North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

A Grave New World: Future Global security Challenges

Panel discussion with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Brussels Forum organized by the German Marshall Fund of the United States
2016-03-18

KIM DOZIER: A word of warning and a word of hope. The warning is this will be a fast paced and interesting dialogue because otherwise, I will hopefully politely and with humour interrupt you, whether you are a world leader on the stage or in the audience and the word of hope. You know, sometimes these meetings end up with just doom and gloom. Yes, we're facing dire times but that's when you're tested, whether you are an individual, a family or a family of nations. So as we puzzle through some of these difficult issues, let's think about resilience and ways to make things work while things seem to be falling apart. With that, I'm going to open with 2 questions for the audience. Word cloud first. What is the one word that comes to mind when you think of the transatlantic relationship? So if you are interacting with the app, you can answer and I'll pause for a moment. I already know from our panelists what at least one of them wants to see out there. 2. This is true. Distant, consensus, values. Okay, well, what at least 2 of our panelists had hoped to see was the word NATO. Okay, so the second question that I wanted to ask the audience is it's a Q&A, a multiple choice and it's also in the app. What is the leading threat facing the transatlantic relationship? Russia, ISIS, refugees and migrants or the economy? I realize this may be the first time some of you are looking at this section of the app, so that's okay. I can just take over and decide which one I'm going to lead with. 7 more seconds for an answer, 5, 4, 3, 2, time is up. Ah, the economy, not the one any of us expected. So, let's open with that. Is there anything that the security relationship can do to repair the direction the economy is going right now? Who wants to take a stab at that? Secretary General.

JENS STOLTENBERG (NATO SECRETARY GENERAL): Of course there is one very fundamental relationship between economy and security and that is that you need security, you need stability to be able to have a strong economy. So, the more we can do to create stability, both of course inside NATO, however we have a lot of stability but perhaps even more important, create stability around NATO, the more we are also able then to promote economic development and also more economic interaction with our neighbours. So, that fundamental relationship is I should say very strong and is an additional reason to be focused on security.

KIM DOZIER: Which is why you all should have said NATO in that word cloud. Anyone else before we move on?

JEANNE SHAHEEN (U.S. SENATE MEMBER): I knew he was going to get NATO in there. You know, I think it's the same issue that we're seeing in the United States as we look at what's coming out in this election in the United States, the anger and frustration of voters and it's I think very much a piece of what's going on in Europe and around the world, we're all affected by globalization. The world as we know it is changing and people are anxious about that because they don't know what that means for themselves and their families. It's why TTIP and trade is such a big issue. We're seeing it in our elections in the United States but you're seeing it here in Europe too in terms of the concerns that have been expressed about TTIP among workers, among the population. So, I think it's understandable that people are concerned about the economy and what we need to do, certainly in the United States and I think transatlantically is, if there is such a word, through the Transatlantic Partnership is to think about a strategy for how we're going to respond to people's economic concerns and how we're going to lay out an agenda that helps people understand how they succeed in the changing world that we're living in and that includes a focus on job training and education, it means that we've got a workforce that's able to do the jobs of the future and a better understanding of how things are changing. So, I think it's understandable that this is a number one concern that we're seeing in the transatlantic relationship.

KIM DOZIER: Mr. President, did you have something to add?

TOOMAS HENDRIK ILVES (PRESIDENT OF ESTONIA): Let's keep in mind that NATO is, up till now, the one and only treaty relationship between the United States and Europe. I mean, if we get TTIP, then we'll have 2 but NATO is fundamental and it is what keeps the United States here and what makes Europeans think about the United States. Of course, TTIP is a big part of the debate today but since 1949, I mean Europe and the US have been tied through NATO. Now, then we get to learn how much Europe is concerned about security and I think that has returned since living in this kind of bubble of the peace dividend for 25 years. We all thought that no one had to spend money on defence, that everything we had achieved, Woodstock, peace, love and understanding and now, it turns out since, well I'll just mention that today, 2 years ago, in a sham pseudo-election, 98% of Crimea voted under military occupation to join Russia. I mean, I think that shocked a lot of people, that was just 2 years ago. Anyone believes that kind of election results, go back to see what happened in eastern Europe in 1940 and the immediate post-war 2 period. That has brought us back to the security relationship that I think for 25 years is slowly going from or fading from memory.

JEANNE SHAHEEN: So you can tell the 2 NATO voters here.

KIM DOZIER: So, of course, the knock on effect of the economy must concern NATO. At this point, only 5 nations are living up to their agreement to invest 2% of their GDP in defence. Do you see in the future any other countries stepping up to the plate that way?

JENS STOLTENBERG: Yes, absolutely and that's one of the, I should say, good developments we have seen over the last couple of years and especially since NATO

decided at our summit in Wales in September 2014 that we were going to stop the cuts in defence spending and gradually increase it towards 2% because it is exactly as President Ilves just stated. Since the end of the Cold War, we have seen a steady decline in defence spending, especially among European NATO allies but in 2015, that's the first year since many, many years that we have seen at least the cuts have stopped, which is not good enough but it is a beginning and hopefully beginning of a gradual increase. So one year after we decided to stop the cuts, we have actually been able to deliver the first step. The picture is mixed. Some allies are continuing to reduce defence spending while others have really started to increase. Estonia is one which has reached already 2%. Poland reached 2% I think it was last year. I met with Latvia, they will be at 2% soon and Romania is increasing. So more, 16 allies, European allies, actually increased defence spending last year. So I'm not saying that we are there, it's still a long way to go but after many, many, many years of cuts, at least last year, we stopped the cuts and hopefully, we will then start gradual increases and that's at least moving in the right direction. Then, of course, the United States is continuing to be really the big contributor spending, more than 70% of NATO's total defence spending is US defence spending.

