



Transatlantic Diplomacy after 9/11: The U.S. and Norway
Collective Memory Project

Interviewee: Sven Erik Svedman

Ambassador to France, 2003-2005
Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005-2007
Ambassador to Germany, 2007-2014

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[Begin Transcription]

LEONG: Okay. I'm with Ambassador Sven Erik Svedman, a one time Norwegian Ambassador to France, and then later to Germany. I'm LaiYee Leong, for the SMU Center for Presidential History. Today is March 7, 2018, and we're in Oslo,



Norway. Mr. Ambassador, let's start with your time in Washington, D.C., in the 1990s. How would you describe transatlantic relations during that period?

SVEDMAN: We started out, when I came to Washington in 1990, with a good, solid basis for transatlantic relations for a long while. We had a very solid relationship between our governments, our countries, and as [00:01:00] you know going back as a Norwegian, looking at the Norwegian/American relations, they go far back, to our immigrants being part of building America, to the Second World War, forming NATO, partners there, working in the UN and bilateral. And then, during the Cold War, strong partners and allies in the north, and always with a strong American interest and presence in the northern flank, and very good relationships politically and also between military. We had a very solid and good basis for a strong policy between partners and friends. We had a relationship and a trust in the then Bush, senior Bush, administration, which we felt that you had a president, you had a White House, you had an administration and you had a country [00:02:00] that you could trust and you knew, it was dependable and predictable. So that was the situation at the outset, with very strong relationships, also personally with key people, and the National Security Council and the State Department obviously, and also in Pentagon. Also, in the many think tanks and all the universities, not only in Washington but across America, engaged themselves in transatlantic issues and questions. That formed the basis, was the fundament for that policy. So we felt we had an America which understood us and which were on the side of the transatlantic ties.

LEONG: Was there any sense that things were perhaps shifting a little bit at all? After all, it was the post-Cold War years.

SVEDMAN: Yes, it was a sense of things shifting and it was this inner sense [00:03:00] that things had to change and would change, but how. In that period, you cling to what you have and you tried to be separate. It was a period of course, of huge changes, because it was in the aftermath of momentous developments in Europe,



which formed of course, the situation in Washington, for diplomats at that time, with the reunification of Germany, with the developments that had taken place and where also, the American president played a very important role obviously. So the foundations, things had changed, but it had, we all felt it had changed very much for the better, and the perspectives for change or demands. There were very few dark clouds actually, at the outset, because we were building, rebuilding [00:04:00] Europe, and you had a Germany who had taken on a very constructive role. Germany had, of course, always been very careful about its role, but you had had a period where Germany, based upon the very constructive policy that country took very soon, of course guided by what was to become, -- what was old enemies and became new friends and partners. From the Marshall Plan to building also, a NATO with Germany inside, and everybody felt and were actually impressed about the responsibilities that Germany slowly took on, but it was difficult for Germany, to take on military obligations and sort of the slow emergence of Germany as a [00:05:00] security policy, defense policy mover, took some time. But then of course, with reunification, you saw Germany was building Europe and was very strong also, emphasizing the transatlantic ties. You had some ups and downs, you had Reagan in when I was a diplomat, a young diplomat in Bonn, when Reagan invited by Helmut Kohl, the Chancellor, visiting Bitburg, the cemetery, that you might recall, created some havoc, as it turned out that also, SS soldiers were buried in that graveyard, which was a coincidence, I'm sure nobody planned for that.

But it started out and ended in the beginning, when I came to Washington in 1990, I had a solid fundament. A changing NATO, a changing Europe, but a new dawn, so to speak. The problem [00:06:00] was, I wouldn't even actually call it a problem, the situation was that there were more question marks now than answers, because during the Cold War, you didn't have any questions because you knew the answers. It was a Cold War and things didn't change, and that was sort of, in a strange sense, very safe, but also unsafe of course, but it was a totally



different thing. You knew and you sensed that things were changing. We felt very safe with President Bush, Sr. because of the role also, that he played in reunification of Germany. His role was very influential. So that was the outset.

LEONG: Can you identify some of these questions that you referred to? What were some of these larger questions that were overhanging [00:07:00] this period?

SVEDMAN: I think the larger questions overhanging that period, you had the end of the Cold War, you had reunification. You had a NATO which was actually there in order to keep the Russians out and the Germans in, and you had a UN which was a result, or as an organization, building upon the end of the Second World War, with two European veto powers and one powerful, more and more powerful Germany not being part of the Security Council where you had veto from Russia and gradually China emerging as well. You had a UN and a NATO which were not built, at least it needed some rebuilding. [00:08:00] Keep the pillars, keep the basement, and then remake it, that were some of the challenges that one faced at that time. Also, for Norway, it was of very huge importance that when you look at a country's interests in defense policy, security policy, economic policy, foreign policy in general, development policy, whatever, a lot of what's there, and you don't really think about, is starting out by your geographical location, and no one can escape its geography. Our policy had been shaped by, of course, our position next to then, the Soviet Union, and if you use not a wall map but a globe, you see that at that time, [00:09:00] before the Soviet Union unraveled, you saw the Soviet Union, saw it coming towards us up in the north, and Norway was a little country there, totally left alone in the ice and the cold. We needed someone else in order to defend ourselves.

The other thing was of course, the situation we found ourselves in, in the Second World War and after the Second World War, where we learned that you cannot escape a war by pretending it will never happen and by doing nothing. You have to build up and you have to have partners and allies, and that we found in



NATO of course. But for Norway too, as a small country, although I wouldn't call us small in every sense, because [00:10:00] Norway can move things and can actually make a difference, and we had to do that. The smaller you are, you have to be very clear on where you and how you can make a difference, and we certainly can make a difference in many fields, and we had to do that, but we can't do it alone. We have to work with others. The UN also, of course in parallel, was, and is a very important organization for Norway. Then, the rule of law. You cannot accept that a neighbor takes a chunk of a country and makes it its own. You have a UN system, you have principles that should govern every country's policies and actions, any small country can negotiate all that one. So that UN has also been a very strong part of us and Europe, [00:11:00] again we have a strong interest in a strong Europe. That was the thing and when I was in Washington as well of course, because suddenly, from this time of promises that you had gone from a situation of Cold War, you had gone to a situation of peace and you had seen a Soviet Union where the secretary general that reached out and didn't use the military forces in Eastern Germany when things could have gone wrong. You had the reunification of Germany, you had building Europe again, in a fantastic way. We were not a member of the European Union, but we had a strong interest in Europe succeeding, but not only succeeding as Europe, but in a transatlantic perspective, [00:12:00] that ties between Washington and Europe were strong and solid. That is of course, something that has always been important for us as well.

