In Munich, Scars of Greenland Threats Remain

By MEGAN MINEIRO

MUNICH — U.S. lawmakers left the Munich Security Conference on Sunday confident they had patched the wound inflicted on the trans-Atlantic partnership by President Trump when he toyed with invading Greenland.

But they conceded that his threats had indelibly altered relations with Europe and left scars that Congress would have to reckon with, leading some rising Democrats to chart a path for a more cooperative future beyond Mr. Trump's "America First" policies.

Senators, and a handful of House members who bought last-minute tickets to Munich after Speaker Mike Johnson canceled their chamber's official convoy, said Greenland dominated their conversations over the three-day security summit. The Trump administration and European leaders are continuing to negotiate on the issue of America obtaining sovereignty over some part of Greenland, the island territory controlled by Denmark, a NATO ally, for military bases.

"If I were to draw a cartoon," said the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, Representative Jim Himes of Connecticut, of his meetings over the weekend, "it would be a European saying, 'Greenland, Greenland, Greenland, Greenland.'"

Senator Lisa Murkowski, Republican of Alaska, said the issue of Greenland had "distracted in ways that I don't think that any of us could have anticipated," drawing attention away from urgent issues, including how to bring an end to the war in Ukraine and counter China's global influence. Ms. Murkowski added: "This is not the way the United States should lead."

Pranav Baskar contributed reporting.

Lawmakers from both parties agreed that Secretary of State Marco Rubio's speech in Munich left Europeans breathing sighs of relief. And the question of whether the United States would still try to take full control of Greenland was "put to bed" at the conference, said Senators Jeanne Shaheen, Democrat of New Hampshire, and Thom Tillis, Republican of North Carolina.

But Congress has only so much sway when Mr. Trump can detonate days or weeks of diplomacy with a single post to his social media platform.

> Some U.S lawmakers are hoping for a less bellicose approach.

"The fundamental, core source of European anxiety is Donald Trump's whiplash, vacillating on Ukraine and Putin and other threats like China," said Senator Richard Blumenthal, Democrat of Connecticut.

And while the American delegation projected confidence, leaders of Greenland and Denmark continued to say that they believed the American president's impulse to command the island territory was still an active threat.

American lawmakers conceded that calming European anxieties over Greenland was the easy part.

Asked if the issue of whether Europe could still trust the United States as a reliable trade and defense partner had been put to rest, Ms. Shaheen said: "No."

"That's going to take some time," she added.

As leaders of the Senate NATO Observer Group, Ms. Shaheen and Mr. Tillis took on prominent roles, racing together from discussions on several panels to a dozen closed-door meetings, including with Mark Rutte, the secretary general of NATO, President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine, President Alexander Stubb of Finland and the prime ministers of Denmark and Greenland.

The two lawmakers, who are set to retire at the end of the year, reassured their counterparts that there was a new generation of lawmakers coming up that was committed to maintaining, and building new, global alliances.

A potential diplomatic successor with the most star power at the conference was Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York. The heir to the American progressive wing long led by Senator Bernie Sanders, Ms. Ocasio-Cortez attended for the first time to pitch a new approach to American foreign policy, rooted in the belief that the rise of authoritarianism across the world was the result of worsening income inequality, and that addressing that divide was the surest way to safeguard democracies.

She called out Mr. Trump, saying he sought to "command the Western Hemisphere and Latin America as his personal sandbox." She said lawmakers should focus on building a new U.S.-European alliance focused on shared priorities "that ideally advance the working class of all nations."

Representative Jason Crow, Democrat of Colorado, was by Ms. Ocasio-Cortez's side throughout the weekend to pitch the new vision for foreign policy. Their proposals included an end to U.S.-led "military adventurism," "reinvigorating the industrial base" in America and an end to "corporate protectionist policies" in foreign trade agreements.

Several of their Democratic colleagues struck a similar tone, including Senator Chris Murphy of Connecticut, who also attended the security summit. (Both Ms. Ocasio-Cortez and Mr. Murphy are viewed as possible presidential contenders in 2028).

Mr. Crow, a member of the Armed Services and Intelligence Committees and a leader of the Democrats' recruitment efforts for the midterm elections, said he was mobilizing candidates who could help execute a new foreign policy vision.

Representative Sara Jacobs, a California Democrat and chairwoman of the Foreign Affairs Africa subcommittee, was also in attendance in Munich and agreed a new approach to American foreign policy was needed. "That means not only engaging with our European partners, but also with the global south in real partnership, not paternalism, to solve our shared challenges," she added.

One of the youngest Democrats in Congress, Representative Yassamin Ansari of Arizona, said on a Sunday panel in Munich that it will take "a lot of work" for the United States to "regain our credibility around the world."

But the next U.S. president will have the opportunity, she added, to show "that we can both deliver for people in the United States and be a credible partner around the world."

ALEXANDRA BEIER/AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE GETTY IMAGES

"We are part of one civilization: Western civilization," Secretary of State Marco Rubio told a crowd of anxious diplomats in Munich.