North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

NATO 2020 - shared leadership for a shared future

Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the Brussels Forum (with Q&A session)
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Mr. Martens,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much indeed for that kind introduction. And many thanks as well to the German Marshall Fund for its continuing, strong commitment to bringing Europe and North America closer together, including here at the Brussels Forum.

Mr Martens, you mentioned my love of cycling. And as you also mentioned, the key to success on a bike is to keep it in a regular, forward movement, be it uphill or downhill, and the same goes for our transatlantic alliance. And another key to success on a bike is balance. And it is a word I shall return to during my remarks this afternoon. Because the right balance is also the key to the continued success of our NATO Alliance.

The right balance is also what many of our nations are trying to find at the moment in their national budgets. The financial crisis is an immediate challenge that requires urgent attention. And our defence budgets are not immune to this crisis. Actually, between 2008 and 2011, twenty NATO nations reduced their defence spending.

This goes against the trend we can see in much of the rest of the world. This year, for the first time, Asian defence spending will outstrip that of NATO’s European Allies. And Russia is planning to double its defence spending over the next decade.

These declining European defence budgets are a concern. Because every cut today will have consequences for our security tomorrow. And for what we are able to do as an Alliance.

This is no small matter. Because our Alliance is more than a collection of nations. Our Alliance is a unique community of shared values and interests. And it has played a major role in guaranteeing peace in the Euro-Atlantic area for over sixty years.

Yes, the economic crisis now dominates the headlines. Yes, new powers are emerging. But the truth is that the world still needs our Atlantic Community. Because as our mission for Libya showed, our Alliance remains an essential source of stability in an unpredictable world. NATO is the indispensable Alliance. And Europe and North America have shown that when they act together, they can be a tremendous force for good in a turbulent world.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is a special community that we must all continue to invest in – militarily, economically, and politically. So while Europe must to a certain extent look inwards to deal with today's economic crisis, Europe must also continue to look outwards. Europe needs to look beyond today's crisis so it can stay ahead of the security challenges that tomorrow will bring. And Europe needs to strengthen its global responsibilities alongside the United States.

Because when times are tough, we need each other more than ever. We all have a stake in keeping each other strong. And, in good times and bad, we have no viable alternative to a strong Atlantic security partnership.

This is why in my remarks this afternoon, I want to lay out my vision for NATO in the year 20-20 and beyond. And show how we can realise that vision by focusing on our shared purpose, shared responsibility, and shared leadership.

So first -- our shared purpose. What is it that binds us together as Allies?

It is the belief that NATO is the primary instrument for safeguarding our security and our values. That was its purpose when it was created. It remains its purpose today. And it will remain its purpose in 2020 and beyond.

Fulfilling this shared purpose is WHAT we do. How we do it, however, changes to reflect the changing security landscape.

At our last NATO Summit in Lisbon in 2010, we agreed a new Strategic Concept – a Strategic Concept which sets out HOW we should do this during this decade and beyond. The Strategic Concept identifies three core tasks of Collective Defence, Crisis Management, and Cooperative Security.

Collective Defence means NATO Allies will always assist each other against attack.

Crisis Management means NATO helping to manage the full range of crises – before, during, and after they occur - where that contributes to Euro-Atlantic security.

And Cooperative Security means that the Alliance will engage actively to enhance international security. Through partnership with other nations and international organisations.

It is by carrying out these three tasks effectively that we will be able to continue safeguarding our security and values. And fulfilling our shared purpose.

So second – what exactly do we have to do to carry out those core tasks and meet our shared purpose? In other words, what is our shared responsibility?

In 2020, NATO must remain ready to respond to the full range of security tasks. We will still need to be able to put together complex joint operations at short notice. With high impact.

And high precision. This means we will need flexible, rapidly deployable forces. And the right mix of military capabilities.

Libya was a strong reminder of what those capabilities are. They include air-to-air refuelling. And the ability to gather information through surveillance and reconnaissance, so we can make accurate intelligence assessments and select and engage the right targets with precision-guided munitions.

