North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

A Force for Freedom

Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at Carnegie Europe
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Thank you Jan for that very generous introduction. And first of all, thank you very much for your dedicated work for Carnegie Europe and your strong engagement in the public debate on foreign and security policy issues.

And also a big word of thanks to Carnegie Europe for hosting our event.

As you mentioned, my very first speech as new Secretary General in September 2009 was also hosted by Carnegie Europe, so I feel that I have come full circle by delivering my last Brussels speech as Secretary General also hosted by the Carnegie Europe Endowment.

By the way, this Bibliothèque Solvay also gives me sweet memories. Actually it was in this very room that Heads of State and Government of the European Union agreed on the economic framework for concluding negotiations with the applicant countries in October 2002. Denmark held the rotating presidency of the European Union at that time, so as Prime Minister of Denmark, I hosted the dinner for Heads of State and Government and we reached an agreement on the economic framework for concluding these negotiations which led to the historic decision at the EU Summit in Copenhagen on the 13th of December. An historic decision to enlarge the European Union. And actually the foundation was laid in this very room.

This is my last month in office as NATO Secretary General. And I have to say these past five years have been the busiest and most challenging – for NATO and for me personally.

NATO has carried out demanding and difficult operations on three different continents. And we have reformed and renewed our Alliance to make it fitter, faster and more flexible.

A New Strategic Concept. The Readiness Action Plan. Smart Defence. The Connected Forces Initiative. Defence Capacity Building. Missile Defence. Enhanced Cyber Defence. These are all major achievements. They demonstrate NATO’s continued ability to change and to adapt.

So, I’m confident that I will be leaving my good friend Jens Stoltenberg an Alliance with a solid foundation and a clear compass. And I am sure that he will do a great job in keeping NATO strong.

Keeping NATO strong could not be more important. There is an arc of crisis and instability that stretches from East to South. And it poses a threat to our populations. And our territory.

We see challenges on a scale we have not seen for over two decades. And they will endure for years to come. We need to face this fact.

To the East, there is Russia. We have tried long and hard to build a partnership with Russia. In a way that respects Russia's security concerns, and based on international rules and norms.

And, as Jan mentioned, in fact my very first speech as new Secretary General of NATO five years ago was about developing a stronger partnership between NATO and Russia.

Regrettably, Russia has rejected our efforts to engage. Instead, Russia considers NATO, and the West more broadly, as an adversary. Russia has trampled all the rules and commitments that have kept peace in Europe and beyond since the end of the Cold War. The pattern is clear. From Moldova to Georgia, and now in Ukraine, Russia has used economic pressure and military actions to produce instability. To manufacture conflicts. And to diminish the independence of its neighbours.

To the South there is the so-called Islamic State. Not a state, but a group of terrorists. Who are committing horrific atrocities against thousands of people across Iraq and Syria. I strongly condemn the outrageous murders of American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff, and of the British aid worker David Haines. All NATO allies stand shoulder to shoulder, resolute and united against the scourge of terrorism.

This group poses even more of a danger as it risks exporting terrorists to our countries. It also controls energy assets. And it is pouring oil on the fire of sectarianism already burning across the Middle East and North Africa. A region that is a tinder box of porous borders. Arms proliferation. Weak governance. And poverty.

We are confronted by forces that reject our liberal democracy and our liberal, rules-based order. Their agendas and ideologies are different. But they are virulent, violent, and viciously anti-Western. They will grasp every opportunity to undermine our values of individual liberty, freedom, democracy, respect for the rule of law, and human rights. And to impose their backward-looking vision on others.

We are on the frontline of a new battle – a new battle between tolerance and fanaticism, between democracy and totalitarianism, between open and closed societies.

In this new age of unrest and revisionism, we must stand strong. And we must stand united as a force for freedom.

Strengthen our collective defence. Strengthen our community of nations. And strengthen our collective engagement.

First, we must strengthen our collective defence – our ability to defend our populations and our countries against any threat.

In response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, we immediately reinforced our defence and deterrence. And at the NATO summit in Wales, we agreed our groundbreaking Readiness Action Plan. To make sure our response to any challenge is firm and fast. Our defence capabilities, military posture and political will must send a clear signal to any potential aggressor.

