of the European Union. I believe - that's my personal view - that we will overcome. And - those differences, I won't say divisions. And that's why I mentioned also, in my speech, the need to have also a more positive narrative, in terms of not only transatlantic relationship but relationship - but in terms of our common project that is the European Union - for the member states, for Europe, all united and free, as it is defined. So this is, let's say, ontological in terms of the union. And I strongly believe in this, and I believe also that countries from Central and Eastern Europe, with all their differences and different historical experiences, believe in this more than people can think because of their tragic and traumatic experience before 1989 with Communism, with another type of forced integration in a system that was not natural to us.

**MEAD:** It is - I think it's important to try to remind us of this past because certainly if I - when I go to Germany these days and ask many of the people I speak with, what are the ways in which Germany is like America's Trump - the America of Donald Trump - or shares values with the America of Donald Trump, I don't get a long list of values that people say they share in common or perceptions.

(LAUGHTER)

**MEAD:** And so there is a sense, I think, among some that the U.S. and Europe are growing apart on these questions of values. How would you respond to that, as someone from the eastern part of Europe?

**MAIOR:** I think there are, from time to time, discussions of different perceptions, different ideas, because we face so many challenges on the global scale. So and, of course, we view some things when - it's natural to have this in mind when we speak about this. We have different views on certain questions. But, again, we have a core of strategic also interests that links us together, and we should learn from - again, from history at this point because there were discussions also before World War II about different views. And different views were really applied for a period, and unfortunately, that great catastrophe for the entire mankind. I believe that the relationship between the European Union and U.S. is the most important relationship and framework in terms of an area of security, of peace and stability that is present now in the actual world order. And we should preserve this because it's in our common interest. We can have, again, different ideas about trade, different ideas about certain perceptions of threat, with

respect to some international situation, but this doesn't mean that we have a fault line or division that is so deep that it's hard to overcome.

**MEAD:** A lot of it seems to boil down to the question of the place of nationalism or the relationship of nationalism in democracy. Because if you talk to many people in the American State Department these days or the Trump administration, there's a desire to put nationalism at sort of the center of American policy, and for many people in Europe, looking at European history, that's a very uncomfortable perspective. How would you square that circle or respond to that kind of difference in perception?

**MAIOR:** Well, it's again a very, very difficult question. And looking at the clock, if there's still time...

(LAUGHTER)

**MAIOR:** Yes. Yes. Well, there are many definitions of nationalism, and I believe that there is also a concept named positive nationalism that have created democratic nations on the basis of this principle. And this principle really was applied, for example - again, I get back to our experiences in Central and Eastern Europe - back in 1919, created nation states on a Democratic basis in Israel. And of course, there is a definition that that connotes a strong, negative aspect in terms of ideology, especially - and that takes us to very tragic moments in our history; I mention World War II. Of course, nationalism, in both aspects, it's a very difficult concept to comprehend, however. But in terms of the evolutions of countries, it's natural also to assume that countries have national interests, that countries sometimes pursue those interests in competition with other countries.

The idea is that the European Union is constructed as a - more than a organization. I hate to disturb that, as you sometimes hear, proper leads. More than that, it's created on a foundation that put those common national interests to a common project in terms of many aspects related to economics, security, et cetera. So it's a period in a political evolution of societies in terms of politics, but we are democracies, and I'm optimistic in terms of the response of populations to those more extreme appeals to nationalism. I will be more concerned about populism, for example, as a political concept that is, let's say, put into political practice in some parts.

**MEAD:** Well, let's talk about a place where nationalism and populism are going together in some ways - Turkey, where Turkey, up until recently, one would have said was both a pillar of NATO and of moving toward integration into Europe. But at the moment, it would be - its status in both projects seems to be questioned in various quarters. Romania has a history of very good relations with Turkey, and Turkey is an important part of Romania's economic and security set of relationships. So from your perspective, how do you assess what's happening there and what may happen there?

**MAIOR:** Again, very difficult question. Yes, we have a special, strategic relationship with Turkey, historically. We spoke less about NATO in our discussion now, but let's remind ourselves that, from NATO's point of view, from a security point of view and a collective security point of view, Turkey's presence on the southern flank of NATO is vital for the alliance.