Then you came to the point where 9/11, where you had changes in the world, that really started out on a new chapter, when you came into a totally new ballgame in Europe, between Europeans, between the U.S. and Europe, and we were sort of in between and had to navigate in that period of time.

LEONG: Let me jump in here. Because as you know, of course, I'm going to ask a lot more questions about that. Let's sort of skip ahead from President George H.W. Bush, and skip the Clinton years, to 2000, [00:13:00] when President George W.



Bush got elected. You were back here, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Given all that you've said, the sort of broad landscape you have drawn for us, how did things by the year 2000, become a little bit different than the prior -- than eight years ago, under Bush the first. Had things, some of those bigger question you identified been resolved in any way or moved in a certain direction? Where did things stand when George W. Bush became president?

SVEDMAN: When he became president, what I think we've experienced, more or less with every new American president, and the present one included actually, is that they haven't come across, or few of them have come across, in an election campaign, as strong transatlantic presidents interested [00:14:00] in Europe and whatever. It wasn't the case for, I don't think it was the case for senior Bush either, but he found himself suddenly, and admirably so, in a situation where he became a strong transatlantic and European oriented president, with a lot of conviction. George Bush came in, not as a -- and he hadn't presented himself, as far as I can recollect, as a transatlantic or specially oriented towards Europe, although, although, he was the son of the father, so we all expected that will work out. So the position was little George Bush then, as also with, frankly, with President Clinton and later with Obama, we didn't know actually, [00:15:00] we were a little worried, or at least concerned, that a lack of perspective from our point of view, Europe, a lack of interest, so it was an unknown factor. But every president has very soon, very quickly actually, turned towards the world and now, be it towards Asia or towards Europe, and taking an interest in international issues immediately after being elected as president. So, we had a short period, like we always have.

I remember when Clinton was elected president, at the time of the election campaign, where President Bush had enormous support, [00:16:00] the 60s or even 70 percent at some period of time, and joked and said maybe we can call off the whole election because he would win. Then suddenly, you see this new person coming up and actually winning this race. So he was an unknown factor and we



were a little worried about that. But then, Bush Jr. coming in -- —the old Bush left quite a few political challenges to future president, not only his son, but also actually some unsolved problems which reappeared obviously, in the Middle East, and they hadn't been solved. The older Bush had actually solved it to our huge [00:17:00] satisfaction, stopping at the right part, not going all the way to the capital. So we felt pretty safe anyway.

LEONG: So what do you expect when George W. Bush became president? What did you expect to be the issues that you would be working hardest at?

SVEDMAN: At that time, I didn't work on the political side. I was the Director General for European Affairs and then I was immersed in these issues, going to France as an ambassador in 2003, where obviously, the question of the Gulf War and the aftermath of 9/11, and having gone to Afghanistan and then the discussion about going with or without, or joining the U.S. [00:18:00] or being part of that erupted, and at that time I was in France, seeing it from a totally different perspective of course.

LEONG: Right.

SVEDMAN: So that's when I reentered, sort of the political and the defense discussions.

LEONG: Okay. Before we get there, I just wonder if you have any personal recollections about 9/11 itself. Where were you and, given that of course you're a diplomat, what were some thoughts that you had about how this might change the world politically, or at least relations between the United States and Europe.

SVEDMAN: Yes, I think everybody remembers, and if people are as old as I am, one also remembers where one was when John F. Kennedy was killed. I was in that room. We didn't have a [00:19:00] television at that time, because we were pretty conservative people, my parents. But I remember of course, every Norwegian, everybody at that age, remembers. Yes, I remember. It was absurd in a sense, because I was the director general, not dealing with security policy at that time, sitting in my office, and the minister had asked for a paper that I had to deliver



later in the day, so I had to concentrate on really working just on that paper, not letting anything distract me. Usually, I had the television on in my room, and I had my television on, but on silent. So I was sitting, working very hard, watching the screen, and then came CNN and Breaking News. So I saw [00:20:00] a picture of a plane flying into one of the buildings there and I turned on the sound, and I didn't have time to listen, because I had to get that paper done. I only had a few minutes on doing that.

I'm an old pilot actually, I used to fly small planes, single planes and that, so I know a lot about flying. So the rational part of me said that's a terrible catastrophe, but how on earth can a plane hit in broad daylight that building? I can't understand it, it must be a freak accident, I can't really understand it. So I continued working, I actually didn't -- I turned it off, because I couldn't do anything with it, [00:21:00] it was a freak thing, and that was it. I had to get my act together. But then of course, when the second plane hit, I left everything, because I understood that the paper I was preparing, the minister would probably not need it that afternoon. Then we all understood, of course, that here, there's something happening, and that put in motion of course -- I hadn't gone to France, as you understand, at that time, but that put into motion, emotions of course, and before you really knew what would happen, who was behind it, but of solidarity with the American people, everybody of course. So this huge, we were all Americans. And many Norwegians have always been Americans, so that wasn't a big change for many actually, in that sense, [00:22:00] feeling very strong solidarity, because half your family came over, and so forth and so on. Much more than that obviously, and they saved you during the Second World War and so forth. We all became Americans, and so that was the beginning of a new era obviously, but geopolitically, we didn't know and we didn't understand Islam raising, and all these issues that would follow, and then what would happen in Afghanistan and being on the American side or not obviously.



So it was a watershed obviously, but the watershed, it sort of normalized itself and then France went in one direction and the UK, of course, as we all know, went another direction. Germany sided, I wouldn't use the word sided actually, but went with France, [00:23:00] and we were caught in the middle of all that and I think we navigated fairly well at that time, but that was a watershed obviously. It shows the transatlantic relations being a combination of continuity and change, and sometimes disillusionment, but that was a watershed decision obviously, and what the president and what the American president then had to do and did, and we were all on that side, for -- so that was the start of something very new, which we didn't see actually, at that time. As you indicated, what happened in the beginning, when George Bush Sr. came in, we knew that things were going to change, and hopefully for the better. We didn't quite see what would happen. Now we knew that things would change [00:24:00] and not necessarily for the better, there was something larger out there that was a problem that we would have to tackle together, and not only nationally. We had a huge dark cloud, not only over Manhattan, but globally.