We must also improve our ability to participate in international crisis management. The threat posed by the so-called Islamic State requires a military response to degrade and defeat this terrorist organisation. And it was the credible threat of military strikes against Syria that persuaded the Assad regime to give up their chemical weapons. And it was the principle of responsibility-to-protect that led the UN Security Council to mandate a military operation in Libya. We must be able, ready and willing to step up to the plate when conflicts can affect our own security.

And we must improve our ability to help partners build their own security forces. If we train local security forces to take care of local security we can project stability without necessarily projecting large numbers of our own troops. So we must do more to help our partners defend themselves, find their own solutions, and prevent crises in their regions before they emerge. That is why at the Wales Summit we launched a new Defence Capacity Building initiative. As an initial step, we extended it to Georgia, Jordan, and Moldova. And if the new government requests it, NATO will consider a new defence capacity building mission for Iraq, as well.

All this will require more investments in defence and security. At the Wales summit we turned a corner. The commitment to gradually increase defence investment over the next decade is a strong and united response to the arc of crises surrounding us. Security comes at a cost. But insecurity is much more expensive. And freedom doesn't come for free.

Second, we must strengthen the global community of free societies that are devoted to democracy, market economy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for the liberal, rules-based international order.

Europe and North America are at the core of the global community. The transatlantic bond is the bedrock of our shared security and our common values. We must continue to strengthen that community, and reach out to like-minded partners across the globe.

We should invigorate our economies by enhancing economic ties. More trade. More mutual investments. I welcome the free trade agreement between the EU and Canada. And I hope to see a rapid conclusion of negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between the European Union and the United States.

Freer trade and greater investments will create jobs and set a strong example for others to follow. And a stronger economic partnership will boost our ability to protect and promote an international rules based economic system, whose benefits we all enjoy.

We should strengthen the strategic partnership between the European Union and NATO. We share 22 members. We share a positive vision of a Europe whole, free and at peace. But we also share difficult neighbourhoods. So we should work even more closely together to deal with those threats and to project stability.

By bringing new members into NATO and the European Union, we have spread peace, prosperity and progress across this continent. We made clear in Wales that we are actively supporting our partners in Europe to choose their own path. We will keep NATO's door open for new members. We continue to help partners to walk through that door if they so wish, and if they make the necessary reforms. And no third country can have a veto.

Our shared vision of a Europe whole, free and at peace cannot be complete without the integration of the Western Balkans. Montenegro could be an important next step. That's why our door must – and will – stay open.

The United States and Europe are core partners and allies. But this is not an exclusive club. We should continue to reach out to like-minded partners across the globe. A stronger global community of democracies would help us protect and promote freedom, democracy, free trade and a rules-based world order. Those are the values that forces of oppression violently oppose.

By working together, the world's free societies can better preserve and bolster our core values. Because to preserve the rules-based global order and our way of life, the forces of freedom, cooperation and modernity must prevail over those of division, dictatorship and destruction.

Third, we must strengthen our engagement in world security. Stand up for our fundamental principles and values. Defend the rules-based international order.

For decades, the world has profited from a liberal international order, a cooperative order of states observing common rules and norms, embracing freedom, market economy and democracy, and renouncing territorial conquest. A rules-based order that can manage the peaceful rise of new powers. A liberal international order that has facilitated global peace, progress and prosperity.

We, the citizens of free societies, need to show greater self-confidence in our own values, principles and way of life. Of course, our societies are not perfect. But freedom and opportunities for each individual have tapped undreamt-of resources, and unleashed progress and innovation. The right to choose your own way of life stimulates creativity and energy. The freedom to pose critical questions about established truths and dogmas ensures

progress, renewal and development. And the right to speak against those in power contributes to a more open society and a more efficient and transparent government.

I see these values and principles now coming under pressure from forces of oppression. Forces of oppression that want to limit the liberal democracy and trample the liberal international order. Recent events show only too clearly that freedom, democracy and peace cannot be taken for granted. It is for us to stand up for freedom, and defend our freedom.

We have to be willing and able to use both soft and hard power to protect and promote our values. However, as we approach the end of over a decade of combat operations in Afghanistan, we see pressures to turn inward.

But the world will not become less dangerous just because we wish it to be. Challenges will not go away just because we look away. So now of all times, we must keep a global perspective. And counter isolationism and retreat.

Any lasting solution to a crisis will always be political. And so diplomacy remains vital. But to give ourselves the best chance of success, we must be prepared to back up diplomatic soft power with military hard power, when necessary.