TOOMAS HENDRIK ILVES: But I would say when it comes to security, I think the security concerns of Europe today and so many countries are far more focused on migration than the sort of traditional Cold War era view of the transatlantic relationship and here, of course, the transatlantic relationship, see NATO gets really involved in defending the borders but here, I think if you ask most Europeans, unless they are ones who are directly affected an aggressive and revengous Russia will see migration as the true issue, the true security issue facing Europe rather than the transatlantic relationship.

KIM DOZIER: And the president brings up the second item of concern for everyone in the audience, the issue of Russia. So, before asking for questions from you all about this, I'd like to pose one to all of you. Is Russia an existential threat to Europe and NATO or is Russia trying to re-establish its place in the world watching European nations and NATO and the US encroach on its influence and treated as a second-class nation?

JEANNE SHAHEEN: I'm not sure that it's either or. I think it's a little of both. Certainly Russia has shown that they want to restore their position in the Middle East. We saw that with their entry into Syria. They've certainly, as President Ilves said, reasserted their influence in Ukraine. They are doing hybrid warfare in parts of eastern Europe in a way that makes people that I've talked to from a number of countries express their concern about the kind of influence that Russia is wielding and questions about where we are, where's the United States, where's the EU in responding to that, particularly in terms of propaganda. Russia is spending significant amounts of money, whether it's for Russian television, Russia Today, to influence people's thinking in a way that expands their influence throughout Europe.

TOOMAS HENDRIK ILVES: I think existential may be too strong a word but first of all, we're seeing for the first time since Khrushchev, nuclear sabre rattling, you know, threats even to

Sweden that if you join NATO, you might have a problem, nuclear problem, that is clear. The undermining of the post-World War II security structures, foundations from the UN Charter to the Helsinki Final Act to the Paris Charter saying you don't change borders through military force. I mean, we've basically seen that violated. So again, existential, I mean I would add to that the failure of the UK and the US to support the Budapest Memorandum in allowing Russia to do what it did and not stand up for the territory integrity of Ukraine when Ukraine gave up the third largest nuclear arsenal in the world in exchange for this. It means that it's a long term dilemma and 50 years from now, you still may have a problem convincing, say Estonia gets a nuclear weapon in 50 years, we would say you're going to guarantee our territorial integrity, no and finally I would say what I find right now dangerous is the support for financing occasionally hard-core extremist parties, you know right wing populists that are anti-immigrant, anti-EU leading to strengthening fissiparous tendencies in the European Union, all those are genuine threats. Now, to talk there about restoring its legitimate place.

KIM DOZIER: And yet, Secretary General, you have in some of your recent remarks, spoken of a hope of restoring a positive relationship with Russia. You have talked about their role at the UN Security Council, in securing a nuclear deal with Iran. Do you see any rays of light and warning, we're going to move on to Ukraine from this.

JENS STOLTENBERG: Sorry.

KIM DOZIER: And warning, we're going to move on to the subject of Ukraine from this as I ask you…

JENS STOLTENBERG: My message has been that Russia is our neighbour, Russia is going to remain and Russia is going to be our biggest neighbour in the foreseeable future. Therefore we have to develop a relationship to Russia and we have to do that based on 2 strands or 2 tracks. One is military strength. We need to be strong, we need to be credible, we need to deliver the necessary deterrents, we need to have strong defence and we are also now implementing, we are therefore now implementing the biggest and the strongest reinforcement of collected defence since the end of the Cold War because we see a more assertive Russia. We don't see any imminent threat against any NATO ally but we see a more assertive Russia being responsible for aggressive actions in Ukraine and today 2 years ago, they illegally annexed Crimea but at the same time, we have to be able to strive for a more constructive and cooperative relationship with Russia because that is in our interest and there is no contradiction between strong defence and political dialogue. Actually, I believe that as long as we are strong, as long as we are firm, as long as we are predictable, we can also engage with Russia on different political arenas. We have seen it when it comes to the Iran nuclear deal and we have seen it in other, we have seen it at least partly in Syria and me or my own experience as a Norwegian politician was that in Norway, we developed, actually even during the coldest part of the Cold War, a pragmatic working relationship with Russia where we cooperated on energy, on fishery, on economy, on environment and many other areas, not despite of our membership in NATO but because of our membership in NATO. We

had the strength and the confidence enabling us to engage with Russia. So when, for instance, the United States engaged with Russia on many different areas, it's not because the United States is weak, it's because the United States is strong. So as long as we are strong, we can engage with Russia seeking a more cooperative relationship.