LEONG: So you became Ambassador to France in 2003.

SVEDMAN: Right.

LEONG: It wasn't clear to me, on your bio, when exactly in 2003 you went over?

SVEDMAN: It was the autumn, I guess September, 2003.

LEONG: Okay. So it was already after the start of the Iraq War and all of the ---

SVEDMAN: Right, yeah.

LEONG: The sort of tensions between France and the United States.

SVEDMAN: Absolutely.

LEONG: So when you got over there then, in the autumn of 2003, to what extent were issues to do with transatlantic relations [00:25:00] still sort of swirling about on the diplomatic scene and the foreign affairs scene?



SVEDMAN: Well the choices had already been made, of course, that the UK would join, France wouldn't, Germany followed or at least, well, is for the -- so it was set, it was done.

LEONG: Right.

SVEDMAN: So there was no room for changes, it was done. Our position is interesting too, I think, and you can talk to others more closely involved in that one, of course, Norwegian decision concerning the war. I guess the respect from Washington and President Bush, of our position, I think he actually understood why we did it and that there wasn't a deeper -- it wasn't [00:26:00] anti-American, it wasn't lack of solidarity, it wasn't that we were not a friend of America. It was different things that led us to conclude when it came to our position in the Iraq War, where France of course, was in another position. Although I would never actually call France or see France, not even in that period, as anti-American, that was not the key to understanding why France did like they did. It was much more a factor of understanding why London did as they did, we are friend of America, and maybe sometimes that --

Interestingly enough, if you'll allow me to go a few years back, to Bush Sr., I remember a conversation I had in the National Security Council, high up there, [00:27:00] and in a situation where we had to decide whether we would be part of the coalition or not. We hadn't decided yet and I was asking about the United Kingdom, which would obviously be part of that, and talking about the larger issue of special relationships and special relationship between the UK and the United States, which clearly was there. It was a question of how you define it and how it acts out, and what's the value of it and whatever. But he said that the strongest -- it's good to have friends and allies, and the UK is a friend and an ally, and we appreciate that very much and it's good to have, but we really need the UK to be influencing Europe, [00:28:00] we need the UK inside the European Union, that's where they can have an added value, because on the military side we have the



hardware. If you're very clear on that, friends, what's friends for, but we need them inside the European Union. That's what I reflected upon recently in Brexit, where actually the UK is leaving Europe where, from a strategic point of view, transatlantic point of view, defense point of view, foreign policy point of view, they lose some of that privileged position because they do not any longer, well at least not to the extent, play a role within the European Union. But I was just going back a little.

At that time, France had of course taken its position, so it was not much a Norwegian ambassador could actually [00:29:00] do about that, things had found their place, but talking to President Chirac, which I didn't do every day obviously, but when I handed over my credentials, I had a long and very nice conversation with him, going back to his visits in Norway as a young person, and then talking a lot about America. He, Jacques Chirac, French President at the time, not especially appreciated in Washington, over the position at that time, talked warmly about America and how he had traveled across America. He spoke French to me, because he was the French president and this was an official visit, but he loved to speak English when he could, when the mics were off, and he was a friend of [00:30:00] America and he loved America for many things, but this was not about that of course, this was not about that. This was larger politics at play.

Also, the lack of, or the complexity of, if you work as a diplomat, which I haven't, but I've been often in London of course, at meetings, there you have a capital and a country which genetically thinks transatlantic and with allies within NATO, genetically. France, you don't have that in NATO. Key people struck me many times, key people at the top really didn't know much about NATO at all because they didn't really care that much about it. They hadn't worked there, [00:31:00] and the French NATO Ambassador, I'm sure he didn't play much of an influential role in defining the policies at the time, where you had to choose which side France was going to it. Genetically, you didn't have the sort of reflection.



What I'm trying to say is there's nothing anti-American in those positions. The basis for them is different, the genetics is different. So also, what was so easy and obvious, being an ambassador later in Berlin, where you could work with the Germans also inside NATO, almost continuously and it played a huge role, this role, working with the French on NATO, on a bilateral basis, was hardly nonexistent, because they couldn't, on that top level they couldn't actually [00:32:00] -- they didn't engage themselves.

LEONG: Right.

SVEDMAN: So that was interesting to see. Also, how foreign policy and defense policy was much more defined and coordinated that you see, with the president of course having great powers, almost like an American president, where the foreign policy establishment, where the foreign office, hardly had any influence other than, of course you had at the time, Dominique de Villepin, as a foreign minister, who played largely, his political developments in the UN and chose of course the UN and not NATO, as the organization where France was defining its policies. [00:33:00] So that was difficult as well, because we were dealing with these questions in NATO. Of course the French were there, but that's not the political theater at the time, it was the UN, where obviously the French foreign minister played a very important role.

LEONG: That sounds like a really important disconnect between how the U.S., for instance, would be approaching these questions, versus how France would be approaching these questions.

SVEDMAN: Yes, definitely. Yeah.

LEONG: Now, academics have written about this episode and raised questions about whether these tensions have to do with structural issues, the fact that we've got this post-Cold War new order and that France was, in a way, sort of asserting itself [00:34:00] against the lone superpower, or whether it was a question of personalities, because of George W. Bush's rhetoric, or Secretary Rumsfeld being



very aggressive perhaps, I would say, in his approach to Europe. What is your take on that, given your vantage point in France?

SVEDMAN: Structural change is an important issue I think, or at least much more important than the personality of the president. The president becomes the victim or the hostage of structural changes and political changes, and the fact that we've been talking a lot about events, 9/11 was one of them, reunification of Germany was one of them, actually, the fact that Gorbachev opened up and allowed things to happen. So the structural [00:35:00] changes, ending the Cold War and leading a world into a new situation, with 9/11, with political Islam developing and complicating the global picture, is one such change. And now of course, you see China reemerging as a very important political actor, with a lot of ambitions and question marks, question marks, but these events are the drivers, so it depends on how that personality relates to that and uses the immense power of the Office of the President of the United States, and the vast power of the president of France obviously, but France doesn't have the power globally obviously, as the United States has. [00:36:00] But then the personality plays an important role as well, coming in and dealing with these issues obviously, so one shouldn't belittle the personality factor, but in this sense, George Bush was given a difficult task when 9/11 happened. He was given, perhaps after the Second World War and Franklin D. Roosevelt, he was given one of the most difficult situations any American president had been served with when he got that mobile phone call, and then struggling in order to find answers and actually asking the right questions. So in that sense, the personality of the president plays a role. [00:37:00] I don't think -- so you shouldn't overstate the personality issue, but the personality issue and the person obviously plays a role, taking on these huge challenges or being a president with that enormous power, and using that power not only on a national level, but then building coalitions, building confidence.



