North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

# NATO at 70 - The bedrock of European and transatlantic security

Speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Körber Global Leaders Dialogue, Berlin
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(As delivered)

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, and dear Thomas,

It is always great to be at the Körber Foundation. Normally, actually, we meet for breakfast, and you serve a lot of food and good coffee. Now there's no food, no coffee. But a fresh glass of water. And as you said, more food for thought, hopefully.

And the fact is that regardless of food or no food, it is a great pleasure to be back here at the Körberstiftung, especially on the eve of this important anniversary.

Standing in the vibrant city of Berlin today, it is hard to imagine how different the world looked, just a generation ago.

A city divided. A country torn in two. A continent frozen in the depths of a Cold War.

So therefore it is even more important to remember, the bravery of countless men and women, in East Germany, and across Central and Eastern Europe, who stood up against oppression and fear.

Germany understands better than most of the other countries in our part of the world, the value of freedom and democracy. And Germany's history shows the importance of a strong bond between Europe and North America.

Our transatlantic Alliance was created in 1949 as a "shield against aggression." Founded on our solemn pledge to protect and defend each other. One for all and all for one.

In 1955, NATO extended this pledge to West Germany. A remarkable gesture of trust, so soon after the end of the Second World War. Offering a former adversary a stake in our shared security. Not to repeate the mistakes of the past. But committing to build a unique area of peace and prosperity, together.

Because NATO has always been much more than a military alliance. It is a political alliance. An unprecedented promise to preserve peace. Prevent conflict. And uphold our values. This is true multilateralism. Germany has for decades been firmly anchored in our transatlantic

Alliance. Which has created the framework for this country's security policy at every critical juncture. From Chancellor Adenauer's "Westbindung" to Chancellor Brandt's "Ostpolitik." And eventually paving the way for Chancellor Kohl to reunite Germany and deepen European integration.

This story of reconciliation is reflected in so many families, including my own. My grandfather was a prisoner of war, who became a friend of Germany. My father served in the Norwegian Brigade in 1950 in Schleswig-Holstein. And he became a great admirer of Germany. And I am proud to continue this family tradition.

So, in 2000, when I became Prime Minister of Norway, I made my 'Antrittsbesuch' to Germany. Reflecting that we admire and that we regard ourselves as close friends of this country. It was this same desire for reconciliation, that helped to reunite friends and loved ones, East and West, after forty years of the Cold War.

For my generation, the fall of the Berlin Wall was a defining moment. That night, we were all Berliners. Like so many others, I was glued to my television set. Holding my son, who was just a few months old, in my arms. This truly felt like a new beginning.

That his generation, unlike my my father's, my grandfather's, and mine, may grow up in a world without barriers, and without the constant threat of war.

The images of hundreds of people "tearing down that Wall" became iconic. A rallying cry for champions of freedom and oppressed people everywhere. But as we know, the walls had already started to tumble. All across central and eastern Europe.

In the shipyards of Gdansk, the birthplace of Solidarność. In the pan-European picnic, on the Austrian-Hungarian border. In the peaceful protests on the streets of Dresden, Leipzig and Prague. And in the two million people, forming a human chain from Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn.

And that is what made these events so remarkable. The power of peaceful protest. The strength of solidarity. Being part of something bigger.

And that is what makes the transatlantic bond so important. Where no nation stands alone. And no barrier is too great.

The bond between Europe and North America made it possible to reintegrate Germany into the European and international community. To end the Cold War without a shot being fired. And to create the conditions for European integration.

The reunification of Germany and Europe would have been impossible without the United States' security guarantee. And further European integration was made possible under the umbrella of security provided by NATO. For the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, NATO membership was the first step to integration in the Euro-Atlantic family. A driver of democracy and reform. A step to greater prosperity. And a precursor to EU membership.

NATO and the European Union are two sides of the same coin. Indispensable partners for peace and prosperity in Europe.

Any attempt to distance Europe from North America will not only weaken the transatlantic Alliance, it is also risking dividing Europe itself. European unity cannot replace transatlantic unity. I strongly welcome efforts to strengthen European defence. Which can enhance capabilities and burden sharing within NATO. But the European Union cannot defend Europe.