That is why our vision in Romania is to have Turkey involved in NATO as a very, very critical partner. And we're trying to do our best in this respect, in our bilateral relationship with Turkey, to try to have a conversation related to this importance of Turkey. In fact, even in terms of the European Union - and I have here the agenda that we put forward in terms of our presidency - we will have after - I think we have after many years - I'm not sure, but after a long time anyway - the first meeting of the EU-Turkey Association Council. Yes, since 2016, in Bucharest. It took place, I think, yesterday. That's also relevant in terms of having a communication between the European Union and Turkey, on the basis of also this common interest in terms of security at least. Also, Turkey is a big player, I would say, of the Black Sea, and dare I mention some negative developments recently or even for many years right now. I mention also the Georgian war from 2008.

**MEAD:** Yeah.

**MAIOR:** And Turkey is a critical NATO partner to the Black Sea, which is now a very complicated region in terms of security and - because of events in Crimea. Just yesterday it was announced that, in Crimea, the war-deployed strategic bomb with Crimea is less than 150 miles from the shore. So for a NATO country, Romania - say, also Bulgaria but longer - 175 miles.

**MEAD:** (Laughter).

**MAIOR:** So that's why we need this relationship with Turkey. And we want to see a stable and predictable ally in this country; not to speak about its role in the Middle East, Syria, et cetera.

**MEAD:** Well, lots to think about from a Romanian point of view with NATO, the EU and so many things. I guess the good news for Romania is that you seem to have discovered an awful lot of natural gas.

**MAIOR:** Yes. Thanks to new technologies and American companies. In the Black Sea, yes, there are serious reserves of natural gas. We expect that this will create an alternatives to certain sources that are the monopole of a big neighbor on the eastern frontier. But, of course, this has to - exploration has to - exploitation has to start. Pipelines have to be constructed. On the medium and the long term, this looks well for our national energy security and for the energy security of Europe, which is also an important aspect of the union, the creation of the European Union. And that she...

**MEAD:** Now, forgive my ignorance here, but I know that in Texas a lot of the new production for the U.S. has been is they've applied new techniques to old oil fields. They're able to recover a lot more. And Romania has had some large oil fields in the past. There a chance that some of these fields can be revived and production re-established?

**MAIOR:** Yes, yes. Many companies are operating right now, and we have reserves. In terms of energy independence, I think we are No. 3 in the European Union - that's good for us (laughter) - because we have those reserves. And many companies are operating, including companies from U.S. We need - Romania was the largest oil producer in Europe back in the 1940s, 1950s.

**MEAD:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. All right. Well, would anyone in the audience like to have a turn? These questions should be short. They should end in a question mark. And I'd be very interested to hear them.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for coming. I'm happy to report that I've done business with Romanians, and there's a thriving technology sector in Romania. So congratulations. But my question really asks you to put on your European and not your Romanian hat. Many of us find the growing transatlantic debate over the future of the alliance perplexing, in part because the two sides of this debate often don't speak the same language. If you listen to most European leaders, what they say is that the alliance is about values - three things - values, values and values. If you listen to the president of the United States, he says that the debate is about money, money and money.

And we have two - so we have a debate between one party speaking Romanian and the other speaking Gaelic, and the European response is often, how can you talk about money when we're talking about democracy and liberty and rule of law? In the United States, the president's response to the European side is, how can you - values, schmalues. You have a \$150 billion trade surplus, we spend hundreds of billions of dollars a year defending you, and we're getting the short end of the stick. So can you help us bridge the gap and translate between Romanian and Gaelic, and explain to us how the two sides can communicate? Thank you.

**MAIOR:** Thank you. In fact, it's much closer to Gaelic than you imagine - the Romanian language.

(LAUGHTER)

**MAIOR:** Well, it's difficult - it's not only a question, it's a commentary that I received from you. But let's say that during the visit of our president in U.S., meeting your president, President Trump, it was clearly reaffirmed by President Trump, the value of the transatlantic commitment in Article 5, during a common press conference in the Rose Garden. And that was very strong in terms of message and narrative. And despite those discussions, again - perceptions, et cetera - I think that NATO is functioning well in terms of our cooperation for collective defense. And despite, again, those differences in views, we have common values and also common interests. And I should say that we should work for creating more harmony than more divergence. I'm a diplomat, sorry.