KIM DOZIER: And yet today, we've had words back and forth between Moscow and the EU over Crimea. The Minsk Agreement doesn't seem like it's anywhere near to being honoured. Do you think that it needs to be dropped and we need to move on to something else? Do you think there's any chance that the fighting will stop with reports from General Breedlove that there have been increased incidences along the line of control?

JENS STOLTENBERG: The Minsk Agreement is the best possible way towards a negotiated peaceful solution to the crisis in Crimea and I think it's very dangerous to start in a way to not try to implement the Minsk Agreements. We have seen an increased number of violations of the cease fire but the answer of that is not to give up to try to implement the Minsk Agreements but it is to reinforce our efforts to have full implementation of the agreement meaning that we have to see withdrawal of heavy weapons, we have to continue to push for that international observers have full access to the area so they are able to monitor the implementation of the Minsk Agreements and we have to continue to support the efforts of different nations trying to implement agreements but also to push for reforms in Ukraine and I can see no other way because in the long run, there has to be a negotiated political solution to the conflict in Crimea.

KIM DOZIER: And I was going to say, to play devil's advocate, it is something we often argue with our poor press attaché at the State Department, we hear this, we hear everyone saying but Russia agreed to this and therefore must do what it said it's going to do and you just keep saying the same thing over but we don't see action. Russia arguably has found success with saying it's going to go along with international agreements but then doing something else on the ground.

JENS STOLTENBERG: But we have seen actions. We have seen economic sanctions from the United States, from EU, from other countries and I think it's important that we continue with the economic sanctions and we have also seen this in actions because what NATO now does when it comes to increasing our collected defence is a direct response to the aggressive actions of Russian in Crimea. We have tripled the size of the NATO response force, we have established a high readiness joint task force and we have increased our military presence in the eastern part of the alliance as a direct response to what Russia did in Crimea, Eastern Ukraine. So there has been actions, economic actions and military actions but we have to then combine those actions with the political efforts to try to implement the Minsk Agreements and again, there's no contradiction between economic sanctions, military strengths and the strong wish to try to pursue a political path to implement the Minsk Agreements.

JEANNE SHAHEEN: Can I? I want to add to that. I agree with that but we've got to then continue to take action against Russia where we can to try and hold their feet to the fire. So, the talk about letting sanctions lapse at the end of this period I think is letting Russia off the hook for what they've done and so we need to do that. That's why the United States is talking about increasing the European Reassurance Initiative fourfold in this budget cycle because we are concerned about showing the kind of strength that you talk about and reassuring our allies like Estonia and some of our eastern partners that we are concerned about what's happening and Russia's influence along the eastern border of Europe and again, that's why I think we've got to look at where we can weigh in in a way that counters the Russian propaganda message and also that for Europe doesn't let people think that the only thing we have to do is to have Ukraine comply with Minsk 2, that they're the ones who are the problem. Well, they certainly have to reform and they have corruption issues, they've got a lot of issues they have to deal with, they've made some real progress on that but Russia needs to be held accountable too.

TOOMAS HENDRIK ILVES: I mean Russia has invaded a country.

JEANNE SHAHEEN: Absolutely.

KIM DOZIER: I was just going to ask. If hearing that, you have a front row seat, like it or not, to what is happening. You've got Russia just on the other side of your border. Some think tanks have estimated that your country and your neighbour Latvia could be overrun in 72 hours should Russia choose to follow the same acts it did with Crimea and Ukraine. I know, I'm depressing you.

TOOMAS HENDRIK ILVES: No, no, you're not. I mean, basically, that's true but people forget what Article 5 means that if you're going to go and invade us, then you're going to have to worry about more mammen (sic), you know. I mean it's not as if this is locally isolated. So I mean there's a lot of sort of…

KIM DOZIER: So is there enough pushback though?

TOOMAS HENDRIK ILVES: Well, I think there are 2 issues. One is that we have to recognize that we live in a new security environment where rules for the past 70 years do not necessarily apply anymore. You know, you've invaded a country and we cannot let that just go by. Some countries in the EU are perfectly willing for in pursuit of mammen (sic) are willing to do maybe but that's a real bad slippery slope and we all need to work against that.

KIM DOZIER: So with that, I'd love to invite a couple of questions from the audience before we move on to another topic. Sir, I saw your hand first. Can you wait until the microphone gets to you? This gentleman in the back row and identify yourself and your affiliation, oh and could you please stand up so I have some company?

DANIEL FREEDOM (DEPARTMENT OF STATE): I'm Daniel Freedom, sanctions coordinator with the Department of State. On the issue of the western response to Russia's aggression in Ukraine, European Union deserves credit for a sustained strategic response that went well beyond what many skeptics thought was possible and went well beyond I suspect what the Russians predicted Europe would do. On the basis of a combined western response, we have probably halted further Russian aggression in Ukraine, laid the basis for Minsk and now, the task it seems to us and the administration and thanks also for the support from the Congress because America is speaking with one voice on this. If the Ukrainians pull themselves together on their domestic reforms and we keep the pressure on Russia to fulfill Minsk, which it now is not doing at the moment, we have a chance of a genuinely good outcome which is an independent free Ukraine, which is not a bad place to be in any foreign policy dilemma. So NATO can do its thing which is the right thing to do and it's a big shift, Europe and the United States are doing their thing. As foreign policy problems go, the possibility of a decent outcome is sometimes as good as it ever gets, so this is not a bad place to be if we keep it up.