I remember hearing Angela Merkel and she said that -- and open, I think, but she often got the question, having worked with many American presidents obviously, she's been a chancellor for quite a while, and for many years with George Bush obviously, and [00:38:00] then Clinton, with Obama coming in as a new president. We were frankly, not only -- and I'm not talking on behalf of Angela Merkel obviously, but all Europeans, I think were amazed by this new president and liked him immensely. He was a very likeable person and such a fantastic change, and I'm not meaning change from George Bush or whatever, or Clinton or whatever, but he was a new personality and with a lot of promise, so he created an atmosphere of expectations in the Middle East. But in Europe we were a little hesitant, because he hasn't shown any interest, but going back, few presidents did in the election campaign.

But the question [00:39:00] that Angela Merkel got, how much does personality actually play a role, "Did you like George Bush, did you like Clinton, did you like Obama, did you like Sarkozy?" Did you like -- whatever president or prime minister you worked with, how important is that? She gave a very wise answer, which I think I can make my own. She said, "Yes, I liked some of them more than others and some of them I really liked," and George Bush was one she really liked as a person, he was a very likeable person. He was a very likeable person. Sarkozy was not a very likeable person, but I'm working with United States, I'm working with France, I'm working with the UK. [00:40:00] If I like the Turkish president is that a factor? It would be nice if I liked him, but would it change much? What I'm trying to say is personality issue is nice or it cannot be so nice, but fundamental issues and structural changes and problems that have to be solved, I have to deal with the presidents, I can't change that, and I have to live with the personality. Obviously, things are much easier when two people understand each other and like each other. I would rather put the confidence issue, if you can have confidence in the person you are dealing with, then you've



come a far way, and if you add on all those presidents and prime minister, you add on President Putin, if you like Putin or not, his personality [00:41:00] is probably part of a problem, but the problem goes much deeper than that. So in order to solve it or tackle it, you have to go much deeper than that.

LEONG: So would you say then, that coming back to when you became ambassador to France, how would you characterize transatlantic relations at that point?

Would you say that that was probably close to the lowest point?

SVEDMAN: In my time, not only close to but -- not for us, as Norway, because as I said and others have certainly told you, we actually felt that Washington and President Bush understood the rationale behind our position. So I don't think we took any flack on that one in Washington actually, but transatlantic relations were absolutely at the bottom, [00:42:00] seldom been worse, because, in order to make the transatlantic relations work, as I said -- I used to call myself, and my generation of Norwegian diplomats usually defined ourselves as transatlantic Europeans, because we couldn't see Europe and U.S. drifting apart, it had to be combined. You had to have a transatlantic European perspective. You had to work with both sides and you had to be united. A weak Europe is not in the interests of the U.S. or in the alliance interests. A strong Europe can be hard to tackle for America, but it's always preferable, more preferable, than a weak Europe. But you always saw this hand in hand, a transatlantic European [00:43:00] -- and that was a very difficult period of time of course, because it also developed into a either you're with us or you're against us, if you took that position. It wasn't about that, but you got that perception and you were so high on adrenaline when 9/11 happened, because we were all that high, of fear, of anxiety, of grief, you were high, and when you are high you have to come down. And then you come down to all these friends who were Americans, suddenly were against, or didn't want to participate or didn't want to join, and you came down. So from a very high, where obviously we had an extra shot of adrenaline, coming down to normality, we didn't



manage that, so we ended up down, [00:44:00] and the perspective of talking together, and between London and Berlin and Paris too. I'm not only talking about Washington and Paris, it was of course extremely difficult.

But then of course it was not a NATO mission, so you didn't, you isolated in a sense, NATO, but you also, you didn't make NATO irrelevant. Irrelevant in that situation, but not irrelevant, but you couldn't have the kind of discussions there that could actually, in the short run, solve the larger issue. It wasn't NATO's issue and as NATO partners, you couldn't have the U.S., France, the UK, and Germany and whatever, sitting around the table, solving that problem that has stemmed from 9/11 [00:45:00] and led into via Afghanistan, to the war in Iraq, and then of course the UN, where things developed in a very difficult and unfortunate way, I think, and complicated too, because you lost the UN too, as an arena of confidence, of building confidence and understanding and commonality, but for a period of time. So you had two international platforms; NATO and the UN, and they didn't actually lend themselves, for that period of time, until later, to giving you the platform that would be needed to create, again, understanding and a way forward. So, we went through a very difficult period actually.

LEONG: How did it [00:46:00] manifest itself on a sort of personal level?

SVEDMAN: Now, on a personal level, the good thing about diplomacy, and maybe it is a little like that for politicians as well, is that you have a position and the other side has a position, and your job is to try to find a common position, or at least an understanding. Diplomats are trained of course, to try to find that, so we're trained to see possibilities, not only problems, because you have to know the problem to find the solution, but if you concentrate only on the problem, you won't find a solution; and this respect for each other. So, dealing with Russia for example, [00:47:00] it's fascinating to see, obviously, and I told you, when you cannot escape your geographical location and we've been living there, next to the Soviet Union and then Russia. But we've had peace with Russia for all those



hundreds of years, never war with Russia, and the Soviet Union liberated the whole northern Norway in the end phase of the Second World War. So, Russian soldiers liberated Norway, northern Norway, from the Germans, and they left. Leaving was a very important factor, they left. They could have stayed, because this was a very strategic position up north, but they left. So you created sort of a development of being their neighbor for hundreds [00:48:00] of years, liberated us, left. Then of course came the Cold War, came NATO, came the Cold War, but we managed to cooperate on a very local level, on a lower level, and still have. So in these days too, when Norway is one of the clearly strong proponents of not relaxing sanctions against Russia because of Crimea, because as a small country, even while a big country as well, you cannot accept that people break international laws and takes a chunk of a neighboring country, where would you end? Russia understands, and relations are not extremely good. They're not warm and cordial, I think, but you could always talk to the Russians, I could always meet the Russian ambassador. [00:49:00] So, the life of a diplomat in that sense, is a different one from what is played out in public, and perceived as the problem. Underneath, you have processes. But what I talked about, being in France during that period, there was no move, there was no possibility of doing that with that policy at that particular time, and with the French foreign minister, and the way the UN became the platform. There was no bilateral leverage. We've had a lot of leverage in the Middle East peace process, because we have been trusted by both parties, I would say, [00:50:00] and also by other countries like the U.S., European countries. We've been able to -- but anyway, but at that time, things were set. Relations were bad between allies and the transatlantic relations were bad, in bad shape.

