North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Joint press conference

with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and President of the French Republic Emmanuel Macron in Paris
2017-12-19

(As delivered)

Merci, Monsieur le Président. It's always a pleasure to be in Paris and meet with you, not least because of your strong, personal commitment to multinational institutions, to international cooperation, and to NATO as a transatlantic Alliance. And also, I would like to thank you for your strong commitment to the idea of modernisation: both modernising the French society, but also supporting the efforts to modernise the NATO Alliance.

And France is a key NATO Ally.

You provide robust forces and capabilities.

You have proven again and again a strong will to deploy forces when needed, and by this, you really contribute significantly to our collective defence.

France is also contributing in other ways. You are one of the lead nations for our very high-readiness Joint Task Force. You contribute forces to our increased presence in the eastern part of the Alliance. I met French troops in Estonia recently—committed, professional troops—and you will also contribute with forces to Lithuania next year.

France is also playing a key role in the fight against terrorism. You have a significant presence in the Sahel and you play a very important role in the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh in Iraq and Syria.

France is also leading by example, by a very strong and clear commitment to meet the guideline of spending 2 percent of GDP on defence.

So France is really a highly-valued NATO Ally.

We just had an excellent discussion, and we addressed how we can make sure that NATO continues to adapt. NATO has already responded to a more demanding and challenging security environment, which we have seen not

But we need to do more. And we discussed the next steps in this adaptation, including the NATO command structure, and how we can do more in the fight against terrorism. And I

strongly believe that one of the best weapons we have in the fight against terrorism is to train local forces, is to build local capacity to enable local forces to stabilise their own countries.

And that is exactly what NATO is doing – in Afghanistan, in Iraq – and also what we have done before in the Balkans, and as a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, or Daesh.

We are now looking into how we can step up our efforts to train Iraqi forces, to help them stabilise their own country.

Then, as you mentioned, we also addressed NATO-EU cooperation, and I welcome the fact that we have been able to lift NATO-EU cooperation up to a new level, and that we are working together on many issues, including hybrid, cyber, fighting terrorism and also military mobility.

I am a strong believer in stronger European defence. NATO has actually called for stronger European defence for a long time. And when Europe now is stepping up, we should welcome those efforts, because stronger European defence, more defence cooperation within the European Union, can give more defence spending, more capabilities and fairer transatlantic burden-sharing within the Alliance.

We only have to make sure that what we do is complementary, that we don't compete, that we work together and avoid duplication.

So I really appreciate the close cooperation with France, and I look forward to continuing to work with you, and I look forward to welcoming you to Brussels to the summit next July next year. So thank you so much.

MODERATOR: Are there any questions?

Q: Norwegian News Agency: Sorry for speaking in English. Mr. President, let's continue the pointless debate for a bit. If your visions for European defence become a reality to what degree will Europe still be dependent upon non-EU allies for its security? Can Europe be truly sovereign when its security is contingent upon the protection by nations outside of Europe? And also Mr. Secretary General, President Macron is obviously very ambitious on the EU's behalf. Do you feel it's necessary to hold him back a bit? And are there any aspects of his ideas regarding defence that you have asked him to maybe give a bit more careful thought?

EMMANUEL MACRON (President of the French Republic): [Speaking with translator]. Please allow me to show you a document given to me by the Secretary General. These are the contributions of non-American members to the collective defence. As you see things are, the contributions have been on the mend since 2015. Like I said France is the third contributor and France will increase substantially its contribution each year because we are working on a trajectory of increasing to reach 2 % by 2025. So, let me reassure you, we have sovereign power from a military perspective, France has an army which has all capabilities, which is

very well trained, equipped and which intervenes on all theatres of operation no matter what the alliance does but also an army that fits within the alliance and by increasing our contribution we contribute to the trajectory I just, and thanks to the contribution I mentioned and trajectory I mentioned we contribute to burden sharing, a better burden sharing. So we are shouldering our responsibilities, we are shouldering our responsibilities regarding our own security and defence, this is the purpose of the strategic review and the military programming law to be adopted in the weeks to come or in any case by this summer. And so we are fully refigurating our army, our troops. France has full strategic independence, it is sovereign, we go wherever we feel we shall in order to guarantee our security but also France fully fits within the effort requested by the alliance and we're in coherence with it thanks to the 2 % goal. We have the same coherence and the same, we see the same things within the European Union, in addition to what we have already 17 projects already in Europe, defence projects which either we contribute to or projects we're leading and we can walk in that direction fully in coherence with what we're doing with the alliance. And behind this structured corporation France is, France wishes to have first of all a fund, it is not to replace but it is to add to what France is doing, the purpose is to invest on the European level. It is about capacity building, it is about joint intervention possibilities and you heard what I said at the Sorbonne, we also want more cooperation between our Defence Ministers. So the, within the alliance or at the European EU level we want to stick to our strategy in accordance with the speech I gave. It is about increasing our resources, our capacity to that end.