We must not only develop the capabilities we need. We must also demonstrate the political will to use them when required. So, I welcome the important efforts by the United States and other Allies and partners to act against the so called" Islamic State".

We have seen, again and again, that crises breed crises. Force is still a factor. And if we fail to defend freedom and democracy, forces of oppression will seize their opportunity. We have seen, again and again, that appeasement does not lead to peace. It just incites tyrants. Any failure to counter oppression will only invite further oppression. That is the lesson of the 20th century – a lesson which we must never forget. So while military action remains the last resort, we must be able to resort to it when we need to. Not to wage war, but to build peace.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very proud to have served this unique Alliance. NATO is the only permanent framework where 28 democracies of North America and Europe consult, decide and act every day to ensure our collective security. After 20 years of challenging operations, we have the most capable and connected forces in history. And we are at the centre of a wide network of security partnerships with countries and organisations across the globe.

This is a challenging time. A time when our values and our will are being tested. We must rise to the challenge. Resist the pressures to retrench. And remain resolute.

Over the past year, we have seen why we need NATO. The question is no longer "why NATO". The question now is about "more NATO".

Our Wales Summit has set out a clear course. We need to pursue that course. Urgently. To reinforce the rules-based international order. And remain united today and in the years to come.

We must preserve our freedom. Protect our people. And promote our values.

Thank you.

MODERATOR: (...) Thank you very much, Mister Secretary General. And personally, I want to thank Jan for inviting me to participate. It's a great honour to share the stage with you. And also I want to thank you for the great pleasure of working with you for the last first years, here in Brussels. So ultimately, sad to leave... to lose you! But thankfully, we're having another Scandinavian. So hopefully, he'll be equally as open with us in the press as you have been. I appreciate it. Let me start on... by current and recent events. You said in your remarks the threat caused by the Islamic State demands a military response.

Hum, there are some who have argued recently that we are, in the West... reacting precipitously because of some rather sensationalistic images of Americans and British being killed by ISIS, while we had not responded militarily the last six months.

I wonder if you could address that. And perhaps as a follow-on to that, the same people who argue that perhaps ISIS is not... racking [inaudible] … too quickly towards ISIS... argue it is not a threat to our homeland; whereas a major geostrategic threat Russia and Ukraine risk becoming distracted by our focus on ISIS? Can you address those two issues? Thank you.

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN (NATO Secretary General): First, I think it's fair to say that the rise of ISIS... because I don't want to call it the Islamic State; because it's not a state...the rise of this terrorist organization has become obvious during the last months, I would say. I think this is the reason why the international community takes action now.

Of course, the despicable acts, the murder not only of three Westerners, but actually thousands of people in Iraq and Syria add to this picture. And I think all this has provoked the international efforts to now establish a coalition.

And I also think it's important to build a coalition that includes regional powers, regional countries. And it takes some time. So I think that explains why it is now that we take action.

Next question: Can all the efforts against ISIS detract attention from what is happening in the East? Definitely not! We are able to handle the broad range of security challenges whether they are seen to the East or to the South. That's actually one of the very important conclusions from the Wales Summit that NATO will not become a one-dimensional alliance. We will keep our ability to address the broad range of security challenges. So we will not lose sight of what is going in the East.

MODERATOR: Let me just follow up … this issue of whether ISIS presents a threat to NATO. You said rather definitively that at the end one of the things you cited was the foreign fighter issue, where Europeans and Americans are going to the region and potentially coming back. Is that the greatest threat this crisis poses to our stability both in Europe and US?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Of course, the issue of foreign fighters returning to our countries is a very direct threat. And we have to address that. We decided at the Wales Summit that we will strengthen our cooperation on intelligence and information sharing to counter that threat... But obviously, increasing instability in the region will also have an impact on the overall Euro-Atlantic security. And this is the reason why it is relevant that NATO Allies take action and try to create an international coalition to counter ISIS.

MODERATOR: About NATO and Carnegie, some sent some questions via Twitter. And I will pick a couple of them that are relevant to our conversation here. And the first one I wanted to touch on is from a gentleman named Tommy Steiner who's senior research fellow at the Institute for Policy and Studies at the IDC Herzliya, Israel. And it goes to this issue. What is NATO's role in an anti-ISIS coalition? Thus far, NATO as an institution, he argues, stayed on the side-lines. Why is that? And is that accurate? It's been a coalition of the willing; rather than a NATO-led operation. And why so?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Yes, first of all, actually this goes beyond NATO. I think it is of utmost importance to establish a coalition that also includes countries from the region. So this goes actually beyond NATO.