For the foreseeable future, defence money is likely to remain tight across the Alliance. And acquiring those capabilities will be a major challenge. But all Allies have a shared responsibility to provide them. And I firmly believe we will only be able to meet that responsibility with a new mindset - “Smart Defence”.

We call it “Smart Defence” because it is about spending defence money in a smarter way. The smarter way is to prioritise. To specialise. To cooperate. To focus not just on what we cut, but on what we keep. And to choose multinational solutions instead of unilateral solutions.

We are already seeing the benefits of this approach. We are developing an Alliance Ground Surveillance system, to give our commanders a full picture of what is happening on the ground in our operations. And we are bringing together national contributions to build an integrated NATO-wide missile defence system to defend against the threats of ballistic missile proliferation.

But we must also share the responsibility for making our capabilities, and forces, work together effectively. This will be particularly important as we anticipate the drawdown of our commitments in Afghanistan, where American and European forces, as well as those of many partner nations, where they have developed an outstanding ability to operate alongside each other. We need to keep those gains. And we will – with the Connected Forces Initiative I launched earlier this year.

Now, my third point is a crucial requirement for meeting our shared purpose and our shared responsibilities – and that is shared leadership.

Europe and North America face a broad and complex security agenda. Making this continent whole and free remains work in progress. The Arab world is going through a period of major change. And further afield, especially in Asia, new security actors are making their mark.

Ladies and gentlemen, to address this agenda successfully, we need a rebalanced transatlantic relationship. European Allies must be ready and able to assume a greater leadership role. And I am confident that they can.

Over the past 20 years, more European forces have deployed in more places than ever before. In Afghanistan, the United States has taken the lead from the start of our engagement. But all our European Allies are present there too, and making a significant contribution. In Kosovo, Germany has played a leading role in our operation for some

considerable time, and very effectively . And last year, in Libya, other European nations – together with Canada -- showed that they can take the lead in NATO operations.

This shows how different Allies can lead different operations. It shows NATO's enormous operational flexibility when there is political solidarity among the Allies. And that is why I am confident that European nations can share the leadership role within the Atlantic community.

One area where I hope Europe and North America can demonstrate this shared leadership is in continuing to engage other nations and organisations in building peace and stability.

The Alliance has more than 40 partners in all regions of the globe: in Europe, North Africa, The Middle East and the Gulf, Latin America, Central Asia and the Pacific.

This vast network of security partnerships is truly unique. It is vital for dealing with regional conflicts and with global security challenges such as terrorism, proliferation and piracy. And by working together with our partners, we enhance our own security. We enhance the security of their regions. And we enhance the security of the world we live in.

Cooperation with our neighbour, Russia is particularly important. We face common concerns, and they are best addressed through common approaches. I recently spoke with President-elect Putin. I told him that I look forward to continued engagement and constructive dialogue with Russia. And I was encouraged to hear him underline his commitment to good, stable relations with NATO.

Recently, President Obama announced a new focus in the US defence posture towards the Asia-Pacific region. Some are concerned this will take place at the expense of Europe and the transatlantic relationship. But I see it differently.

It is not just the economy that has globalised. Security has globalised too. And it is in Europe's interest that the United States, with whom we share our most fundamental values, contributes to upholding global peace and stability by engaging in the Asia-Pacific region.

The new American defence posture seeks to address this. But these profound, strategic challenges are just as relevant to Europe as they are to the United States. This is why Europe must also play its full part to rebalance the transatlantic Alliance. By investing sufficiently in our common security – militarily as well as financially and politically. By remaining engaged in making this continent whole, free and democratic. And by keeping an outward looking and global perspective on security.

As our global economy becomes ever more integrated, local, regional and global security and stability become ever more interrelated. We all depend on a free and diversified energy supply. Free and secure sea lanes and air space. And free and secure information and communication networks.

This is why the global rule of law, and global governance, within the principles of the United Nations' Charter, remain central to stability of our world. Why the ability to participate in, and contribute to, international crisis management is essential to our security. Why we must keep a global perspective in Europe, as in North America. And why we must invest sufficiently in the transatlantic relationship to maintain our common security in this global order.

Obviously, an American military presence in Europe is crucial for security cooperation across the Atlantic. But America's commitment to its European allies should not be measured merely by the number of troops or bases here. It should be measured by how much we do together. By where we do it. And by how effectively we do it.