LEONG: How does that translate into sort of the day to day interactions? So from your vantage point again, as ambassador to France, what did you observe in terms of how American officials or the American embassy officials related to French



foreign ministry officials and so on, and NATO officials from different sides relating to each other. What were your observations, just at a more human level.

SVEDMAN: Yeah, that's a good question. American diplomats are of [00:51:00] course extremely professional, they have a system where UN larger countries have a politically appointed ambassador, who sometimes have a lot of experience in political science and foreign policy, and seldom does, chosen for other reasons. I'm not saying that to say anything negative about the diplomatic presence in France at that time, but that's a stated fact. That being said, I don't think any person, not even God, could have made much of a difference on that level, between France and Germany. An ambassador in that period of time, it's very hard to see, and it's very hard to judge an ambassador in a period like that, trying to mend fences between Paris and Washington, such a difficult [00:52:00] situation where that had occurred, and that was the fact. And I think on the presidential level, I don't know more than talking to other colleagues at the time, but I presume that between President Chirac and President Bush, there wasn't many telephone calls and cordial greetings, although I say again, I found President Chirac, I knew and everybody knows, he was a great friend of America, it wasn't that. But of course France wasn't perceived, wasn't seen, and probably rightly so, as then, acting as a friend. But the way you act in foreign policy is not in category of -- if you go to the Middle East, your enemy is friend and your friends enemies, and so forth and so on, [00:53:00] it's not that complicated, but it's a different set of games. And on foreign policy level, with all respect, all due respect, I suspect that the dialogue between the American secretary of state and Dominique de Villepin was not the most cordial, fruitful one. It doesn't say much about the American secretary of state negatively, but the fact of the matter was, there was very little potential at that particular time, of doing much. It was stuck at rock bottom level for a period of time, and for an ambassador to move in those areas, keep open doors and the dialogue of course -- but under ideal [00:54:00]



circumstances, and under different circumstances, clearly things could have been better, but if things are that stuck between the head of states, head of countries, there's very little. In that sense, I think the American embassy did what it had to do and what it could do, and the American ambassador as well. I think he has described this pretty well in the aftermath, how difficult the political situation was from a period where, I guess he came in almost just before 9/11 or just after. I guess he came in as it happened actually.

LEONG: Right.

SVEDMAN: So he came in with -- so actually, yeah, I remember I met him several times and we had a circle of ambassadors. He came in being very enthusiastic actually, because the potential, as we talk about, [00:55:00] was there a potential for things, good things happening? Yes. Well, 9/11, a terrible thing, was a potential for something happening. We were all Americans. So coming in as an American ambassador to Paris, we were all Americans, and I think that could have been seen as a beginning of something larger, but pretty soon, I guess he would have noted that things were going in a different situation and then it's too much to ask from any of us around this room, that you can change that. Not to belittle the importance of ambassadors, because I wouldn't be the last to do that.

LEONG: What were your own interactions with the U.S. ambassador, this would be Howard Leach.

SVEDMAN: I met him. He was a very likeable man, and his wife of course, very sociable, but he wasn't on that level. We met, it was a larger context, but the American ambassador [00:56:00] and some European ambassador, inviting ministers and so forth. He was a very likeable person.

LEONG: Did you ever discuss with him, issues of transatlantic relations?

SVEDMAN: Not much, I must say, no. It never lent itself after, no. In passing, what we often do, you stand in a circle and you discuss.



LEONG: Now, Secretary Rumsfeld, as you will remember, famously said there's old Europe and there's new Europe.

SVEDMAN: Yeah.

LEONG: How did that go down in France, when you were there?

SVEDMAN: France and Europe, if you go to the Military Museum in Paris, and you look at what happened [00:57:00] in the Second World War, you get the impression that France won the Second World War with a little help from General Eisenhower and maybe Churchill. They have a problem with the Second World War, not quite being able to be proud of what they did, divided. The French have many reasons to be proud of what they did, and many Frenchmen did during the Second World War, that's not what I'm saying, but with Vichy and with -- in the aftermath, it was a complicated story. It was not like we did all the right things and we made it and we won the war and we are happy about it. They had to work a little on that one.

The First World War is the French on the -- so as an ambassador in France, you attend international Day of France of course, but you also attend [00:58:00] Armistice Day, and very little about the Second World War, although we usually went to Normandy for the D-Day. But the war, for a Frenchman, was not the Second World War, it was the First World War, and now it's slowly getting out of touch with the younger generation and fewer and fewer are thinking about that, and you don't have the people who lived in the war. At least when I was there, you had a few veterans left, and this is important too. So how, how it's shaped, the history is shaped, France, *La France est un grande nation*, it's a great nation, and it is, it is, but it plays a totally different sort of role in Europe than the Germans. [00:59:00] For France, small state diplomacy is not exactly the most exciting game in town, a small country it's a small country, let's face it.

With Germany, it's not the other way around. But Germany knew, after 1945 and very early thereafter, that in order to rebuild Germany politically, economically, in every sense of the word, they had to reach out to all the countries



of Europe and to America obviously. They had to reach out to small countries, large countries. That is a totally different model, and they didn't have much to be proud about. They did, going back in history, but the war was not much to be proud about. So they had to be following a line where they could be proud with how they dealt with what they had done, and that's [01:00:00] been a driving force. They always knew, very early, and that is of course something that one can thank Konrad Adenauer and other chancellors following in his footsteps, and the Americans, which reached out, which reached out to its former enemy, and the other allies did, building Germany. Germany taking responsibilities and not shying away from what they had done, but taking responsibilities and working with small states and large states alike, seeing how important it was to try to make it up, improve relations with Poland, for one, a big country in Europe obviously, and with other countries which they had invited, Norway being one of them. It formed, I think, one of the -- it's one of the questions of how we, as Norway, [01:01:00] have been able to develop such a strong relationship to Germany, it's Germany also being interested, reaching out. So it's a two model.