KIM DOZIER: So, and your question just in brief, really brief?

DANIEL FREEDOM: My question is to the Europeans here. Are you confident, particularly President Ilves, that Europe will maintain the sanctions and roll it over when it comes time at the end of July assuming Minsk has not been fulfilled because that's a critical element of our strategy?

KIM DOZIER: Thank you.

TOOMAS HENDRIK ILVES: It looks that way because there are no positive developments to grab on to.

KIM DOZIER: So can I ask one more question? From the front row on this side, the gentleman in the grey suit and again, please stand up and identify yourself if that's okay.

MIKE TURNER (CONGRESSMAN): Yes. Congressman Mike Turner, I'm a member of the Armed Services Committee and Mr. President, I'm a big fan of yours. I appreciate your clarity in which you discuss Russia's actions. I do have to disagree with you with respect to the United States' obligations with respect to the territorial integrity of Ukraine and as you know, we did not agree to maintain the territorial integrity of Ukraine. However, as the Secretary General did indicate, both the EU and the United States undertook sanctions to punish Russia in its actions to violate its agreement to similarly recognize the territorial integrity. As the moderator mentioned, there's been a recent RAND study that did not bode well. It did a military exercise of what would occur if there was a conflict over the Baltics and in that, the United States look to those vulnerabilities and as the senator has indicated, is putting forth the European Reassurance Initiative, $3.4 billion to try to address some of those deficiencies that were addressed in RAND but as the debate occurs in the senate and the house, of course the question becomes what will Europe do? So, Secretary General, how do you see

Europe responding if the United States comes forward with its European Reassurance Initiative for an American Reassurance Initiative to match or increase to help backfill some of the deficiencies identified in the RAND study?

JENS STOLTENBERG: Well, I expect that the European allies are going to do is that they're going to make good on what they decided at the summit in Wales and that was to increase defense spending enabling them to step up and as I've already said, they have started to do so, many of the European allies. So for instance, first of all, the European Reassurance Initiative launched actually in Tallin a couple of years ago, it's extremely important because it shows that the US is really committed to the security of Europe and I remember when I was first approached to become the Secretary General of NATO, many people told me that the US was now in the process of leaving Europe. That's not true. The US is actually increasing its presence in Europe and that's of great importance and therefore, I also strongly welcome the proposal to quadruple the amount of money spent on this European Reassurance Initiative but then, of course, the onus is on the Europeans. They have started to make some very important steps. They are in the lead of this new spearhead force. More and more European allies have started to increase defense spending and we decided at our defence ministerial meeting in February in NATO that we will increase our military presence in the eastern part of the alliance with multi-national forces meaning that, of course, we hope that there will be many US forces there but also other European nations have to contribute forces to a multi-national presence in the eastern part of the alliance and what we need is a combination of forward presence of forces. We have already started to deploy more forces, more exercises, more air policing, more presence of NATO forces in the eastern part of the alliance but also increase our ability to reinforce, if needed, and that's the reason why we for instance have tripled the size of the NATO response force. We need more of this and that's one of the main issues we're going to address at our summit in Warsaw in July but we have already started to move and we need to move further.

KIM DOZIER: So as one US official just put it to me EUCOM, it's about making all of those nations, especially along the border, porcupines rather than lambs when it comes to swallowing them whole but one of their complaints, as we turn to another subject, is that as they reach out to various different European NATO members to do some of these exercises, that many of the troops that they would like to do exercises with are engaged in the refugee and migrant flow or engaged in counter-terrorism operations against ISIS and other extremist violent movements. So I'd like to, we'll go back to questions again in a little bit but I'd like to open up with that question. The refugee and migrant issue, turning refugees away makes one question your very founding principles as a nation and as a body, where is your humanity? Aren't NATO and European Union nations supposed to stand up for the oppressed and yet, the critics say it could change our culture and bring down our economy. So, what is your current position on how it's being handled?

JENS STOLTENBERG: The important thing now is that we are seeing a renewed effort to try to find a comprehensive approach and agreement between the European Union and Turkey

and I think that's the most promising initiative I've seen over many months and hopefully, they will agree today and then, we will have a better, more organized response to the biggest and most challenging migrant and refugee crisis Europe has seen since the end of the Second World War. The most important thing we can do if, of course, address the root causes. So all the efforts to try to find a way to end the turmoil, the fighting, the killing in Syria is, of course, addressing the root causes of the migrant and refugee crisis and NATO, the coalition fighting ISIL, we are, in different ways, doing our part in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in North Africa and the Middle East. So, we are to continue those efforts but they may be long term efforts. So in the meantime, we have to address more short term immediate challenges here in Europe and there, NATO is playing its part in a way that we decided to assist and to help the European Union with coping with the migrant and refugee crisis in the Aegean Sea and we actually made the decision within 48 hours after the request was put forward on our table and we deployed the first ship 24 hours after the decision was made. So it was NATO at its best able to react quickly. Now, there are 7 NATO ships in the Aegean Sea and they are monitoring, collecting information and sharing that with the Turkish Coast Guard, the Greek Coast Guard and with the European Union Border Agency Frontex. NATO ships will not push back the boats with migrants or the refugees but what we will do is to help the local authorities, the European Union, to deal with it in a better way than it had been able to do so far and we are a kind of platform for increasing the cooperation between Greece and Turkey and the European Union and it's one important building block in a more comprehensive approach.