I have laid out for you my vision for NATO for the year 2020 and beyond. A vision in which the transatlantic partnership is rebalanced. And in which European and North American Allies' shared purpose is met through shared responsibility, and shared leadership.

In less than two months' time we will hold our next NATO Summit in Chicago. It will be a unique opportunity for European nations – right at the heart of America -- to join their North American Allies shaping their shared future in their shared Alliance.

An Alliance whose members are committed to working together seamlessly, effectively, and efficiently. An Alliance that is capable of meeting the full range of evolving security challenges. And an Alliance that is even more connected with countries and organisations around the world.

NATO already has an impressive history of success. At Chicago we will ensure that success continues into the future - to the end of this decade, and beyond.

Thank you.

Q&A session

CRAIG KENNEDY (President, The German Marshall Fund of the United States): We're now going to move into a conversation. The Secretary General has very kindly... yes, just grab a seat up there. Has very kindly agreed to take some questions, and we'll go for probably 25 minutes or so. And we have asked Nik Gowing, who has long been involved with the Brussels Forum, to lead the questioning, as soon as we get him completely miked up.

Okay, Nik, it's all yours.

NIK GOWING (Anchor, BBC World): Thank you very much, Craig, and nice to see everyone here again.

I'm tempted, Secretary General, just before I open it up to questions, because this is not about an interview, it's about you putting your questions as well, Mr. Martens introduced the metaphor of the bicycle and talked about going uphill and going downhill. You picked it up.

Of course, in November you fell off your bicycle and had a bad accident. And I put that to you not in a facetious way, but simply because out there in the public space is another vision of NATO, which is, and I can quote many, many analyses at the moment, real questions about NATO's future, including from your predecessor, but two, worried about whether NATO can survive in its current formation, particularly with all these pressures. So I have to put it to you, particularly with the 20 reductions in budgets, and also the real limitations which were seen in Libya, even down to planning staffs not being adequate and American planners having to be flown across to bolster the European capability.

But really the fundamental challenges of NATO are really deeper than you've addressed in those more formal remarks.

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN (NATO Secretary General): Actually, you see that I have survived, and very much so, but I can assure you that it takes a lot of training to recover. Which leads me to the political conclusion that NATO demonstrated in the Libya operation: its strength demonstrated the principle of solidarity in practice.

Yes, you're right, that very successful operation couldn't have been carried out that successfully without a significant input of critical military capabilities from our American Ally.

NIK GOWING: So (SPEAKERS OVERLAP) electronic warfare, refuelling, planners.

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Absolutely. But that's not breaking news. I mean, since NATO was established in 1949 we knew that the reason why we need the Alliance is that the Americans are capable of helping the Europeans when it comes to security. But the positive story from the Libya operation is that for the first time in the history of our Alliance European Allies and Canada provided the majority of assets for an operation. So that's actually a very, very positive example of how our Alliance has transformed and adapted to the new security challenges.

NIK GOWING: Let me encourage... I can't see everybody out there. It's quite dark. So if there's any chance of any more light and certainly for the Secretary General, can we get the microphones to people who'd like to come in on any questions. But before the microphone gets to you let me just press you. Here I've got, for example, a document, a series of pieces from the Centre for European Reform. Does NATO Have a Future? They threaten to push NATO into irrelevance in the future. And George Robertson, your predecessor, but two, the Alliance's credibility may be better served by discussing frankly its current financial and military difficulties and adjusting NATO's ambitions accordingly.

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Actually, it's very interesting for me, this doom and gloom debate, taking into account that a number of countries are queuing up to become members, active members of our Alliance. I think it's a demonstration of the success of our Alliance that a number of countries would very much like to become members of our Alliance.

I have experienced, as Secretary General of NATO, that never in the history of NATO has NATO been so busy, operating in Afghanistan, in Kosovo, in Libya last year, conducting a counter-terrorism operation in the Mediterranean, a counter-piracy operation along the coast of Somalia. We are as busy as ever.