And then of course France and Germany, in historical times, in that world, it was also sort of a competition. France seeing that Germany is lifting economically, and then understanding well, economically that's good for us as well, but suddenly politically and then more than that, and getting a stronger political role and surpassing and bypassing France in many ways. And then so that was a fascinating thing too, different roles, different things, which for transatlantic ties, have been extremely important. [01:02:00]

LEONG: So this whole old Europe, new Europe thing, did that create tension within Europe as well, the notion that, oh you've got these new European countries that were more closely aligned with the U.S., whereas France and Germany are the old European countries, were not. Was that a cause of tension within Europe?



SVEDMAN: Well, not to that extent, but it probably was, because it was a bad point of departure, because why do you talk about old and new Europe when you are actually talking about a new Europe. So it's pretty senseless, to talk about the old and the new Europe, because we are old, Europe was old and we had the old Europe and now we have the new Europe. The United States should be interested in having a new Europe, not the old and new Europe, a new Europe. It was the wrong policy choice [01:03:00] actually, using those words, but sometimes -- and I guess he was not the most popular man in town anyway, so. We are talking about personalities. No lack of respect for him, but he was, at the time, not the most popular spokesperson for the allies or for the U.S., I presume.

LEONG: Did that in any way contaminate the relationship, the bilateral relations between countries identified as old Europe, versus countries identified as new Europe?

SVEDMAN: I think much more important at that time was what the EU did, starting out, and then moving more and more rapidly, seeing that the reunification of Germany was a potential for building a new Europe and getting the Eastern European countries in the former Warsaw Pact, countries into the European Union. Actually whether it competed with NATO or not, but hand in hand, at that time of course, Europe, to my mind, played a very important role in creating a new Europe, where you integrated the countries out of the Warsaw Pact, [01:04:00] and Gorbachev actually having contributed to the collapse of the Warsaw Pact.

LEONG: Right.

SVEDMAN: So at that time, I think the EU had a very constructive policy in building a new Europe, whereas NATO, at some times -- and maybe that was also a little part of Rumsfeld's thinking and rhetoric, was in building this Europe, [01:05:00] there should be no competition between NATO or the EU, and we should -- but I think we forgot, to a certain degree, building Europe economically and politically, and enlarging Europe, we ignored in a sense, NATO, then searched for its mission. The



European Union found its mission reunifying not only Germany, but Europe. NATO was searching because it had lost its reason to exist, it had lost its enemy, which sounds like a very good thing. When you lose your enemy, you're in a perfectly happy situation, it's gone, so [01:06:00] close the books, dismantle and go. So you had this very complicated discussion, what's NATO then all about? Out of area, we should find a new mission or what's our new *raison d'être*? So NATO went through a pretty difficult period at that time, actually finding a new *raison d'être*, whereas the EU found a possibility of a very dynamic, actually, development. So that was kind of, it was a fascinating time in that sense.

Enlarging the European Union was not a very contested thing actually, and enlarging NATO, it had to enlarge, in other words include former enemies. They [01:07:00] were not your principal enemies, because they were the puppets from the Soviet Union, but they were part of the Warsaw Pact, the Warsaw Pact was gone, they were no longer our enemies. And they had been the hostages of the Soviet Union and we owed it to them to include them in Europe, economically and having a development, through economic support and trade and opening borders. You could build democracies and you had the carrot of democratic principles, that you had to accept in order to become a member. So it was a very feral thing. NATO had bigger problems grappling with enlargement out of area, and if we enlarge, what's our -- and suddenly, we find ourselves at the border of Russia. [01:08:00] We've never been there. We've been elsewhere. I didn't work with NATO on that time, but the -- NATO at that time was more complicated. And then, to a certain degree, the competition between the two of them, and especially since in the European Union, the U.S. is not a partner and the U.S. is a partner in NATO, and then you had different, U.S. being the driver in NATO, for enlargement of the NATO area.

LEONG: Right.



SVEDMAN: Not being the driver in Europe, in the European Union, where France and Germany, and to a large degree then, Germany more than France, actually saw that it was in their interest to enlarge the union. And also economically, but not in a narrow perspective with Germany, although [01:09:00] Germany obviously knew that it would be gainful for them, it would be in their interests, to have a large area, also in talking about trade and economics; a little like the Marshall Plan in a sense. But there was a certain competition there.

LEONG: Right.

SVEDMAN: Especially since the U.S. was only sitting around the table in one of those organizations.

LEONG: Exactly. I'm glad you mentioned that because that was my follow-up question. Did you have a sense that perhaps the U.S. had some reservations about the EU expanding as it did, and obviously as you say, finding a new mission and crafting a new Europe. Whereas U.S. leadership is indisputable in NATO.

SVEDMAN: Yeah.

LEONG: Did you get a sense that maybe there was some reservations about that?

SVEDMAN: Yeah, there might have been. There's a lack of understanding actually, I think also, yes, reflexes, [01:10:00] because you are more safe in the environment where you can control. So yeah, I guess.

LEONG: How did things finally pick up from that rock bottom phase that was happening when you got there?

SVEDMAN: It didn't pick up as long as I was in Paris, so as soon as I left it picked up.
[both laugh]

LEONG: I hope nothing to do with your presence there.

SVEDMAN: I hope it hasn't anything to do with that. Then I was at home, as secretary general for a couple of years, and then going to Berlin, and then it had really picked up. Of course, we saw that also, traditionally, between, probably traditionally, between diplomats, at least in my generation, [01:11:00] transatlantic



Europeans, if you ask them and they were shy to say, where would you like to go once you can choose your position as an ambassador, and I guess 95 percent would answer Washington, I would go to Washington. And only a few could but almost everybody would. Berlin was down on the list, further down London came, then Berlin, and then Paris, then Moscow, and NATO in between, that was the list. Berlin and Paris was always regarded as a little -- because if you're going to Paris and you don't speak French, you are only 40 percent operational, you're not very efficient. That can be said about the American [01:12:00] ambassadors too, by the way, you lose 50 percent of your potential, so you shouldn't do it, and people don't because you feel embarrassed. So very few actually go there, unless they speak French, so the competition is not that hard.