KIM DOZIER: And I was going to say and yet Amnesty and UNHCR are both saying that forcing refugees to go back to Turkey, which has a mixed human rights record…

TOOMAS HENDRIK ILVES: I mean, look, we are facing an existential issue in all of Europe right now. I mean even I think that some of our refugee agreements will be under threat. The number of refugees coming and it's not just Syria. I mean you got thousands of people who were coming across your border recently, very few of them from Syria or ones who had permanent residence permits in Moscow, who then came illegally across your border with their living permits torn out. We've seen several thousand come in to Finland across the Russian-Finnish border. We are in winter so we don't have these massive numbers of people coming across the Mediterranean because it's just not but last summer, the summer before, so we're seeing a massive movement of people, some of whom are legitimate refugees, some of whom are just saying this is our opportunity to go to rich Europe finally at last. This is putting social services in a number of countries under severe stress. International obligations will be thrown out if you end up with populists taking power, who will adopt an anti-immigration stance, who are exploiting…

KIM DOZIER: Are you discussing populists who might elected in the United States?

TOOMAS HENDRIK ILVES: No, I'm talking about populists in virtually every single European country today. I mean we have Front National, we have If Day (sp?), we have Wilders, we have UKIP, I mean they all adopt an anti-immigrant position, we have them in lesser known,

other parties in smaller countries, they're hostile, they tend to be anti-EU. I mean their views on minorities sometimes are very, very dubious. So, this is a much bigger threat than simply NATO stopping people between Turkey and Greece. It's a big threat.

KIM DOZIER: Point taken. Some good points there and so, Senator Shaheen, I want to put you on the spot. Not only are these all valid or at least important points that people in the region are voicing, feeling but we've had the US Director of National Intelligence and other US officials saying that this refugee flow is being weaponized, that it is meant possibly to cause instability across the European Union and that ISIS is also using it, the so-called Islamic State, to put cells here. Should more be done to keep people where they are?

JEANNE SHAHEEN: Well certainly General Breedlove has said that he thinks that Russia was using refugees as a weapon and the United States, if you're watching our presidential election, you know that immigration is an issue in the United States and that we have been struggling with that as well but we are the biggest supplier of humanitarian aid on the refugee crisis and we will continue to do that and I think we need to take more refugees in the United States. The president has said he wants to do that but ultimately, what we've got to do is deal with the root cause of the problem, as the Secretary General said and that is to resolve the civil war in Syria and to address the other challenges across the Middle East and North Africa that have people fleeing into Europe and trying to get someplace where they can either avoid conflict or have a better life and that's not a short term solution, that's going to be a long term challenge but we've also got to engage the Arab nations, the moderate Arab nations, in helping us solve this issue because we're not going to be able to do it ourselves if we don't have the Middle East also engaged with us.

KIM DOZIER: May I invite some questions from the audience about this subject? Sir, I see, not yet? Okay. This gentleman right here, who I actually stepped on at one point, I apologize. The microphone is coming your way.

YOUSEF AMANI: Thank you. I'm Yousef Amani from Morocco. I have a question for the Secretary General of NATO. Don't you think that today in view of the challenges in the south, NATO should reshape its instrument; NATO should have a new vision towards the southern Mediterranean and beyond? Don't you think, second question, that EU and NATO should coordinate for more coherence in their policies towards the south essentially because the neighbourhood policy today haven't reached the results and precisely insist on the beyond, beyond because the challenges facing, security challenges facing the region are not only in Europe, of course I understand the priority to look east but don't you think that NATO should now look a little bit south with new policies, new instruments, despite ongoing dialogue today.

KIM DOZIER: That is something we had talked about, the pull on NATO between looking east and looking south. So, what grade would you give yourself?

JENS STOLTENBERG: So we have to be able to do both because NATO does not have the luxury of choosing between either being concerned and focused on the challenges and the

threats emanating from the south or responding to the challenges emanating from the east. We have to do both at the same time. I don't think actually we need to reshape our vision when it comes to our cooperation with the countries in North Africa, the Mediterranean region but we have to do more to turn that vision into reality and I think that, of course, NATO has to be ready to manage crisis, to deploy forces, combat forces as we have done before in Afghanistan, in the Balkans, in Libya and so on but I think we should be much more focused on how can we prevent crisis and how can we stabilize countries and how can we project stability without always deploying large number of combat forces and this is about enabling countries in the region to defend themselves, to stabilize their own countries and to stabilize the region and in the long run, it's better that they are able to do it themselves instead of us deploying large number of forces and I just returned 2 days ago from Afghanistan, our biggest military operation ever with 140,000 combat troops at the most. Now we have 13,000 troops who are training and assisting the Afghans and we have built an Afghan army of 350,000 capable personnel and now, they're building an Afghan Air Force. So we should do much more of that in countries like Afghanistan but I think we also should, for instance, do more of what we start this month training of Iraqi officers and we should work with countries in the region which are stable like Jordan and Tunisia and we should support them now and not wait until they are under even more pressure than they already are. So defence capacity building, build local capacity, train, assist and otherwise, that is really a tool which should be used much more than it has been used so far.