(LAUGHTER)

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** I have a question about Turkey. You said - sorry - last week there was a vote in the European Parliament, and a binding one, on Turkey's membership in the EU. And most of the countries, more than 370 countries - 370 members - sorry - voted against - voted to suspend the talks. I think Romania was not one of those countries.

**MAIOR:** In the Parliament, you have different politicians, members of - not countries. Yes?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** I just want to know - my question is, how concerned is Romania about the human rights situation in Turkey, where the European Parliament says hundreds of activists are behind bars for...

**MAIOR:** Well, we are concerned everywhere in terms of rule of law, in terms of human right, not particularly with Turkey, and I won't comment more on this.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Romania's neighbor, Moldova, held permanent parliamentary elections a few weeks ago.

**MAIOR:** Yes.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** The pro-Russian Socialist Party won the most seats and will undoubtedly - and this will undoubtedly influence the official Moldova - EU and Moldova, Romania relations. How do you see this development, and will Romania continue to play the role of a bridge between Moldova and the EU Eastern Partnership and so on. Thank you.

**MAIOR:** Thank you. It will continue to play that role. Nothing has changed from our point of view. You said correctly that Socialists won a large number of the votes but not the majority of the votes. So they will have to form a government, or a government will be formed on the basis of alliances. And there are many pro-European forces in Parliament. And I'm confident that we'll have a government that will keep the path towards closer, let's say, relationships with the European Union on behalf of Moldova. And we'll do our job, Romania, to see that the Eastern Partnership focuses on countries like Moldova in terms of many projects, infrastructure, democracy development, et cetera. And we'll keep this subject alive and very, very important for the European Union. In fact, I know that the opinion public in Moldova is very much inclined, in its majority, towards a stronger relationship with Romania and with the European Union.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** I'd like to pick up on Walter's earlier note about China. China is making inroads in Europe, or in the European Union, on the infrastructure side. None of this is in the European strategic interest. China is a strategic adversary. What are these - equity stakes, loans, long-term access to infrastructure. How does the European Council, under your leadership or in general, can - thwart further attempt for China to make inroads? And what about the European Commission? Are there any ways for the antitrust authorities, competition authorities on the side of the standards, environmental rules, that the commission can act if the council feels that it needs a second source of support?

**MAIOR:** Yeah, well, I believe that we have strong regulations in terms of investments, especially - also in critical areas in the European Union. And each such investment coming from outside the European Union is obliged to keep with those regulations related to open market, competition, et cetera, environmental standards - many, many, many aspects. There were entities, of course, of several projects related to infrastructure, as you've mentioned. But some of them - most of them, in fact - didn't keep up with those criteria. And they were not finalized. That's - will be my response to your question.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** You've already mentioned this deployment of bombers. So I have a question about this because, as Russian officials put it, it was the response to the deployment of

U.S. missile defense in Romania. So the question is, do you agree with an opinion that Romania gave a reason for Russia to deploy strategic bombers in the Crimea, and now they are able to cover the whole Europe?

**MAIOR:** No...

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Was it all worth it?

**MAIOR:** I don't agree with this because they're different aspects. First of all, the missile defense, it's not only a U.S. project. It's a NATO project. It was incorporated in NATO for the protection of Southeastern Europe from ballistic missiles emerging from the Middle East. It has nothing to do with Russia. It's not an offensive system. And unfortunately, in the narrative of - official narrative of Russia, it's portrayed like that. But it's in fact a defensive system from a technical point of view and from a legal point of view or on the basis of the agreement that was signed. That why - that's why deployment of strategic bombers, it's a more offensive act than this defensive missile shield that is deployed in Romania. That will be my answer.

**MEAD:** Thank you very much. And at 1 o'clock, we need to adjourn. But I would like - I know we'd all like to thank the ambassador for a very helpful and enlightening presentation.

**MAIOR:** Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

**MAIOR:** Thank you.

**MEAD:** And I'm sure we'll be seeing you here again at Hudson soon.

**MAIOR:** Ah, well, thank you.