Berlin is a little, the same thing, if you don't know German. It's not as extreme as in Paris, because if you -- it has happened and I know many ambassador colleagues, not Norwegians, going to Paris and not speaking French, and usually from large countries, but you're not efficient. In Germany of course, a German would never react negatively the way a Frenchman does, if you don't speak their language, because if you speak their language, you're frankly, you don't have the intellectual depth and intelligence and why should I talk to you, actually. A German would never think that, but [01:13:00] that's a basic thing. Germany, they speak German, and they have been in a role where we didn't have that many experts who would delve for Germany, but at that time, in 2007, that was a very sought after position because everybody sensed that there is not that much we can do in Washington, it's a big pond and you're a small fish. Suddenly, you have a fairly small pond in Berlin and you are a pretty big fish there, you can actually play a role. So that's actually why I went there, and I have been in Bonn for four years, as a young diplomat, and so I was fascinated with German politics. That being said, the genetics of what is shaping our policy, we have talked about that.



When I went to Bonn, [01:14:00] I was in Washington at the time, and I got a telephone call from my head of administration in the ministry said would you like to go to Bonn? We have a position as a political diplomat there, political and security. My genetical reflex was no, no way, no way I would go to Germany, no way. The reflex was Second World War, my father being in the German prison camp, we won the war with the British and the Americans, and every Sunday dinner it was about the Americans, about the war and how they saved us, and not so much about the bad Germans actually, not so much, but it was always the Americans. So I had in my blood, Germany was no. But then I reflected a few days [01:15:00] and I thought well, maybe I should try that one out, it's an interesting country and we are going into a period that might change things in Germany. So I went and I never regretted that because that role, it struck me again when I was there, NATO got its first German Secretary General, Manfred Wörner, also in a period where Germany asked everybody how would you react to a German secretary general in NATO, the former enemy. Is it as ripe, will people react, would it be negative? And it turned out, well, no, you've done more than we could expect and more strategically, wouldn't it be in everybody's interest, that NATO got that position, because it would [01:16:00] probably influence the government too, in making a stronger effort on the defense side, having the secretary general. Although there should be a separation between the two of them. It isn't of course, and it worked out fine. So you had a Germany building itself in NATO, transatlantically and economically and politically in Europe, so extremely important.

Going back to the capital, but then the new capital of Berlin in 2007, you had obviously, a Germany where the government was respected by all allies and also economically, and played a strong role in Europe, and could combine this influence in Europe, in NATO, [01:17:00] and making that to the best of the transatlantic ties as well. Angela Merkel of course was not chancellor, it was



Gerhard Schröder, who was as you know, chancellor when Germany sided with France at that time. She had, as the leader of the opposition, been very vocally pro-coalition with the United States, against the policy of the chancellor. So as a head of the opposition, she had strong credentials in Washington, building on that. So that was the start of a very fruitful period actually, with Germany, strong Atlantic ties, strong in NATO, respected in NATO, strong in the EU, very clear on establishing [01:18:00] and nurturing a good relationship with Poland, with the Baltic states, with the smaller European countries, and doing that in a very impressive manner actually. So that was a good period in that sense.

Also, a very strong hand with Russia. You hadn't had the invasion of Crimea at that time of course, but you had Putin, who had started to show his reflexes. But a Germany who stood up when needed, and I think actually got a lot of respect from Putin. They had a relationship which was very -- again, reflecting, what about personalities, they had a common view [01:19:00] of working together. But what had happened, I think not due to Germany or to the U.S. in particular, or to any country; it had been a gliding development where we didn't really understand that we built strong relationships with of course, new Europe and new members of NATO and EU, obviously, they were now part of the family, so obviously we did that. Not only NATO started working with former Soviet Union countries, but also the EU, and on the Ukraine, the EU had been years later of course, the EU built a very strong relationship with Ukraine, which could be seen maybe, from Moscow, as going a little too far, and not respecting [01:20:00] boundaries, which were no longer there but were, were nonetheless part of the economic realities. That was a Germany which had a very fruitful role, and also struggling a little with the transatlantic ties, Obama coming in, but that was more small dips and he became a strong friend, and Bush with Chancellor Merkel personally, a very strong relationship, but politically of course, it was not always easy, but a very strong relationship between Angela Merkel and George Bush, on



the -- if we go into personalities, sometimes, as we reflect upon that helps, when you have difficult issues.

LEONG: So, to focus on [01:21:00] Norway now, you mentioned several times that you thought that Norway navigated the situation quite well.

SVEDMAN: Yeah, I would always say that.

LEONG: [laughs] So of course you've got strong transatlantic ties yourself, bilaterally with the United States.

SVEDMAN: Yeah.

LEONG: On the other hand, you're a European country and obviously, even though you're not part of the EU, very close ties to Europe. How did you manage to navigate that low point, when these two sides were sort of pulling apart?

SVEDMAN: I guess it wasn't always easy. The change of government here, when you had Jens Stoltenberg, now the present NATO secretary general, coming in as prime minister. I think we had some difficult times with Washington actually, where President Bush [01:22:00] felt that we had promised things in Afghanistan, and explained things in a way that wasn't exactly seen as clear and consistent. We had some problems in that period.

LEONG: You're referring to that phone call.

SVEDMAN: Yeah, right.

LEONG: Where --

SVEDMAN: Which amazingly, stuck for an amazing number of years actually, as an irritant. As you know, our prime minister was not invited to Washington for the first period of four years.

LEONG: Right.

SVEDMAN: Which was amazing. But it showed, and I think in contrast, at least it seems logical to think of it as parallel, when you had chairman Bondevik actually not doing what the president wanted him to do, but explained it in such a way that



the president understood, and also had this almost [01:23:00] religious commonality, that I understand what you're saying.

LEONG: Right.

SVEDMAN: I understand what you're saying. I understand this is difficult for you, but I respect you for that and I, the President of the United States, I understand that. But with Stoltenberg at the time, it didn't happen, so this lingered on for a very long period of time. And then of course you had had, in Washington, then it lingered on for a long time. And it wasn't an easy decision with Bush deal, with Iraq, the first war, either. You had a government that supported it eventually, but you had a difficult discussion within the government, with conservatives and the Christian People's Party and the structure, and it took some time, it took some effort, in order to go along. You had talks with former defense ministers and all this, about that period of time, [01:24:00] but then it was settled. But with the new Labour government then, coming in, in the wake of many problematic discussions around operations in Iraq, discussions in the UN, President Bush, it didn't help. We had a pretty unusually difficult period at that time. It's the only period where, at least that I can recollect, that it lingered on for so long, no matter what we did. It's not affecting governments, I mean day-to-day operations, foreign ministers going, defense minister working in NATO and so forth, but the top. Amazing. [01:25:00] So it was the exception actually, and then of course things change. The fact that we have that prime minister who, for four years, wasn't welcome in the White House, it shows a little of the personal thing, because it wasn't rational from President Bush's side, if you allow me. I like the guy but it wasn't rational, but it was very personal.

