

CNN's *The Arena with Kasie Hunt*

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1 minute and 49 seconds

KASIE HUNT: Congressman, the things that we heard from the President in this speech, I mean, was, you know, I feel like we say a lot like it's Donald Trump unleashed, but this is a new version of this president for this second term. I mean, what was your reaction to how he conducted himself there?

PETER MEIJER: There are plenty of elements that wouldn't be at all. You know, out of character for a campaign speech where you hear one of his rallies, you know, the regurgitation of the greatest hits. But he said two things that I thought were important to note. One, the difference between, you know, empty words. And that's not how to solve wars. It's going to be action. And number two, a pretty stinging criticism of the degrowth mentality that I think has taken over Europe. And the two are very much linked. He talks about the energy sanctions against Russia, but at the same time, how much the European union continues to buy their oil, and you have Germany continuing to shut down nuclear power plants, funded, thanks to green groups that are funded by Putin. On the one hand, that degrowth mentality is terrible for western democracy. It's terrible for western economies, it is fantastic for China, who has. They are embracing growth left, right and center. So, enough of those empty words that in those cases lead to actions that are detrimental to the West and on the other hand, willing to take action. He talks about the wars that he solved. And is there some hyperbole? Is there some exaggeration as Donald Trump —

HUNT: The wars are still being fought?

MEIJER: They are. But he's — what he's trying to do. And I think this doesn't get covered, is looking for a tangible, articulable American interest in those conflicts, right? The mineral deal in Ukraine, the mineral deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan. If you have something tangible that can actually last across administrations versus rhetoric and high-minded thoughts that easily get swept out with a changing of the guard.

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HUNT: Let me bring Congressman Peter Meijer into this conversation. Congressman, you're someone who, you know, you are a relatively moderate Republican. Obviously, it's part of why you're no longer in congress. If we're, you know, putting all our cards out on the table. But you understand what it is that swing voters are looking for the kinds of questions they ask, what makes them decide they're going to switch parties in a given election cycle? I'm interested to know what you think of what Kamala Harris is doing here on the book tour, and whether or not you think Democrats would be wise to have her continue to be the face of the party.

MEIJER: Well, I don't understand fundamentally how you lash yourself to the mast of a sinking ship, right? I mean, that was why Joe Biden said, listen, I get it — you know, bad debate performance that's not going into good direction. Great hand off the baton and the baton wasn't handed off. She just made sure that he was still continuing to hold that — it — okay. I don't know why they're so bad at this. That was my biggest political misjudgment, was assuming that the Democratic Party, you know, had their finger on the pulse, had their eye on the ball. You look at Kamala Harris and Donald Trump. Trump believes in things. He believes in himself. He is probably the most self-assured person, definitely in the political moment, if not in the entire span of human history. And if you're in a moment of indecision, you want to look to somebody as a political leader. And folks were more than happy to look past all of Donald Trump's flaws because he actually was somebody who believed in himself. And this entire tour that Kamala Harris did was her doubting herself, doubting the voters, doubting every potential running mate. The book is not a rationale for why her vision for leadership wasn't what the American people wanted. It was a litany of explanations for the failure of a campaign. Trump isn't looking in the rear view.

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2 minutes and 44 seconds

DAN KOH: I think it is madness when we view people trying out there to try to justify this. To your point, this shouldn't be a red or blue issue. It should be very simple. Should you be able to speak your mind without retribution from the government? This is a government that is controlling law firms, media companies, educational institutions and silencing opposition at the end of the day. And it's because of the money on the table from Nexstar with their billion dollar merger, and that Disney lost their \$4 billion in market cap that is causing all of this action. They're afraid of the government. It's exactly what Donald Trump.

MEIJER: Who was silenced? Nobody silenced. We're not —

KOH: Jimmy Kimmel was taken off the air.

MEIJER: — by a private company!

KOH: You have universities afraid to speak their mind.

MEIJER: By a private company!

KOH: You have research being completely defunded.

MEIJER: Right, we talk about the blue and the red division, every single one of the reasons why the FCC has a role is because these are broadcast stations with a monopoly that was granted by the government. It's not —

KOH: You feel good about that?

MEIJER: — no.

KOH: Do you feel —

MEIJER: I would hate it if the federal government came in and said, you may not say that. The reason why Jimmy Kimmel got himself into the first place is he was repeating a lie believed by one in three Democrats that the person who assassinated Charlie Kirk.

KOH: He did not say it right of center beliefs. He did not say that.

MEIJER: We can parse his verbiage all day long if he comes out and says, listen, that was not what I was trying to say. Thank you. Fantastic. I appreciate that, Mr. Kimmel. The problem is, that is believed, and we have spent way more time treating Jimmy Kimmel as a victim than the person who was shot and killed in front of their wife and children.

KOH: Let me ask you a question. If Joe Biden took down a prominent right-wing personality on TV for what he or she said, would you endorse that?

MEIJER: Your hypothetical if the Biden administration went and jawboned let's say social media platforms into deplatforming —

KOH: I'm talking about a similar category of someone on TV.

MEIJER: — hundreds of conservatives?

KOH: Will you answer my question?

MEIJER: No. That is literally what the administration that you served did. Google just released all of the components.

KOH: A broadcast TV host taken down for words that they say or intimidated on.

MEIJER: When was that?

KOH: I will not approve the merger of —

MEIJER: In the history of the FCC, they have done that plenty of times on the right. There's a reason why —

KOH: Was the FCC chair saying, we're going to do this the easy way or the hard way, like a mobster? Where they?

MEIJER: Your administration deplatformed and kicked off of social media — you want to talk

about actually silencing? Having any single public outlet that you have on allowed to broadcast something, right? Jimmy Kimmel could go on MSNBC tomorrow. He's going back on ABC tonight. This man has not been silenced. Charlie Kirk been silenced because he's dead. A lot of conservatives were silenced on social media platforms because the government threatened those social media companies. Facebook, Google, Twitter. You can go down all the list. YouTube again, just acknowledged to Congress today that they did that at the behest of the Biden administration.

KOH: So, do you endorse what happened to Jimmy Kimmel?

MEIJER: No, I don't, but I don't care about Jimmy Kimmel.