This is partly about military might. After Brexit, 80% of NATO's defence expenditure will come from non-EU Allies. And Germany will be the only EU member leading one of NATO's battlegroups in the east of the Alliance.

It is also about geography. From Norway in the North, to Turkey in the South, and the US, Canada and the UK in the West. All are key to keeping Europe safe.

I say all of this knowing that many of you may be thinking about the disagreements, differences and divisions among NATO Allies. Over trade, energy, climate change, Iran. And most recently over the situation in northeast Syria. We have had serious differences before. From the Suez Crisis in 1956. To the Iraq War in 2003. But at the end of the day, we have always been able to unite around our core task. To protect and defend each other.

NATO is the only platform where Allies from Europe and North America sit down on a daily basis. To discuss difficult issues affecting our shared security. And to keep our almost one billion citizens safe.

Consensus is not always easy. I know that after chairing the North Atlantic Council for some years. But our unity is essential for our shared security. And it is in the national interest of each and every one of us to stay united. It is good for North America. And good for Europe.

Therefore we all have a responsibility to overcome our differences today, as we have done in the past. Because we are faced with a more unpredictable world. And in uncertain times we need to stand together. We need strong multilateral institutions like NATO.

A more assertive Russia is a key driver for the increased unpredictability we are facing. Its illegal annexation of Crimea was the first time after World War Two one country seized another's territory in Europe. North America and Europe have responded in a united and firm way. NATO has implemented the largest reinforcement of our collective defence since the end of the Cold War. And the European Union has stood firm in its use of economic sanctions.

Demonstrating to Russia the consequences of violating international law. And showing the strength of the transatlantic bond.

Arms control and the demise of the INF Treaty further demonstrate the importance of transatlantic unity. Russia has deployed new intermediate range missiles, in clear violation of

the INF treaty, which was a cornerstone for our security arms control for decades. A treaty that is only respected by one side cannot keep us safe. That is why all Allies supported the United States' decision to withdraw from the Treaty earlier this year.

NATO's position is clear. We will do whatever is needed to keep our citizens safe. But we will not mirror what Russia is doing. We do not want a new arms race. We do not want another Cold War. And we have no intention of deploying new land-based nuclear missiles in Europe.

NATO Allies remain committed to effective arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. And to open and meaningful dialogue with Russia.

As you know, the INF Treaty was a bilateral agreement between the United States and the former Soviet Union. But NATO provided a platform for all Allies to make decisions together. As it has done with other landmark arms control treaties in the past. And as it continues to do today. So a strong transatlantic bond shaping our arms control architecture. And our shared security.

Another challenge which requires Europe and North America to stand together is the fight against international terrorism. Side by side in the US-led Global Coalition, we have made enormous progress in the fight against ISIS. Liberating vast territory and millions of people in Iraq and Syria.

The situation in northeast Syria remains very difficult. There are different views among Allies. But Allies agree on the need to safeguard the gains we have made in the fight against our common enemy, ISIS. To maintain the commitment to our missions and operations in the region. Including NATO's training missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. And to find a political solution to the crisis in Syria through UN-led efforts.

Europe and North America must also work together to understand and respond to a changing geostrategic landscape. This includes the rise of China and the dizzying pace of technological change. China will soon have the world's largest economy. And it already has the second largest defence budget in the world, investing heavily in new capabilities. Only in the last five years, China has added 80 ships and submarines to its navy – the equivalent of the whole UK Royal Navy. It has hundreds of missiles with a range that would have been prohibited by the INF treaty. And it recently displayed a new supersonic cruise missile, an assortment of new drones, anti-ship missiles and hypersonic gliders.

China is becoming a global leader in the development of new technology. From 5G to facial recognition. And from quantum computing to gathering vast amounts of global data. So we need to understand what the rising size and scope of China's influence means for our security. Not only for our shared security, but also for freedom, democracy and the rule of law. The best way to do this is by Europe and North America working together. Because we represent half of the world's economic might. And half of the world's military might. We are

stronger when we speak together on the global stage. And we are safer when we stand together to face future challenges.