NIK GOWING: The problem is, there are a lot of skeptics out there, Secretary General, saying that systematically and in structures it's still under enormous pressure and it's going to get worse. And I think I'm probably reflecting a lot of the thinking of many of the experts here in the audience.

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: You will experience, if you do bike, that it makes you even stronger, that you are under pressure, that you have to go uphill. But the fact is that... and the fact is that NATO is as strong as ever, as active as ever, has modernized, has adapted, has transformed, is really a vivid Alliance.

NIK GOWING: Right. Let's get as many questions as possible. Keep them brief. Who's got the microphone first?

Congressman Turner have you got... where are you? Over here. Thank you. You've got the microphone.

MICHAEL TURNER (Member, U.S. House of Representatives): Thank you. Turn this on, or does it come on automatically? Great.

NIK GOWING: Let's keep our remarks quite short, because a large number of people would like to intervene.

MICHAEL TURNER: Thank you. Secretary General, I really appreciate the fact that you talked about countries that want to join NATO, as one of the evidences of NATO's vitality and its importance. One of the issues that we know is that NATO has been the path for emergent democracies to both move toward Europe and toward a relationship with the United States and it's been an important tool, to use your biking analogy, there are many nations out there who continue to peddle real fast, trying to get into NATO. And the concern that many have is that the upcoming Chicago Summit has been identified as not as an expansion, enlargement Summit, but yet there are many countries that are in the path of still seeking to join NATO.

Senator Luger and I have introduced companion bills in the Senate and the House calling on NATO to make very strong affirmative statements in the Chicago Summit, recognizing both the accomplishments and the path that aspiring nations are on that are in the process of joining NATO.

Now many say that joining NATO is a political process, but it ought not be an arbitrary process. What do you foresee coming out of the Chicago Summit that these countries can look to, especially countries like Georgia and Macedonia, who are making great strides?

NIK GOWING: Thank you.

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Without anticipating final decisions on how we will organize the Chicago Summit I feel safe to assure you that you will see encouraging language in the communique and the declarations from the Summit, encouraging language that will reaffirm that NATO's door remains open.

Overall, the whole Summit will be a clear demonstration of connectivity and cooperative security, a strong demonstration of our partnerships with countries across the globe, including countries that aspire to become members of NATO.

So I don't think you will be disappointed when you see the outcome of the Summit. I have to say it will not be an enlargement Summit, but you will see events and language that clearly reaffirm that our door remains open.

HARLAN ULLMAN (Chairman, The Killowen Group): Can you hear me? I like your hand signals, Nik.

NIK GOWING: Identify yourself.

HARLAN ULLMAN: Of course. I'm Harlan Ullman. Secretary General, it's good to see you again. I'd like to follow up on the May Summit in Chicago, if I may?

Winston Churchill remarked that he disliked puddings because they lacked a theme. I wonder what themes or theme you think is going to run through Chicago and what are your expectations of what you hope the Summit achieves and what it does not achieve?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Actually, I think the overall theme will be a strengthened transatlantic relationship. Under that headline we will have specifics, we will adopt a defence package, a package of concrete initiatives that will strengthen our military capability in the future, strengthen the glue that binds our Alliance together, including through more multinational cooperation in the acquisition of necessary military capabilities. That will be one basket of initiatives.

Secondly, we will discuss partnerships in the wake of the Arab Spring. I think we should take the opportunity to enhance our partnerships with countries in the region. There may also be other partnership initiatives.

And finally, we will discuss Afghanistan. We will reaffirm our commitment to the Lisbon road map as to how we will gradually transfer lead responsibility for the security to the Afghans, and we will reaffirm that we stay committed to our mission in Afghanistan based on the principle ‘in together, out together’.

So the overall message will be a strengthened transatlantic relationship.

HARLAN ULLMAN: Thank you.

ANDREW MICHTA (German Marshall Fund): Hello. Andrew Michta, GMF. Mr. Secretary General, a very brief question. In every crisis that NATO and the Allies in Europe have been in together afterwards we said we need more capabilities, we need more useable capabilities. How do we create the sense of urgency so that a credible argument can be made for the American side of the equation, that the Europeans understand the need to spend more on defence and to become more proactive, so that we do not have at every turn, beginning with the Balkans, and ending in Libya, the argument you, sir, articulated here as well, that an American role in this was absolutely critical to the mission? How do we get the politicians to muster the political will to speak directly to their public?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: In Europe?