Secondly, we haven't received any request for a NATO involvement. However, at the Wales Summit, we decided three strands of activities that could be relevant for NATO...strands that are relevant for NATO. Firstly, we declare that if we receive a request from the new Iraqi government we stand ready to consider defence capacity building which, for instance, could be to resume our training activities in Iraq. We had a training mission in Iraq until 2011. We could resume those activities if the Iraqi government requests so.

Secondly, NATO can contribute to coordinating individual Allies' efforts in Iraq. And thirdly, as I mentioned, we will strengthen intelligence cooperation to counter the threat of foreign fighters returning to our countries.

MODERATOR: Just to push you on point two which is this coordinative effect. One thing that NATO does bring to table, that many other organizations can't, is this command and control capability with multiple Allies. Is that something that potentially, down the road, as this Alliance comes together, this coalition comes together, NATO could play a role in terms of being the backbone for their kind of command and control operation?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: At this stage, I won't exclude anything; because I think the international community has a responsibility to degrade and defeat ISIS that poses a threat, not only to Iraq and to the region; but poses a global threat. But as I mentioned so far, we

haven’t received any request for a NATO involvement. In 2011, you saw that the military operation against Libya started as a coalition of the willing; but it eventually became a NATO operation, including partners from the region.

MODERATOR: I will abuse my chairmanship for one more question. And then I'll turn it to the audience for Q&A. And I'll throw in some of these Twitter questions as we continue. You mention in regard to ISIS that appeasement does not lead to peace. I'm going to turn that slightly on its head. And use that speech... that line; and ask you about Russia. Because what we have seen over the last week is... on Friday a suspension or delay on elements of the EU-Russia-Ukraine trade deal to the end of 2015. We saw the EU foreign ministers already talking about suspending or probably lifting sanctions. Are we suddenly now willing to accept something of a frozen conflict in the Donbass; because there is an enormous need to either arm or do more aggressive military operations against the Russian threat inside Ukraine?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: We should never accept a new frozen conflict in Eastern Europe. Of course, we should do all we can to encourage a peaceful solution to this conflict. But actually, to be very honest with you, my concern is that it is Russia's interest to establish a new protracted frozen conflict in the region. Actually, I think the long-term ambition of Russia is to re-establish a zone of Russian influence in its near-neighbourhood; and prevent countries... neighbouring countries... prevent them from seeking Euro-Atlantic integration with NATO and the EU. And to that end, it is in Russia's interest to keep these frozen protracted conflicts in Transnistria in Moldova; Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia; now Crimea and Eastern Ukraine in Ukraine. So we should never accept that.

MODERATOR: Just to push you slightly on this. You have argued in very stark language in your address the threat posed by Russia, the violation they have done to any number of agreements in almost equally stark language as is used for ISIS. And yet, for ISIS, you advocate military involvement. And for Russia, I've asked this... in interviews in person; but also at press conferences where you advocate military assistance not just only... but actual military and heavy weaponry assistance to the Ukraine. You have deferred slightly on that. Why... why are you advocating military intervention for ISIS; but not help for Ukraine militarily, when in your rhetoric you seem to be worried that both of those present an equal threat to our way of life in NATO?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Well, firstly, while it's clear that Russia has violated all its international commitments and has conducted illegal military actions in Ukraine, I don't think Russia poses an imminent threat to NATO Allies for the very reason that Russia knows that we have an Article 5 in our NATO Treaty that protects any Ally against attack. An attack on one would be an attack on the whole Alliance. Russia knows that. And that's why I don't think Russia poses an imminent threat to NATO Allies.

However, to keep our deterrence credible, we have taken steps, as you know, to reinforce our collective defence. And for Ukraine, we do believe that the right way forward is a political

solution. And while it's clear that Russia has violated international norms and rules, I still think Russia would be capable to negotiate if they decide to do so. When we are speaking about ISIS, this is a group of terrorists with whom there's no chance whatsoever to find any political solution. And furthermore, as I have argued, I think this terrorist group poses a threat, not only to Iraq; but also to the world as such. And that's why I'm in favour of taking military action against ISIS.