The paradox is that despite the differences we see between NATO Allies, Europe and North America are doing more together today than for many years. The United States is not abandoning Europe. Quite the opposite. It is investing in Europe's security. With more troops, infrastructure and more exercises.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall the United States gradually reduced its military presence in Europe. The last US battle tank left Bremerhaven in 2013. Now they are back with a full armoured brigade. And next year we will see the largest deployment of US troops to Europe for an exercise in 25 years. Germany will be the logistics hub for this Defender 2020 exercise. Demonstrating the United States' ironclad commitment to Europe. And Germany's role at the heart of our Alliance.

European Allies are also stepping up. Investing in modern capabilities and the readiness of our forces. Increasing defence spending for five years in a row. And adding an extra one hundred billion dollars to their defence budgets by the end of next year.

This is good news. We are doing more together. And I am confident that we will maintain the momentum. Not because the United States demands it. But because our freedom does not come for free. And because, in a more unpredictable world, we must continue to keep our citizens safe.

We cannot afford to be complacent. We need a strong Germany, at the heart of NATO and European security. Germany is a highly-valued NATO Ally. Making major contributions to NATO missions and operations, from Kosovo to Afghanistan.

It is leading this year our Very High Readiness Force. To enhance our ability to deploy wherever and whenever needed. And it hosts a new NATO command in Ulm. To ensure our forces can move quickly and easily throughout Europe.

Over many decades, Germany has proven a trusted Ally. A responsible global leader. And a driving force behind a stronger and deeper European Union. Europe's largest economy must also remain a leading force within our transatlantic Alliance.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The world we are facing is very different from 1989. But one thing remains the same. The need for a strong bond between Europe and North America. Germany needs a strong NATO. And NATO needs a strong Germany.

We have faced what seemed like insurmountable barriers in the past. But as history shows, when we stand united no barrier is too great. 30 years ago, a generation dared to dream the

impossible. Today, our generation must continue their fight. So that the next generation can face the future with confidence.

Thank you so much for your attention.

MODERATOR: So, Mr Secretary General, thank you very much for that truly inspirational speech. And I think I speak on behalf of everyone here in the audience. And thanks also for agreeing to stick around a bit to take a couple of questions. So, you laid out a full plate of issue[s], and I thought maybe we can start with the elephant in the room. You said the US is not abandoning Europe, quite the opposite. And of course, that's more than welcome to all of us atlanticists. But we all know that there are also different noises coming out of D.C. – NATO being obsolete or maybe not, 'We're the schmucks paying for the whole thing, let's send out some bills.' So I was wondering, do you think that, if and when President Trump gets re-elected next year, do you think, we'll be here to see NATO's 80th birthday?

JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]: Yes.

MODERATOR: Can you elaborate?

JENS STOLTENBERG: So yes, I think so. But, but then I have to add something. And that, of course, there's no guarantee. Because we are an Alliance of 29 democracies. And democracies, people elect different governments, they have different opinions and they disagree. So people who are looking for a kind of . . . kind of one message from all NATO Allies on all questions, they're looking for a totally different Alliance.

I grew up in Norway in the 60s and the 70s, and there was a lot of discussion of whether NATO should stay . . . Norway should stay in NATO. I have, actually, some good friends who are strongly against NATO. And they are close to me. So . . . so the reality is that people are . . . open debate, discussions, disagreements. It's for me, very often, not expression of weakness, but of strength. Because the reality is that despite all these differences and disagreements, we have always been able to unite around our core task to defend each other, and always be able to overcome differences.

I have mentioned this many times before, but, you know, I was not around in 1956, but I guess the atmosphere in NATO was not very good, when you had the Suez Crisis. But I was around in 2003 and it was not easy to deal with the Iraq War. But the reality is that we have always been able to stand together in NATO.

So . . . so my message is that it's up to us to decide. It's up to us to stand up and to overcome the differences and then make sure that we preserve this Alliance. No one will do that for us. It's not kind of force in nature that will make that happen. We have to make it happen. And that's our responsibility. So instead of complaining, do something and make sure that we solve the problems and the issues, because there are problems and issues, I'm not denying that, but they don't disappear. But we either have to solve them or make sure that they don't

undermine our unity. Then if I can add one more thing, and then . . . and that is that I'm a politician. And to be honest, in politics, it's very often that you have, what should I say, good rhetorics and not so good substance.

QUESTION: Really?