JENS STOLTENBERG (NATO Secretary General): The fact that President Macron has great ambitions on behalf of European defence, I actually welcome that because there is no contradiction between strong Europe and a strong transatlantic bond. Actually the stronger Europe, the stronger the transatlantic bond will be, because stronger Europe will contribute to fairer burden sharing and more balanced burden sharing. So we have to choose between either strong Europe or a strong transatlantic bond. I think that very well goes together and that has been my main message since I started as Secretary General: that NATO should welcome stronger Europe because that will strengthen the European Union, it'll strengthen Europe and also strengthen the burden sharing within the transatlantic alliance. And I welcome also the fact that the European Union are now looking into concrete projects on how to develop new capabilities. Because these capabilities will strengthen European defence and that will strengthen the European pillar inside NATO. And there is no way we should have competition between NATO and the European Union. Partly because we know that more than 90 % or 94 % of the people in the European Union, they live in a NATO country. Second, we know that 22 members of NATO are also members of the European Union. So if we had a competition between the European Union and NATO that will be the same as competing with ourselves and that's … that's absolutely without any purpose. And thirdly non-EU allies are key for European security. After Brexit 80 % of NATO's defence spending will come from non-EU allies and three of the four battle groups we have in the Baltics countries will be led by non-EU allies. So there is no way we can choose between either Europe or the transatlantic bond, we need both and that's key for our security. It's actually only in one area I'm a bit

concerned when it comes to the ambitions of France and that is when it comes to handball. Because the plan for Norway was to win, Norway lost. But as Secretary General of NATO I am pleased to note that France is a NATO ally, so actually NATO won the handball championship on Sunday.

Q: [Interpreted]. A question from BFM TV regarding Syria which is also a concern for NATO, Syria. On Sunday you said it was important to talk to Bashar al-Assad, the problem is that he does not want to talk to you and he kind of stated it clearly by saying, blaming France according to him for the, for supporting terrorism. So, so while this is diplomacy, we've seen what happened yesterday together with Minister Le Drian, but there is accordingly a peace process which is going nowhere, a failure as a matter of fact. So how do you think you can succeed given that everybody has failed and the additional challenge not only to get him to the table on negotiations but also to find an international solution?

EMMANUEL MACRON: [Speaking with translator]. Indeed I will not comment, the inappropriate comments that we made, Minister Le Drian's response to it is enough. As to the rest of it, like you said the discussions are in a stalemate. Peace, the, well we've seen what happened in [inaudible] there are no results, there's not outcome today because this is not inclusive. It does enable a fair representation of the opposition to Bashar al-Assad. I personally do not believe that we can build a sustainable peace and political solution without Syria and the Syrians. That being said Assad is not Syria alone. Our priority in, was the fight against DAESH, is the fight against DAESH, this is the reason why what he said is unacceptable because if somebody can win against DAESH anytime soon it is the coalition. All others were ambiguous or, and their priority was to hit, to target their opponents where as we were coherent because we have an enemy, this enemy is DAESH. Syria, the Syrian people have an enemy, as a matter of fact I can see that there are millions of Syrians all around the region or the world, in Canada, in the U.S., in the region as well and their enemy is Assad. This is a reality. So if you want to, to enable stability in Syria we want necessary political process, we need everyone around the table, we need to get the parties around the table and it is not about a sustainable status quo because it means millions of political opponents would have to stay abroad. Listen to the King of Jordan who will be here in a few hours, listen to the Prime Minister of Lebanon, listen to Turkey, everyone says they cannot keep having such a burden. So we need stability to come back to Syria. We'll therefore continue to work with our partners in a very conclusive manner. In this process the representatives of Assad will be there given that he's currently leading the country so I'm realistic, I acknowledge that they shall be at the table of negotiations. That being said we cannot imagine that some of the opposition would be left aside. We need a process enabling all the Syrians including those who had to run away to be represented. National sovereignty is not the violence of one man, it is not either the influence of external powers. So first of all I do not think it is a [inaudible] on Paris to try and impose peace, their own peace, we've seen it in Iraq or in Libya. Neither do I feel that we should be, show any complacency with somebody who believes he embodies the entire country. But it is always difficult to build

peace and the role of France in the region is to contribute to building peace, being very demanding and making sure that pluralism is complied with everywhere taking into account villages, ethical and political differences. And Lebanon today is probably an outstanding laboratory in terms of pluralism.

MODERATOR: One last question, to the Secretary General.

Q: [Interpreted]. The question from a Chinese television. Secretary General what do you think of the Chinese army and the relationship between China and NATO? Mr. President, what about the importance of your coming trip to China in January?

JENS STOLTENBERG: China is a nation with increasing military and economic powers and therefore for NATO of course it is important to relate to China. We have some political dialogue with China and we will like to expand and to strengthen the contacts with China. But at the same time NATO's responsibility is focused on collective defence in Europe and for our NATO allied countries, so we are not a global alliance, we are a regional security alliance.

EMMANUEL MACRON: [Speaking with translator]. Indeed I will be visiting China in the early days of next year. It is very important to me, it is a token of friendship. Friendship because it will be giving me an opportunity to continue the discussions I started with President Xi a couple of months ago and also very important because of the relation between our two countries from the very beginning. And at the same time I want to be very concrete from an economic, cultural, scientific point of view as well as in terms of international strategy together. China is a major ally in the fight against the climate change, Chinese commitment was very important given in particular the decision taken by the United States and the vice, the Deputy Prime Minister announced, Chinese Deputy Prime Minister announced the willingness of China to put in place a carbon market last week. This is very important, and also because China is a multi lateral power, it is very important therefore that we can exchange our views. I will explain my, my vision of the world and we'll, I will listen to President Xi and will discuss with him and it will give us an opportunity to continue to build bones. I think this is, this visit is an opportunity to open a new page, a new chapter not by, shared ambition and reciprocity. Thank you very much for your attention, thank you.

Source: https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/events/transcripts/2017/12/19/joint-press-conference