MODERATOR: OK, thank very much. We have about 15 to 20 minutes for Q&A. As per usual, if I call on you, please state your name and your news... your organization. I've been told to warn the people up in the balcony that you too are allowed to participate. There's a woman here in green... for something at her, so she could get my attention. So let's start here down the floor, the gentleman here in grey. Please wait for the microphone. It's coming from behind you.

Q: Thank you, Mister Secretary General, my name is Mohamed Rajai Barakat (?). I'm a Euro-Arab citizen. And my origins are from the Middle East, Palestine, Jordan and the area. Mister Secretary General, two years ago, we were invited by Carnegie Europe first to speak about NATO and Arab Spring. And you said that you have to accompany the Arab Spring. And it was during the strikes against Libya. And the objective was to instal democracy in Libya. Two years later, it's ….. [inaudible] now in Libya... it's No Land Man. And Libya is destroyed; as Afghanistan, Iraq. Don't speak about Yemen, Sudan and all these countries. Do you think … don't you think that if you're going to intervene militarily; or ask to the other partners to make war against this so-called Islamic State, don't you think that it's going to make also the chaos in Jordan, Lebanon, maybe Iran and other countries?

Second question, Mister Secretary General.

MODERATOR: Quick one, please.

Q: Mister Secretary General, our public opinion knows that the main reason of instability in the area is because the international community didn't find a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And it's not Israeli-Palestinian conflict; it's Israeli-Arab conflict; Israeli-Islam conflict. Don't you think that if NATO, the European Union, United States of America, and EU member States exert pressures against Israel so as to accept King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia plans for peace which was accepted by all Arab countries without negotiations; because Arabs have nothing to negotiate and to give to Israel? Don't you think that it's going to stop these terrorists? And you say that we have to invest in military, don't you think that it's better to invest in development of these countries? Thank you very much!

MODERATOR: Two questions there. I guess one: does military action in the Middle East threaten, destabilize more than stabilize as it did in Libya. And the second one is, is the solution of Arabic-Israeli conflict necessary before stabilizing the region.

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Yes, of course, the first question is a very good question; because you can point to some historical examples that in the wake of a military operation we have seen instability, violence, maybe even failed states.

But first, let me stress that we have... or individual Allies have received a request from the Iraqi government to assist the government in the fight against this terrorist organization. And I think we have a responsibility to help the Iraqi government fight ISIS exactly to avoid that Iraq would become a new failed state.

Having said that, I think we have... there are lessons to be learned from previous military operations. I would not argue against the military operations; because in each and every case, I think they were necessary and legitimate.

However, I think the international community as such should learn, from these operations, that it is of utmost importance to strengthen efforts after a military operation to help these societies improve their capability; to establish security and good governance. Libya as an example... I mean... after 40 years of dictatorship, the new authorities had to start from scratch. And seen retrospectively, I think the international community as such did too little, too late to help the new authorities in Libya build a new nation.

The NATO operation was a great success. We implemented the UN security mandate 100%. We prevented attacks against the Libyan people. So we did what we were mandated to do. But when we had finished the military operation, I think, seen retrospectively, that the international community led by the UN should have done much more, much faster to help the new authorities in Libya. And that's one of the important lessons to be learned that military operations should go hand in hand with civilian efforts to follow up to establish or to build a new nation after such a military operation. But I have to say this goes beyond NATO's capability. NATO is a military alliance. So it's for the broad international community to follow up in such cases.

Of course, I can only agree that a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would solve many problems, absolutely. I fully agree. And without going into too many details, I still think that the long-term sustainable solution is to see two states living side-by-side in peace and harmony and within secure borders. I still see this as the right formula for a long term sustainable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

MODERATOR: We'll go to the other side. Radio from Reuters...

Q: Adrian Croft from Reuters. Could I ask you how long it would take an independent Scotland to join NATO? And whether that you believe that NATO...that Scottish independence would undermine Britain's contribution to NATO's defences?

MODERATOR: Did you get both of those?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Probably, you know very well, that I'm not going to interfere with the referendum campaign in Scotland. What I can tell you is the following: If a new independent state wants to become a member of NATO, it will have to apply for membership of NATO. And such an application will be addressed in exactly the same way as all applications are dealt with. And eventually it will require consensus, unanimity within the Alliance to accept a new member of our Alliance.

As this is a hypothetical question, we haven't discussed it at all within our Alliance. And I'm not in a position to say anything about timelines. As you know, from history, timelines differ significantly when it comes to applicant countries' roads towards membership of NATO. And basically it's very much about their ability to fulfil the necessary criteria. So actually, the answer is that I can't say anything about timelines.