JENS STOLTENBERG: Yeah. At least in Norway. Never in Germany, never in Germany. But in NATO it's normally the opposite. The rhetoric is not always good, I admit that. But the reality is that, when you look at the facts on the ground, we do more to get them done – done for decades. Higher readiness of our forces: for the first time in history, combat-ready battlegroups; increased presence in the east; tripled the size of the NATO Response Force; increased defence spending in all NATO Allied countries for five years in a row; and more US troops in Europe.

So I'm not underestimating the challenges and the differences on climate change, on trade, on many other issues, but when it comes to the core task of NATO delivering collective defence, we are actually delivering more substance than we have done for many years. And that's . . . that helps. When substance is good, then the rhetoric may be so-and-so, but substance counts.

MODERATOR: That does help. And I also like . . . I really like the passion, Mr Secretary General. But let me confront you with something, in fact, your . . . your predecessor said, Anders Fogh Rasmussen. He said that NATO is militarily strong in terms of the substance, but politically weak. And some people, I'm being told, call that the Stoltenberg Paradox. Is he wrong? Is Anders Fogh Rasmussen wrong?

JENS STOLTENBERG: I will never criticise a predecessor? No, but . . . no, no. But I mean, I understand what he says, because he says with other words some . . . a bit what I said now. That, when it comes to substance, when you see what we actually do together, we do more, spend more, invest more, modernise more than we have done for decades. And I made a list. We're also adapting the command structure, with a new Command here in Germany. And Germany is spending more. So, so that's substance.

But then, of course, yes, we have some differences. And, first of all, these differences are also real. I mean, the disagreements on trade are real. The disagreements on the Iran Nuclear Deal are real. But the best thing would be if we were able to solve those differences. But as long as they remain unsolved, we need to minimise the negative consequences on NATO. And we have been quite successful in doing that. So that's my message in a way, and my response to that.

Let me also say that I know that the question is asked and so on, but if you go to the United States, first of all, in my first press conference with President Trump, he said, this is a quote, "I used to say that NATO was obsolete, but NATO is not [sic] longer obsolete.

MODERATOR: That was thanks to you.

JENS STOLTENBERG: … [Inaudible] but . . . so that's a good thing. And I totally agree with him. Then, second, they increased their presence in Europe. But thirdly, if we look at the opinion polls in the United States, it's a record high support for NATO. Hardly ever recorded stronger support for NATO than they record now. And if you go to the US Congress, you have a very strong bipartisan support for NATO.

So, again, in politics, in the real world, no guarantees exist, but it is absolutely political support in the United States for NATO. Also, because they see that European Allies are stepping up. And also because they realise that NATO is important for them. Partly because we have 9/11, the only time we invoked Article 5 was after the attack on the United States. They know that European Allies have been together with them in Afghanistan and many other places.

Second, in the United States they are concerned about the size of China. The United States has always been the biggest … the biggest economy, the most advanced technology, the biggest every— . . . everything. Now China is becoming bigger. Bigger economy, bigger GDP, increase in defence spending and advanced when it comes to technology. So I tell the Americans, if you are concerned about size, then you should keep your friends close because together we are really big. So I told them, it's good to have friends and they agree. So we are happy.

MODERATOR: We'll convey that message to Mike Pompeo tomorrow. Mr Secretary General, some people say that NATO has two problems: one American and one German. So let's move over . . . and I know you . . . you disagree, but let's move over to Germany for a moment. It is rumoured that you are Chancellor Merkel's favourite Social Democrat. I don't know whether this is true or not. So I wanted to ask you a bit about the debate here in Germany. The . . . the SPD is rather opposed to raising Germany's defence budget. So what is your message to your German comrades?

JENS STOLTENBERG: You know, I think that it's extremely important. I'm a Norwegian Social Democrat. But I think that when I decided to become Secretary General of NATO, I also decided to leave party politics and partly to leave Norwegian party politics, but I should at least . . . and leave Norwegian party politics, not to join German party politics. So I think that it will be absolutely wrong if I started to be part of a domestic debate. And that happens in almost all the countries I visit, they try to drag me into a domestic debate. I will not do that, because that would undermine my task. And my task is to keep the Alliance together. We don't have two problems in NATO, we have 29 Allies. So . . . so . . . and again, it will not help.