LEONG: Right.

SVEDMAN: And of course he had gone through a period where this was so difficult. It wasn't rational but one can understand it. Then, the next period of course, it was - he was invited, but it didn't happen overnight, when Obama came in. We



weren't invited over the first weekend [01:26:00] and as far as I understand, for a little period, well, if you say something to the president and you have this kind of problem, you have a problem with the President of the United States, not with that particular president. It lingered on for a little while but then relations became strong, with Obama of course, and you had a totally different side. He even got a Nobel Peace Prize.

LEONG: Right.

SVEDMAN: I'm not sure he liked it or I'm not sure he deserved it, but that certainly helped to solidify the relationship between Washington and personalize it in a very important way. You had this sympathy factor which was immense at the time for President Obama.

LEONG: Right. What about Norway and Europe, how were relations between Norway and Europe through the Bush years?

SVEDMAN: [01:27:00] You know, it depends on what do you mean with Europe, because obviously, NATO had a difficult time with the UK, decided the U.S. would end that conflict. And then France, we never really had strong ties with France on defense. Well, on defense, practical defense matters, yes, and then with Germany. But within the European Union, I think we had a period where we worked extremely well with the European Union, after -- and it goes back to actually, the Middle East Peace Process, where you sort of [01:28:00] created a new trade, diplomacy, peace diplomacy. That has been the basis for a very strong relationship with Europe, working on different conflicts all over the world, and also with Washington, with open channels. It's attractive from the hard, strategic issues, into Norway working very hard on conflict, resolution, on democracy, on softer issues, on peace process over the world, be it in Latin America or in Asia or in Africa or in the Middle East, making us relevant in that sense, and respected. That was very much a new trade and a new instrument for [01:29:00] us.



LEONG: Did Norway play any role at all, in terms of trying to mend transatlantic ties between the United States and France on the one hand, and then France and Germany on the other hand, during that period? Did Norway have any -- I mean, you guys are good at conflict resolution.

SVEDMAN: I think we always did in a sense, because all our reflexes and all our interests and genetics, takes as a point of departure that Norway is interested in and is well served by a strong Europe, but not against but with the United States. And we are well served by an America, a United States engaging itself [01:30:00] in the world and in Europe, strong ties. And that's why we always have tried to play that role. I would never call it a bridge role, building a bridge, because that's -- you can build a bridge between two parties in the Middle East maybe, almost literally, but it's not a bridge because it's the same thing. That is genetically, what we've always done. And also, with Russia, the former Soviet Union, obviously we have a commodity. And I'm not meaning to say that we are using that as a bargaining chip or whatever, but it is a fact that we are positioned next to Russia, [01:31:00] which is a huge potential trap, and have a major military capability; naval, air, and so forth. We are positioned there, we have resources, we know much about what is happening in that part of the world, and of course we share that kind of knowledge with our friends, and one friend is America. That is also a reason why these ties are so strong, and part of that is also that American soldiers have come to the north to train with Norwegian soldiers, showing this interest and solidarity, you're not alone out there, there's a lot of things happening. Regardless of all the conflicts in the world or regardless of transatlantic problems, [01:32:00] under the surface, things are going on and we are strong partners with a lot of common interests and we share many of those interests.

Also of course, building -- looking at the global challenges with America today, and what America has always ended up with, being engaged in the world, because there is, at least I think so and most people think, that there's only one



indispensable country if it comes to creating problems or solving problems, and that is still the United States. So it's an indispensable country. America, not even America, can by its own, solve all problems [01:33:00] facing America. So, it's genetically too. You want that America engaged, so you have to use every diplomatic effort to keep America engaged. In other words, do things internationally that America finds not only interesting, but necessary and vital also for them. That could also be development policy, that could be energy policy, it could be economic policy, whatever. It's part of building these strong ties, not always that clearly visible but extremely important. That has always guided our diplomacy, and being helped by, as I said, several [01:34:00] times, that no one actually sees us as an enemy, as an opponent, as a threatening factor, and that we've always also been willing to share economically, participate economically, and some would say even buy ourselves into political processes. But that's not so bad if political processes are costly, if making peace is costly, if building democracy is costly, if getting women to vote and to have a future in different countries in the world, strengthening the world of women, if that is costly, we are willing to pay. So politically and economically goes hand in hand, but it also has a strategic perspective. It's keeping America engaged, it's keeping the European Union engaged, and it's strengthening the ties between America and Europe.

LEONG: [01:35:00] Well I think I have run through my questions. Is there something important that somehow this conversation has managed to glide over and needs to be included?

SVEDMAN: Well, that's a difficult question. I think what one is reminded upon, talking like this, is how often things have occurred that has made it necessary to change policy and perspective; it just comes. So, to sit and analyze what will happen, you have to do that and you have to have risk benefit analysis, and you have to look at the world and what's the meaning of China raising and what's the role of Russia going to be, and the role of NATO and what about [01:36:00] the transatlantic ties,



and what about America, with President Trump. You don't really know. Even if you thought you knew, something entirely different would happen, and you have to relate to that. So you have to have your instincts right, you have to have your convictions, you have to have your friends, you have to have your perspectives, you have to know where you are and where you want to be when things happen. But you must always be ready for something happening that you didn't expect to happen, and that is true. That is probably the hardest thing.

In looking backwards, in the Cold War, [01:37:00] being a young diplomat in Bonn, we thought we had all the answers, because there wasn't many questions. So this would go on forever, the Cold War. We knew who was the KGB resident in the Russian embassy and if you were at this level, you could even have lunch with him, and you knew that things wouldn't change and you were pretty comfortable with it. So few questions, the same answers. And then we had gone through a period where the questions have been many fold and the answers few, and then gradually, you find the answers. Today, I think being a diplomat is -- I've never, in 44 years in diplomatic service, experienced a period where there are so many questions and so few answers. We are [01:38:00] even doubtful about the few answers we give to some of the many questions. But, there's one thing I will insist is equally important and it always was. I can never, I cannot find, or define or name, any major problem facing us as a nation as Europe, as America, as transatlantic partners, as a globe, as common citizens of this world, any problem that is better solved nationally, better than in cooperation with others and internationally.

LEONG: Thank you, Ambassador.

SVEDMAN: Thank you. I enjoyed it.

[END OF AUDIO/VIDEO]