ANDREW MICHTA: In Europe, yes.

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Well, again, I would point to the Libya operation as an excellent example. Despite the economic crisis, despite declining defence budgets in almost all European Allied countries, the Europeans stepped up to the plate.

NIK GOWING: Are they committing themselves to that? Definitely? With clarity? Are they committing themselves to that?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: So such engagement as we saw in the Libya operation?

NIK GOWING: Well, and also to replace the assets, to find... to have the assets which the Americans don't want to provide in future?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: I will revert to that. But again, use the Libya operation as an excellent example. Let me... you speak... how will politicians address their publics? Let me use my own country, Denmark, as an example.

Denmark decided to participate at the very sharp end of that operation right from the outset, without any caveats, delivering F-16s from the first day. Even before NATO took on responsibility for the operation. That decision was based on a very, very, very broad political majority, including political parties that in the past have been very skeptical about any military intervention. Not just being about NATO.

But this time they addressed their constituencies in a very proactive manner. They really engaged. They realized that the United Nations Security Council had taken an historic decision, based on the principle of responsibility to protect the civilian population in Libya. They used that to make the case convincingly and they succeeded, and the same goes for other countries as well.

Let me use another example. The day before the Swedish Parliament took the decision to join our Libya operation I met with the Foreign Policy Committee of the Swedish Parliament,

and as you know, Sweden is not a NATO Ally, but a valued partner, and in the Swedish Parliament you will also meet some skepticism about NATO.

The argument I met, why a broad majority in the Swedish Parliament decided to join the operation was that NATO took on the responsibility for that operation; that it took place within a NATO framework, a tested and tried framework, with all the institutions necessary to also exercise political control.

So I use these examples to demonstrate that it is possible for the politicians to make the case, convincingly, and get public support for such a decision. Now...

NIK GOWING: But Secretary General, the issue of procurement and assets?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Now, to your question about assets. Again, a concrete example. Yesterday I met with the European Union. The European Union has initiated an air-to-air refuelling project which will address one of the shortfalls we identified during our Libya operation.

Overall we do have an air-to-air... a sufficient air-to-air refuelling capacity within NATO, but primarily delivered by the Americans. But the Europeans lack that capacity. This is the reason why the European Union has now decided, through the European Defence Agency, to focus on developing that capacity and probably, and I will encourage them to do so, that will be a significant European input to our defence packets in Chicago.

So I take that as a concrete European commitment to delivering critical capabilities in the future.

NIK GOWING: A concrete commitment, even with 20 member nations having to reduce their defence budgets. Can it be done?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: It can be done through more multinational cooperation. It can't be done if we continue business as usual. If we go for purely national solutions many countries will not be able to afford to acquire these capabilities, but if we pool and share resources, if we help each other across borders, and go for multinational solutions, it's possible.

NIK GOWING: And we won't run out of weapons and ordinance, as we did during Libya? Many of the nations who were actively involved had to go looking for extra weaponry because they'd run out.

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Yes, but actually that's very much about being an Alliance, that we help each other.

NIK GOWING: Okay. Right.

ANTON LA GUARDIA (European Union Correspondent, The Economist): Anton La Guardia of The Economist. I want to pick up in a sense following from Nik's point about procurement and your question of Smart Defence. I mean, in a sense it's a new word for an old idea which is pooling and sharing. This has been knocking about NATO corridors for a long time. It never quite seems to happen. Why is it going to happen now?

Secondly, if you really want to make this happen, does NATO need to take on a role similar, for example, to the European Commission, which is to say, okay, Allies, this is what you have to cut, this is what you cut, this is what you share, to have some kind of rational organization within NATO?

Take the case of Denmark, it's about to go through a... is it a 10 or 15 percent cut in defence spending in the coming years? It gave up submarine warfare. You were critical of that, actually, although perhaps today that might be seen as a smart rationalization of one's national resources.