What I can say is that I, of course, expect all Allies to deliver on the pledge we made together. And we made the pledge to increase defence spending. But, you know, Germany, as Norway, as other NATO Allies should not invest in defence to please me, or to please the United States. They should invest in defence because it is in the security interests of Germany to do

so, to make sure that your armed forces can protect Germany. And if your armed forces can do that, they also have to protect the whole of NATO. That's the reason. And you need ready forces, you need capable forces, you need well-equipped, well-trained forces. And I say this also, and then I can also tell you that before I became the Secretary General of NATO, I was some years, in the 1990s I was Defen— . . . sorry, I was the Minister Finance in Norway. And then I cut defence budgets. That was one of my specialities.

MODERATOR: But that's not a policy recommendation.

JENS STOLTENBERG: No, no, no. But then the thing is that we all did that, because in the 1990s, this was few years after the end of the Cold War … [inaudible] came down of the Berlin Wall. We all thought it was … we were moving towards a less uncertain world, more safe, in partnership with Russia. So I was not the only Minister of Finance that was reducing defence budgets, we all did that. Because when tensions are going down, it's possible to reduce defence budgets. But now tensions are going up. So if you cut budgets when the tensions are going down, you have to be able to increase budgets when they're going up. And, therefore, I also started to increase defence budgets as Prime Minister of Norway some years later. So I understand it's not easy to increase defence budgets, but that's just something we have to do when we live in a more unpredictable world.

MODERATOR: On that note, and to be a bit even-handed when it comes to domestic politics in Germany, I also wanted to ask you about our Minister of Defence's proposal for a security zone in northern Syria. I understand your initial response was cautiously positive. Do you think that the proposal will make it to the agenda of the Leaders Summit in London in early December, or will it end up somewhere in the annals of NATO?

JENS STOLTENBERG: That depends very much on the developments in northern Syria and in Syria in general. I think the main message is that, what has happened in Syria and northeast Syria over the last weeks just underscores the importance of trying to find a political solution. And we have seen some progress, some, what should I say, new initiatives. And at least of the . . . since the initial uptick in fighting we've also seen a reduction in violence in northeast Syria. And we have to build on that to try to create the conditions for a political solution.

And therefore, I welcomed proposals, initiatives, that can help that happen. But of course, at the end of the day, this has to be negotiated, agreed, not only among NATO Allies, but, you know, among different actors which are operating in the region on the ground. And therefore, no one can dictate the solution, no one can dictate any kind of international presence. It has to be something which is negotiated and it's too early, too hard … [inaudible], to tell the outcome, and whether some kind of international military presence in northeast Syria will be part of such a solution.

MODERATOR: Hmm, and you didn't think it was kind of a bit too late now that Russia and Turkey are already carving up Syria amongst themselves?

JENS STOLTENBERG: But again, that depends. And I think it's extremely hard to predict. We have to realise that the United States, publicly, but also in NATO meetings, they urged NATO Allies, not NATO as NATO necessarily, but NATO Allies to increase their presence in northeast Syria. So that was something . . . a year ago that was publicly expressed from the US. It was not a big rush from NATO Allies to join them there. And then they decided to withdraw. And then, and then we had all the events that happened after that.

We can discuss how it happened, why it happened. But I think now we have to face the realities on the ground. And then do whatever we can to then support the efforts to find a political solution.

MODERATOR: Right. Mr Secretary General, I have one last question to you before I open it up for . . . for our guests. And that question is about public opinion, pretty much. When you were still the Prime Minister of Norway, I think you once spent an afternoon practically working as a … as a cab driver, incognito. And it must have been very funny, because you kind of put on sunglasses and a cab drivers uniform. So if you were to do that same thing in Brussels today, what would you expect people to . . . to ask you, or to hear about NATO and what would be your response to that.

JENS STOLTENBERG: Well, I don't know what they will ask me about, but you should go and watch me being a taxi driver in Oslo on YouTube. Then you understand that I have to go back to politics, because that was not a great success, and the passengers they don't want to . . . they didn't want to pay, actually, because they regarded me as such a lousy driver. But . . . no, but I think, I think that one of the challenges we are faced with is that we should never want to go back to the Cold War. But at least during the Cold War, it was a very well-defined world order. You had, in a way, the East against the West, the Warsaw Pact against NATO. And we had one threat, that was the Soviet Union and nuclear war.