KIM DOZIER: But of course the question with that is capacity for continuing that and the US paid a large part of that price tag for Afghanistan. So, how much can they carry on?

JENS STOLTENBERG: But it's extremely, much more expensive to fight a war than to prevent a war and that's a big paradox. When you're going to war, you spend a lot of money but when you ask for some money to try to prevent the war or to for instance, it's much cheaper to have 13,000 people, NATO troops, in Afghanistan training an army of 350,000 Afghans than to have 140,000 NATO troops and in the long run, it's better to have 340,000 or 50,000 Afghan defending their own country instead of us deploying 140,000 NATO troops. So of course we have to be able to do both, we have to be able to deploy forces also in the future but we should do much more to try to enable countries themselves to protect themselves and us helping them instead of fighting their wars.

KIM DOZIER: Mr. President.

TOOMAS HENDRIK ILVES: 2 brief things on NATO and the EU. I mean 21 years ago, we had an article Out of Area or Out of Business by Senator Lugar. That assumed the peace love dove Woodstock model that you didn't need anything at home so you had to go out of area. We've seen the results of that and here we are, we're back in area. On the other problem that has been, I mean I'll say this now but I mean I think what has been hugely disappointing on the EU side has been the reform response of the neighbourhood countries. We have put a lot of effort into that unlike what happened post-89, '91, the response from the

neighbourhood countries, more on the east, has actually been, well it's not been sufficient and one of the results is with new crisis coming in with a migration crisis and so forth is that these countries are falling off the radar screen and it's not only migration that's to blame, they must bear part of the responsibility for failure to do the kinds of things that Europe has asked them to do.

KIM DOZIER: I can see from some of the expressions in the audience there will be a couple of people wanting to chat with you about that afterwards. Ma'am, over there.

KERRY BUCK (CANADA'S AMBASSADOR TO NATO): Thank you. Kerry Buck, I'm Canada's Ambassador to NATO. I'd like to go back to the refugee migrant issue right now and draw a link to Margaret McMillan's opener and Dr. McMillan, I apologize if I give a précis of what you've said but if globalization prompts fears, people revert to their sect, their tribe, their race. A logical conclusion of governments is to put up walls. I'm wondering if terrorists might have more effective ways of getting people across borders than integrating their folks into migrant flows. I know they have more effective ways of getting people across borders. So, in managing the migrant crisis, is there a different way in the short term to manage the migrant crisis that doesn't put up walls around Europe, that doesn't do something that might actually stoke those protectionist fears?

KIM DOZIER: Great question. Just one point that I feel I have to make from UNHCR's perspective. They say a lot of these people, the majority of them, are refugees and the use of the word migrant, which I find myself using as well, I can see you nodding, is mislabelling them.

TOOMAS HENDRIK ILVES: I'll say that's nonsense. I mean, when you have, I mean I know in the case of one of our neighbouring countries, they were trying to take refugees, they ran away in the Frankfort Airport when they find out that you would be in the European distribution network, you'll be sent to Estonia. I know a third country up in our region where they said we'll take you and they said how far are you from Germany and these are people who are legitimate refugees. So I mean this is a far more complex problem than the kind of statements that some of these organizations are making and I don't think these organizations understand the risk that right now exists with Europe really changing its whole entire take up till now and not because of the danger of refugees but the fear of right-wing populist parties coming to power and I think this needs to be understood. The fear is not in liberal democratic societies that we can or cannot absorb this many people, the fear is that the nasty organization groups, parties that are in our countries are gaining massively in support. That is the driver, not the fear of the refugee and I think the discussion in this case is wrong. I mean the topic is not migration…

JEANNE SHAHEEN: Let's bring it back to the point that you were raising because I was in Europe in October at the beginning of the huge influx and I talked to a number of people who were fleeing into Europe and they divided themselves into 2 categories, those people who

were coming for a better life and those people who were fleeing conflict and the people who were fleeing conflict, the Syrians primarily, they wanted to go home. You know, they wanted to go back to a country where they can make a living and raise their families. I didn't hear that from the migrants who were here from Africa, even people from Afghanistan who in many cases were fleeing conflict, they wanted to come because they wanted a better life but for the people who want to go home, we need to help them get their country back.

KIM DOZIER: And Mr. President, I would say that your argument means that we should cater to the fear and hatred within our societies rather than showing them there is a way to incorporate, there is a way to honour our international agreements and protect these vulnerable populations but all of that would be to ride roughshod over the original question, which the Canadian Ambassador posed, is there a better way to handle this?