NIK GOWING: Can I just build on that. In one commentary here, the efficiencies that Smart Defence stands to generate will be too small to compensate for the cuts in national defence budgets made by European governments since the economic crisis began.

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Yes, let me first correct a misunderstanding. I was not against scrapping the submarines. Actually, it was my government who took that decision, so I was very supportive.

And it leads me to a very important point, speaking about Smart Defence, because you asked me why is it that we will succeed in more multinational cooperation now? Well, I have no illusions. It is first and foremost because of declining defence budgets and the economic austerity. But let me point to a very important aspect of this: this goes well beyond economic austerity and declining defence budgets, because the long-term trend is that the price, that the cost of advanced military equipment rises more rapidly than inflation and GDP.

So investments in the military will occupy an increasing part of our budgets if we don't find new ways to do business. So it's not just because of the economic crisis, it's a long-term challenge.

But the economic crisis is the driving force right now, but that's just a demonstration of the fact that you should never miss a good crisis to promote reforms that are necessary anyway. And it is actually my firm belief that we need more and strengthened multinational cooperation.

We will never reach the point as a European Union that we have a commission to take initiatives and being the driving force, because when it comes to defence and security nations will protect their national sovereignty, but actually we do have within NATO what we call a defence planning process that very much addresses what you asked for, that we try to

coordinate how individual Allies organize their military so that overall we provide the right mix of military capabilities.

But I have to say, and that's the reality in today's world, it is more or less a voluntary process. Nations have not handed over sovereignty to NATO, as they have done to the European Commission, and realistically I don't think they will.

NIK GOWING: Secretary General, we have about seven minutes to run, so I want to get many more questions in, if possible. Steven Erlanger at the back, you've got it, and I'm going to bring the microphone forward here, and over here, so go ahead, Steven. Can you keep it brief and then we'll pass the microphone forward.

STEVEN ERLANGER (Paris Bureau Chief, The New York Times): I will. Mr. Secretary General, from the New York Times. Just very quickly, Colin Powell used to say if you break it you own it. NATO's pretty good at breaking it. It broke it slowly but it did manage to break it in Libya, but we seem to have left the shards in the desert. Does NATO not have any responsibility for helping Libya to construct a real government that's coherent? Isn't this part of the responsibility to protect? Thank you.

NIK GOWING: Do you want to answer that now, quickly, and move the microphone forward to Michael Ignatieff, please.

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Yes, we had the responsibility to fulfil the UN mandate to protect the civilian population and we did so and we did so successfully. When it comes to the post-conflict phase I think it's primarily a responsibility for the United Nations, helped by international organizations, to assist the new authorities in Libya.

We have stated that if requested from the Libyan authorities we stand ready to help where we have some added value and some expertise within reforming their security and defence sector. So in that respect we are ready, if requested.

XENIA DORMANDY (Senior Fellow, Chatham House): Xenia Dormandy Chatham House. Thank you for being here. I'd like to move you into a longer time horizon, in fact, where you started with your remarks. The Libya operation had a NATO umbrella, but as you rightly said, there were members involved in that operation that weren't part of NATO. Afghanistan, again, it's a NATO, in some respects, operation, but has lots of members that aren't part of NATO.

It seems to me that we're moving towards a structure that maybe has a NATO umbrella, but is more of an ad hoc coalition of members acting. Is that the direction that NATO might go in a concrete way, or is NATO going to continue to conduct such operations in an implicit way, and what are the implications of that in terms of, for example, former Defense Secretary Gates' comments about everybody has to step up and everybody has to do the same thing, because there's clearly a conflict there.

NIK GOWING: Is that desirable, or a matter of fact now?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: It's desirable to conduct such security operations in partnership with countries across the globe. It's desirable. It's also necessary.

And let me stress, our Afghanistan operation is not a coalition of the willing. The core is NATO Command and Control, and that's actually why so many partners have joined our operation, that they know that NATO is capable to provide a clear Command and Control system in which they have confidence. In our Council we can exercise political control and the management, and they appreciate that.

So that's why such an operation is not similar to a coalition of the willing. A coalition of the willing doesn't have these fixed structures. So NATO is the core of such operations, but you will see such operations conducted in the future, in partnership with counties across the globe. I really do believe that will be the model for future operations, as we saw it in Libya, as we see it right now in Kosovo.