MODERATOR: And on the issue of whether Scottish independence would somehow undermine UK's ability as being one of the leading members of NATO to participate? Concerns about that?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: No, again, without interfering with the debate leading up to the referendum, I don't see that any outcome of the Scottish referendum will have an impact on UK's contribution to NATO.

MODERATOR: Sir, right there, Egyptian Television... with the book up.

Q: Hi, my name Hassim Ibrahim (?). I'm TV reporter and correspondent for As-Safir Newspaper. Secretary General, one question. When you had this operation in Libya, you spoke about three conditions which under these conditions you are going to lead the operation? A clear request from the Libyan authorities and I think UN mandate? Under which conditions you are going to lead this coalition, international coalition in Iraq? Do you exclude this? Or it's something for the future?

MODERATOR: Just to throw in one from Twitter here from an Alex Laing saying almost the same thing, given the cause of a precedent, would NATO need a UN-Security Council backing to legitimize a military action on IS in Syria?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Yes, first, once again, let me stress we are not considering a NATO role or even a leading NATO role in this operation. A number of NATO Allies are forming a coalition that also includes countries from the region. So to avoid any misunderstanding, let me stress that we are not in a process of engaging NATO as such in military strikes against ISIS. I pointed out that at the Summit we mentioned three possibilities of a NATO involvement: firstly, defence capacity building in Iraq if requested; secondly, a coordinating role; thirdly, strengthened cooperation on intelligence and information sharing among Allies to counter foreign fighters.

So the rest of is quite hypothetical; because we haven't received any request for a NATO involvement. But NATO Allies are involved. And I really welcome that. Peter, you added the question about UN mandate, when individual Allies engage in this, will they need a UN mandate. Well, I'm not a legal expert. But I see it the following way. ISIS commits horrific atrocities. And I would say, witnessing manslaughter, their attacks against religious and ethnic minorities, in my opinion it's pretty close to a genocide. And in my opinion, that gives such a military operation legitimacy within the principles of the UN Charter. I say this without being a legal expert.

And finally, I also consider this a kind of self-defence which is also permitted within the UN Charter. So I would say that, as a layman, as a politician, not as a legal expert, as far as I can see, there is a basis in the fundamental UN Charter principles to conduct military operations against ISIS.

MODERATOR: We only have about five minutes left. Let me take two or three for the Secretary General? Sir, at the front here, if we could start here. Just wait for the microphone please.

Q: Hi, my name is Mark Poore (?). I work at Carnegie Europe. My question, Secretary General, is on Turkey. During your five years, Turkey has been involved in Afghanistan and in Libya, although in non-combat mode. Turkey is still waiting for a decision on missile defence which has been for two years now. And we don't know the answer yet which, of course, is very important to NATO missile defence. And finally we've learned on Friday that Turkey will not play any role in the military operations against ISIS.

After your five years what would be your judgment without perhaps going as far as what the Wall Street said on Saturday, Turkey has stopped long ago be a friend of the West. Do you see a problem there in the future?

MODERATOR: Let me take another one. I saw a gentleman. The blue shirt right there.

Q: Thank you, Nassim Oder (?) from New Stern (?). Given the security volatility in Eastern Europe, can NATO resources be employed to secure energy supplies to the European Allies, for example, by deploying NATO troops to protect strategic infrastructures in the region, for example Baku-Ceyhan pipeline or Trans-Iraqi pipeline? Thank you.

MODERATOR: And lastly, right behind you, there's a woman in orange right there.

Q: Thank you, I'm Phu Ano (?) from Phoenix TV, Hong Kong. My question is that there's some critics that look... (inaudible) sorry, the ability of NATO to use its forces in the East and in the South at the same time. So how do you think about this? And also there is also another question: Do you have any detailed plan to rescue the hostages in the region? Thank you.

MODERATOR: Three very different topics: Turkey, energy security and the ability to do multiple things at one time.

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: First, on Turkey, I have to say I consider Turkey a strong Ally. And on a personal basis I've had an excellent cooperation with the Turkish leadership since I took office as Secretary General. And whenever we have needed contributions to NATO operations, Turkey has actually engaged and contributed to NATO-led operations.