TOOMAS HENDRIK ILVES: Yes, there is. I mean it's been done before and this is I think one of the things that I miss here. I mean if you take the amount of money that UNRRA spent in 1945-47 on 25 million refugees in Germany, half of which were from outside Germany, the rest were displaced, how much they spent in all of Europe, you calculate the under-expenditures, put them into 2015 Euros, it's €50 billion, the money spent, €50 billion. We are spending €3 billion on the refugee issue right now. It was a massive refugee crisis post-World War II and was solved, it was dealt with. The amount of money that some of these countries, again convert it from 1945 US dollars because it was dollars to contemporary Euros was huge. I mean Italy got €5 billion itself, Poland got €5 billion, even little Austria got €1.5 billion in contemporary money to solve the problem and it was paid by outsiders. Right now, Europe is rich, it has money but it is not committing the resources to the problem that it should. We put €283 billion to Greece to solve its insolvency, we put €3 billion on the entire refugee crisis. That requires commitment but it also requires leadership on the part of European leaders, I mean to say we're going to really deal with this rather than a blame game and they're at fault and they're at fault but on the other hand, I say again the fear in European capitals is not the refugees but the effects of refugees.

KIM DOZIER: So I would like to pivot to one of the last major topics that we wanted to touch on which was the threat of the Islamic State physically to the people of Europe and beyond but also the threat of the reaction to it changing culture and turning people into it's all about us and we've got to keep the outsiders out, feeding into the kind of movements that the president has been talking about. So, how would you best combat ISIS within Europe and keep them out? What's the best way to inoculate Europe from them and their influence?

JEANNE SHAHEEN: Well, as an outsider, it's easy for me to say, right but I think the best way we provide for security in Europe and the transatlantic partnership is by being strong and that means including some of the things the Secretary General talked about but it also means being unified, having an approach and a strategy for how to respond that people have bought into so that right now, as I'm looking as a member of congress at the challenges Europe is facing, there are a lot of them. You know, in addition to the refugee migrant crisis and the

fiscal challenges that you faced with Greece and some the other countries, the Russian threat on the eastern border and Ukraine and then, ISIS and the violent extremism that they are spreading. What we hear in the United States and I'm sure you'd probably say the same thing about us, but that there's not a unified response, that there are divisions within Europe that I find a concern because I think we are best, we are most secure when we are unified, when we have a joint approach that allows us to move forward on all these fronts and so, I think that's one of the things that we need to think about and of course, I forgot Brexit, while I'm talking about the threats to the EU and Europe. So thinking about how we can better cooperate on all of these fronts is something that I think is our best protection.

KIM DOZIER: So speaking of cooperating on fronts against ISIS, now there's already a coalition combatting ISIS within Syria and Iraq but they're growing 5,000-7,000 estimated within Libya. Do we need a NATO response there?

JENS STOLTENBERG: We need to do many different things at the same time and I think that the important thing is that we are working better together both as NATO but also with the European Union and with governments in the region. When it comes to Libya, NATO stands ready to help Libya build a defence institution to stabilize their country if there is such a request to do so from a united and legal government in Libya. So we are not planning for any big military operations or combat operations in Libya but we are ready to help a government in Libya if it's possible to establish such a government based on the efforts of negotiations which are going on now and we have seen some progress and hopefully, we will have a government in Libya which is the first step towards creating a more stable Libya where we can then work with that government in fighting ISIL.

KIM DOZIER: So as with Afghanistan, you'd rather have 10,000 NATO troops on the ground training rather than a larger number fighting.

JENS STOLTENBERG: Again it's very hard to predict exactly what will be needed in the future in different countries in the Middle East, North Africa…

KIM DOZIER: But feel free to make predictions here. We don't mind.

JENS STOLTENBERG: …meaning we have to be ready to deploy large number of forces in the future if that's the only possibility, if that's what's needed but my main message is that when it comes to fighting, for instance, ISIL then it's much better if you are able to build forces in the region and I met with the King of Jordan recently and his main message is that we should never make this into a fight between the west and the Muslim world. We should actually support the Muslims, which are the frontline fighting ISIL and they are more efficient in the long run than we will be but then, it may differ from country to country. Sometimes, it's perhaps just about training. Other times, it's a combination of NATO being present with, for instance air forces or coalition forces and they are delivering the ground forces. That may vary but the important thing is that we have to do much more when it comes to enabling them fight ISIL.

KIM DOZIER: So in the interest of making headlines for the forum, you wouldn't describe to us what you would send to Libya in your ideal world?

JENS STOLTENBERG: Because I have stopped being in the business of making headlines as Secretary General. It's a very strange thing

JEANNE SHAHEEN: But we haven't been all that successful at nation building when we've tried to take on the whole job and so we do need to think about governance issues, how to work with countries and provide them the support that they need to build their countries.

KIM DOZIER: So with the couple of minutes that we have left, I think we've got about 10 minutes left, I'd like to ask a couple more questions. Josh back there. Again, please stand and identify yourself and ask a question.

JOSH ROGIN (BLOOMBERG VIEW): Good afternoon, I'm Josh Rogin with Bloomberg View in Washington. Thank you for your time today. I'd like to turn back to something you said, Mr. President. You said there were thousands of Muslim migrants coming from Russia over the Finnish border. That strikes me as a particularly inelegant path for Syrian refugees. I'm wondering if it's your analysis that Vladimir Putin is intentionally deporting, moving thousands of Muslim migrants into Europe as part of a plan to strategically destabilize Europe. I've heard US defence officials say privately they believe this represents a new threat called the weaponization of migration. Do you agree with that and for the senator and the secretary general, do you also recognize this and is there a plan to respond to that if it's so and lastly Mr. President, we hear that there's a deal between EU countries and Turkey to give them back tons of refugees in exchange for certain perks and privileges and undisclosed monies. Can you give us all the details of that, please? Thank you.