Now, one of the challenges we face, and I think also that is reflected in many of the conversations and meetings I have with people, is that we are . . . it's much more confused. It's much more unpredictable. And for instance, the whole situation in Syria describes that. It's really not easy for anyone. And also that there are so many different threats and challenges. We still have a more assertive Russia. They have nuclear weapons. They have annexed a part of their neighbour, Ukraine, Crimea. But we have cyber, we have terrorism. And we have also, of course, what you started to address, the internal divisions. So, so I think people . . . I don't know exactly what they will ask, but I think the conversation I have with people reflects this confusion, the very complexity of threats and challenges we are faced with.

MODERATOR: Thanks so much for now. Ladies and gentlemen, it's up to you now. Let me just say that you should please be very concise, very crisp. Please remember that every question should really end with a question mark. And please briefly introduce yourselves. I think as almost always, I'm tempted to say, Johannes … [inaudible] was first.

QUESTION: Johannes … [inaudible] political adviser to German Social Democrats in Parliament. Secretary General, the Defence Minister has come up with the proposal of setting up a National Security Council in Germany, too. I ask you, with a view to your experience in Norway, do you have that kind of thing, or is . . . are there other ways of arriving at a kind of whole of government approach, effectively, when it comes to security?

JENS STOLTENBERG: I'm afraid I'm not going to give you a very good answer, because I really mean that this is for every nation to decide, every government to decide. And different governments organise their work in very different ways. You know, some governments there are quite few ministers, a small Cabinet. And then, actually, the Cabinet is, in reality, the Security Council. Then, other governments they have many ministers and many junior ministers. And then they form smaller groups which are addressing security issues.

In the Norwegian government, I can only speak about my own experiences, we, we . . . most of the security issues are discussed among all ministers around the table. But we also have a smaller group. I don't know exactly the English translation, but kind of Security Council or, … [inaudible] the Security Council, the Security Committee of the Norwegian government. We meet . . . they meet, not 'we', they meet, when needed, and they address, partly, defence issues, but also security related to resilience, you know, for instance, the consequences of the terrorist attacks back in 2011.

So, I think if it would be absolutely wrong, when you have 29 different Allies to try to standardise the way they organise their government. As long as Germany delivers credible contributions to NATO missions and operations, as long as Germany is a reliable Ally, how they organise the work in the government is not for me to decide.

QUESTION: … [Inaudible – off mic] that whole Germany became member of NATO and there were debates afterwards to have maybe a perspective of a pan-European security system. But then, as you know, in 97, 98, the decision was made mainly in the US to expand NATO to the east. And there were very critical voices like the Ambassador, George Kennan. And if you look to the events since 2013, 2014 in Ukraine, Crimea, it seems, for me, a bit of fulfilment of this critics. He said that Russia will react and will be forced to react in the way they reacted. What do you think now, looking back to this development? Is there still a prospective of having a pan-European security system, or will we step in, let's say, in a new Cold War?

MODERATOR: Thank you for the question.

JENS STOLTENBERG: Thank you for the question. And, then I think, first of all, we have to reflect a bit on the way we phrase this, because you said that it was, a decision was made in Washington to expand NATO to the east. In one way, I disagree with that. It was not Washington that decided. It was the people of Poland, the people of Latvia, the people of Estonia, the people of Hungary who wanted to join. They begged for membership.

As I remember in Norway, we had the debate whether we would like to have them. But there was no doubt that this was democratic, strong wishes from the people in these countries. So the question was not whether we were, in a way, were going to expand in an aggressive way eastwards. It was a question of whether we would like to welcome people who really begged for membership in NATO. And just to think about the possibility that we should have told the people of Latvia or the people of Estonia that, “Oh, you are neighbours of Russia and Russia don’t like that you join NATO, so you are not allowed into this club.” What kind of message is that? Because then we say that we turn back to the old world, where we have spheres of influence, where big powers have the right to decide what neighbours can do or not do. I don’t want to live in that world. Where, because Russia don’t like Latvia to join NATO, we tell Latvia, “You cannot join.” Where is the self-d— . . . where is the sovereignty, where is the respect for the people of Latvia?