NIK GOWING: Secretary General, I'm determined to get a voice from Canada, and from Russia.

MICHAEL IGNATIEFF (Senior Resident, University of Toronto): Secretary General, Michael Ignatieff from the University of Toronto. It follows on Steven Erlanger's question. You're proud of the Libyan operation as a military success, how then do you explain the extent, depth and ferocity of the buyer's remorse on the Security Council? Because it's making it very difficult to get collective action on Syria.

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Yes, actually, that's also an interesting paradox, that after the successful Libya operation we are now in the situation that I can't meet media without getting the question, when will NATO intervene in Syria.

NIK GOWING: This has come from a politician and now an academic again. Not from the media.

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: No no, but it's okay. But I just point to the fact that it's a testament to the success of our Alliance that people are now wondering why we don't stand ready to intervene in Syria or wherever. We have no intention to intervene in Syria, because it's quite another case than Libya. And it would be too lengthy to elaborate on that, so let me just clearly state that I regret strongly that the international community, embodied in the UN Security Council, has not managed to reach an agreement that could send a very strong message to the leadership in Damascus. I really believe that the lack of unity in the UN Security Council has sent a very unfortunate message to the leadership in Damascus, so they concluded that they could continue their crackdowns on the civilian population.

But we operated in Libya because we had a UN mandate and strong support from countries in the region. None of these conditions are fulfilled when it comes to Syria.

NIK GOWING: Secretary General, this time last year we had a very spirited debate about exactly that, about laying down those markers very clearly to Damascus in this room. It didn't get very far at that point.

Russia.

KONSTANTIN EGGERT (Commentator and Host, Kommersant FM Radio): Secretary General, Konstantin Eggert from Kommersant Publishing House in Moscow. President Medvedev today issued a series of threats regarding missile defence, deploying nuclear weapons in Kaliningrad, withdrawing from START Treaty. Minister Lavrov told me on Monday that on the other hand NATO-Russia, NATO-US relations will never be hostage to the missile defence issue. Who should I believe?

And following up on that, isn't the problem is that there is no common threat assessment and this is essentially a political and psychological question rather than counting warheads and measuring distances?

Thank you very much.

NIK GOWING: And Secretary General, you talked about a commitment to good and stable relations from President-elect Putin. Does that message from Moscow fit in with the kind of message you yourself got from President-elect Putin?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Yeah, if I base myself on facts on the ground, on what is actually happening in the NATO-Russian relationship it's a fact that our discussions on missile defence haven't made a negative impact on cooperation in a number of other areas.

Actually, we have seen steady progress in our cooperation in a number of areas, across the board, from Afghanistan where the Russians have delivered a valuable transit arrangement, to counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, count-piracy, just to mention some of the practical areas in which we have enhanced our cooperation with Russia.

So the fact is, we have disputes when it comes to missile defence, but these disputes have not blocked progress in other areas.

I... well, just to relate it to our upcoming Summit in Chicago, probably and primarily because of a very busy domestic political calendar in Russia, we won't have a NATO-Russia Summit meeting in Chicago, but we will have a NATO-Russia Foreign Ministers meeting next month on the 19th of April. We will meet in this very town. And we will discuss progress in our cooperation across the board, and also how we could advance cooperation on missile defence.

NIK GOWING: Secretary General, thank you very much. I know there's six or seven people who want to come in, but we've got to talk about Iran and we've overrun our time. So I

begged a few more minutes as I was being asked to wind up. So thank you very much, Secretary General.

I have to ask you before you go, is there any plan for an Alliance bike ride in Chicago?

(LAUGHTER)

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Not to my knowledge. (Laughs).

NIK GOWING: No photo opportunity?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: No.

NIK GOWING: Thank you very much, indeed, Secretary General.

(APPLAUSE)

CRAIG KENNEDY: And thank you, Nik. Secretary General, that was really a terrific conversation.

Q&A session

Source: https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/events/transcripts/2012/03/23/nato-2020-shared-leadership-for-a-shared-future