Now, in the case of Iraq, first of all, we're not speaking about a NATO operation; but so far, a coalition of the willing. Furthermore, it may play a role that ISIS has also taken Turkey's hostages. I don't know. It's for the Turkish government to answer that question. But I have to say, seen from my chair, that Turkey has played a crucial role within our Alliance and continues a crucial role and overall I also have to say that Turkey, not least because of its geographical location is a very important Ally and partner from a strategic point of view. And as regards missile defence I'm sure that the Turkish authorities have listened to concerns raised by fellow Allies.

Next, on energy. First of all, let me stress that NATO's core task is territorial defence of our Allies. And as regards pipelines on Allied territory, of course, it's part of territorial defence to protect such pipelines and other means of energy supply. But first of all, I think energy security is much more about reducing Europe's dependence on imported gas and oil. It has become evident that there's also an overall security aspect of being so dependent on one single supplier, in this case Russia. And I think, but that's more the European Union. I think it's of utmost importance to increase energy security by establishing a well-functioning European energy market with more free-flow of energy across borders. So that this single most important supplier cannot blackmail one and single out individual Allies; because energy will flow more freely across borders.

Alternative pipelines, development of alternative energy sources, all this is part of overall energy security. And I think it's for the European Union first and foremost to deal with that.

Finally, can we actually address security challenges from both the East and South at once and the same time? I think I answered to that question already at the beginning of this Q&A. And, yes we can. We have the capacity to deal with these wide-ranging threats. It was one of the very important outcomes of the NATO Summit in Wales that we will not become a one-dimensional Alliance. We do have the capability to deal with more or less conventional threats, both to the East and to the South, as well as addressing newer security challenges like cyber-attacks, missile attacks. That's why at the Summit, we decided to enhance our cyber-defence. We continue building our missile defence system. So I can assure you that the Alliance stands ready and capable to address both the East and the South and cyber-space if needed.

MODERATOR: Let me wrap this up by having one last further question from the fellow Dane. This is John Derby Paulsen who is the Foreign Affairs spokesman for the Social-Democrats in the Danish Parliament. He says: What is the most important advice you could offer your successor Mister Stoltenberg?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: I think actually the most important advice would be to continue reforming, modernizing our Alliance; and continue strengthening our collective defence so that NATO remains capable to address this broad range of security challenges. And then on top of that, he will need some patience to make sure that he spent the necessary time and effort to create consensus among 28 independent nations. But, for me, it's been a great pleasure. It's been a very positive experience. And while it may take some time to create consensus among 28 nations, once we reach a consensus... and there is a very strong consensual spirit within our Alliance; once we take a decision all twenty-eight, then it is a very strong Alliance that moves forward. That's been a big pleasure for me to see.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Sir. Please join me. One more round of applause for Anders Fogh Rasmussen. Thank you very much.

MODERATOR: I will abuse my chairmanship for one more question. And then I'll turn it to the audience for Q&A. And I'll throw in some of these Twitter questions as we continue. You mention in regard to ISIS that appeasement does not lead to peace. I'm going to turn that slightly on its head. And use that speech... that line; and ask you about Russia. Because what we have seen over the last week is... on Friday a suspension or delay on elements of the EU-Russia-Ukraine trade deal to the end of 2015. We saw the EU foreign ministers already talking about suspending or probably lifting sanctions. Are we suddenly now willing to accept something of a frozen conflict in the Donbass; because there is an enormous need to either arm or do more aggressive military operations against the Russian threat inside Ukraine?

MODERATOR: OK, thank very much. We have about 15 to 20 minutes for Q&A. As per usual, if I call on you, please state your name and your news... your organization. I've been told to warn the people up in the balcony that you too are allowed to participate. There's a woman here in green... for something at her, so she could get my attention. So let's start here down the floor, the gentleman here in grey. Please wait for the microphone. It's coming from behind you.

Finally, can we actually address security challenges from both the East and South at once and the same time? I think I answered to that question already at the beginning of this Q&A. And, yes we can. We have the capacity to deal with these wide-ranging threats. It was one of the very important outcomes of the NATO Summit in Wales that we will not become a one-dimensional Alliance. We do have the capability to deal with more or less conventional threats, both to the East and to the South, as well as addressing newer security challenges like cyber-attacks, missile attacks. That's why at the Summit, we decided to enhance our cyber-defence. We continue building our missile defence system. So I can assure you that the Alliance stands ready and capable to address both the East and the South and cyber-space if needed.

Source: https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/events/transcripts/2014/09/15/a-force-for-freedom