But then I also say this because I respect the Swedes and the Finns. They don’t want to join NATO. Fine. The thing is that it is for the people of individual countries to decide. So I totally respect Sweden … yeah, yeah, yeah! They ruled us for a hundred years, so that’s . . . in Norway, we say that the most important thing is not to win, when it comes to sports, but to beat the Swedes. But, but I respect the Swedes and Finland and Austria and Switzerland and Serbia. Countries in Europe that have decided to stay outside NATO. I would never force them into NATO. But I also respect the people of North Macedonia who want to join NATO and then we allow them to join.

And again, sometimes … [inaudible] refer to Norway, they say that it is a provocation, that these countries join NATO. Well, Nor— . . . because they’re neighbours of Russia. Norway is a neighbour of Russia. Stalin didn’t like that we joined in 1949. I’m very glad that the Clement Attlee and Truman said Stalin should not decide what Norway can do. Norway, decided what Norway should do. So we are a member of NATO. So the whole idea that Washington decided, no, that’s wrong. And secondly, it was not Washington, it was actually 16 members of NATO in 89 that decided that our door is open.

So, the conc— . . . first of all, the concept is wrong. And it’s signed, part of the Helsinki Treaty or the Final Act, part of the Budapest Agreement, which Russia has signed, is that every nation has the right to decide its own path, including what kind of security arrangements we want to be part of. And therefore, it is wrong to say that it is a provocation against me that you join NATO. And the reality is that NATO has provided stability, security, we are a defensive alliance. We have Social Democrats, we have left socialists in governments in, in NATO countries. I was in government for eight years with left socialists. Well, that’s NATO. Not dangerous, but safe.

MODERATOR: Swedish questions anyone? No, okay. Claudia Major is next.

CLAUDIA MAJOR: Claudia Major, from a think tank here in Berlin. We have an increasing Chinese presence in Europe. They’re owning physical infrastructure like ports. We have the

question of digital infrastructure like, Huawei, we have Russian-Chinese exercises in the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean. So what do you think should NATO's answer be? Also, knowing that Allies have different approaches on how to deal with that. Thank you.

JENS STOLTENBERG: So, first of all, it's not per se, or in a way, by itself a problem that other countries own infrastructure in our countries. And it's not, by itself, a problem that China owns a port, or whatever it is in a NATO Allied country, that . . . that's the case. The challenge is that if foreign ownership weakens our resilience and undermines the security and the safety of the infrastructure.

And that has been a discussion, for instance, related to 5G. And therefore, NATO has developed, we have just agreed at the Defence Ministerial Meeting a couple of weeks ago, new, updated basic requirements for infrastructure for telecommunications, including 5G. And these requirements are very . . . how should I say, important, because they state clearly that all Allies need to conduct thorough risk assessments, mitigate risks, including also analyse the risks related to foreign ownership, foreign investments, to make sure that when we invest in 5G we have secure and safe systems, because these systems, 5G, will be extremely important for our societies, for the civilian society, for health, for industry, for communications, for everything, but also for military operations. So we don't put . . . we don't have specific names, we don't name any specific country or company, but we have to make sure that all Allies meet these requirements, because we need a resilient and safe and secure infrastructure, including 5G.

MODERATOR: So, I think we have probably time for two more questions. I had a lady in the back over there and then we'll move over to the last one.

QUESTION: Thank you very much. I'm … [inaudible] from Executive Intelligence Review. You spoke about President Trump. President Trump recently has attacked the military industrial complex. And he referred to General Eisenhower, when he left office as a President, and he made that comment in the context of his wish to stop the regime change wars. And I'm wondering what you think about that? And he also has accused and . . . in the whole debate on the RussiaGate, which we have now, the … I know, the Five Eyes, Five Eyes countries to be involved in that, to . . . to stop his presidency. So this is very fundamental, it … [inaudible]. And I'm wondering if his wish to really establish better cooperation with Russia to solve problems, terrorism, Syria, whatever, is not a good platform to really . . . to really go in that direction for cooperation and new ways of alliances instead of the old paradigm? Thank you.

JENS STOLTENBERG: I strongly believe in dialogue with Russia, and I believe that we need to strive for a better relationship with Russia. And, therefore, one of the things I am glad that we have achieved in NATO over the last years is to again have meetings in the NATO-Russia Council. We don't solve all the problems, but at least that's an institution where Russia and NATO Allies meet. We have discussed Ukraine, Afghanistan, arms control, INF, many other issues. We brief each other on exercises, military posture.