TOOMAS HENDRIK ILVES: On the last, I can't give any details because they are currently meeting; at least they were when I came on stage. So I don't know where that is. Well, it's not only Finland. I mean, it was actually a far greater number of people coming across on bicycle across the Russian-Norwegian border because anyway, they would come and then, they would have their passport or their visas or permit of residence permits ripped out of their passports so they couldn't be sent back. Now, do you want to call weaponization, instrumentalization, I mean I think it's a more appropriate term but in any case, there's something very fishy going on, yes and the number of, I don't know the total number, I think there were 7,000 in Finland, I don't know how many were in Norway but in any case, that's very funny. It is not exactly you're looking for a new home turf in a country similar to where you're from and of course, they were not all Syrians though some of them have been long term residents of Syria, which gives you an idea of who they supported or who they were with given the political scene because they probably wouldn't be opponents of Assad and hanging out in Moscow and of course, all of the other countries they came from. So in any case, I'm not an expert on the topic, I just know those details. I think it's certainly a topic for Bloomberg View to investigate further.

KIM DOZIER: Mindful that the Secretary General has to get back to some of these meetings. Do you all have something to add on that particular question?

JENS STOLTENBERG: First of all, I think we have seen that terrorists are able to come into European countries in many different ways and that the migrant and refugee crisis we now see in Europe is first and foremost a humanitarian tragedy and that's the main message and of course, I actually used the phrase migrant and refugee crisis because some of them are migrants and some of them are refugees and very often, it's very hard to distinguish because seeking a better life, I think that's a very normal thing to do and to flee a conflict or to try to get some kind of protection if you live in a country with fighting, of course that's a very, very normal thing to do and that's also the reason why when NATO decided to help the European Union with coping with the migrant crisis, we stated clearly that this should be in accordance with international law meaning that you cannot just send back people. There are procedures, there are regulations deciding how we can do that and of course, I'm not able to speak on behalf of the European Union and Turkey but as we all know, they are discussing not to close the borders but to have a safer and more regulated way of getting migrants or refugees into Europe. So they will send back people from the Greek Islands but then, they will take from the refugee camps people who need protection. It's not easy but I think we have to just admit or to realize that this is a big, big humanitarian tragedy where we all have to respond according to international law.

JEANNE SHAHEEN: And listen, I think I quoted General Breedlove earlier with talking about Russia using refugees as a weapon and whether that's deliberate or inadvertent, Russia still achieves the same outcome and I think Russia is going to look at agitating wherever they can to create disaffection in Europe along its eastern borders and countries, whether it's through some of the nationalist parties that are coming up or whatever it is but that's all the more important reason for Europe to be unified and for us to have a strong transatlantic partnership between the United States and Europe because in addition to our military strength, that is the best deterrent we can provide because we show people who might be looking at Russia that there is an alternative that provides a better life to people.

TOOMAS HENDRIK ILVES: I think, just on Russia's role here, I think really what people ought to study more outside of Germany is the completely fake story of these 13-year-old supposedly raped by refugees in Berlin. Lavrov going on stage saying why is Germany covering up? It was a completely fake story. I mean talk about, let me say this again, I don't want to say weaponizing but that is instrumentalizing a tragedy in Europe and it was a fake story and I mean, that sums up the whole situation right now.

KIM DOZIER: Well, it is now my role to sum up our panel as I've just been given the warning with apologies to the other questioners in the audience. I think we've heard today a lot of the problems that you all are dealing with and some of the fears driving some of the more negative suggestions to solve things but you have to look at the reasons behind them or

some of the solutions you've suggested won't work. With that, on a more hopeful note, there are some solutions out there. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

KIM DOZIER: A word of warning and a word of hope. The warning is this will be a fast paced and interesting dialogue because otherwise, I will hopefully politely and with humour interrupt you, whether you are a world leader on the stage or in the audience and the word of hope. You know, sometimes these meetings end up with just doom and gloom. Yes, we're facing dire times but that's when you're tested, whether you are an individual, a family or a family of nations. So as we puzzle through some of these difficult issues, let's think about resilience and ways to make things work while things seem to be falling apart. With that, I'm going to open with 2 questions for the audience. Word cloud first. What is the one word that comes to mind when you think of the transatlantic relationship? So if you are interacting with the app, you can answer and I'll pause for a moment. I already know from our panelists what at least one of them wants to see out there. 2. This is true. Distant, consensus, values. Okay, well, what at least 2 of our panelists had hoped to see was the word NATO. Okay, so the second question that I wanted to ask the audience is it's a Q&A, a multiple choice and it's also in the app. What is the leading threat facing the transatlantic relationship? Russia, ISIS, refugees and migrants or the economy? I realize this may be the first time some of you are looking at this section of the app, so that's okay. I can just take over and decide which one I'm going to lead with. 7 more seconds for an answer, 5, 4, 3, 2, time is up. Ah, the economy, not the one any of us expected. So, let's open with that. Is there anything that the security relationship can do to repair the direction the economy is going right now? Who wants to take a stab at that? Secretary General.

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