So I strongly believe in dialogue with Russia, partly to try to improve our relationship with Russia, because Russia is a neighbour, Russia's there to stay. We need to try to improve the relationship with Russia. But even if we are not able to improve the relationship with Russia, we need dialogue with Russia. Or actually . . . especially when the tensions are high, we need to talk to them, because we have more forces, more exercises, more military presence along our borders, and we have to make sure that we don't, you know, stumble into a conflict. So any incidents, accidents, we have to do the maximum to prevent them. And if they happen, we have to prevent them from spiralling out of control. So I'm a strong advocate of dialogue with Russia and of course, arms control, INF, New START, whatever it is, we need to talk to Russia.

But then, for me, there is no contradiction between NATO and strong deterrence and defence, and dialogue with Russia. Actually, for me, that's a precondition. Because we have to be united and we have to be firm in our dialogue with Russia. If not, they will . . . we risk that they interpret that as weakness and that can be dangerous.

And I say this also because I have long experience as a Norwegian politician. It started, actually, when I was State Secretary for Environment in 1990. I started to work with Russia on environmental issues up in the north. We had agreed on the borderline line, in the Barents Sea and the Polar Sea, on energy, on fishery, on . . . actually, the Norwegian military forces, they have regular meetings and contacts with Russian forces up in the north. This, how should I say it, cooperation, dialogue with Russia in the north was something we developed even during the coldest period of the Cold War, not despite NATO, but because of NATO. Because NATO provided a platform, the strength that we needed to engage with Russia.

So for me, there is no . . . there's no contradiction. But I strongly believe that we have to work. And to be honest, for me, this is one of the areas where I really feel that Germany has shown the way. Over years, Germany has been an important Ally for many reasons, but also because Germany has always been aware of this importance of dialogue, an open line to Moscow, dating back to the Cold War. And you started asking me about Social Democrats, for me, Helmut Schmidt and Willy Brandt were people conveying that message. So, so it's not . . . this is a kind of bipartisan approach, that we need credible deterrence and defence, which then also enables a credible dialogue with Russia. So I strongly hope that we can improve the relationship with Russia. I'm extremely in favour of arms control. And we convey that message to Russia all the time.

MODERATOR: … [Inaudible] last question, I saw a question on this side. Yes, sir. Please.

ABDUL JABAR ARIYAEE [Afghan Embassy]: Yeah, my name is Abdul Jabar Ariyaee, I am chargé d'affaires, Afghanistan Embassy. And Your Excellencies, say the key issue and challenge is to fight against the international terrorism. What will be the great challenge to fight the international terrorism? And also with the international community involvement in Afghanistan, in the past 18 years, and the peace process and your involvement as well, what

will be the new approach of the European Union and NATO after the called-off peace process by the President Trump.

Thank you.

JENS STOLTENBERG: The challenge is that when we speak about international terrorism, we speak about many different things and we speak about many different tools. We have to remember that many of the terrorist attacks we have seen in our countries, the last years, have been home-grown. There have been actually, they came from people, committed by people who are born and raised in our own countries. And it is also very important to remember, that not . . . some of this is terrorism committed by people who misuse religion, but not always Islam. We had the terrorist attack in New Zealand now. We had my . . . the terrorist attack in Norway, in 9/11 . . . in 2011. These are people who are misusing other religions than, than Islam in trying to defend their use of violence.

And to address this kind of terrorism, to be honest, the answer is not NATO. Because that's about, you know, everything we can do to improve the neighbourhoods, to fight extremism. Education, social workers, domestic police, all those issues. And that's extremely important. But it's not a NATO task, because it's not about military tools that we have.

Then, part of the fight against terrorism is also what we have to do with military means, as, for instance, our presence in Afghanistan. And then, I will share with you one . . . one challenge we have is that, of course, NATO has been, and is, able to deploy in big combat operations when needed. We did that in the Balkans to help to end the atrocities there, in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Kosovo. We have done so in Afghanistan, we had more than 140,[000] troops, but the challenge is that, in the long run, there is a limit to how long NATO Allies are able, willing, to be part of big combat operations far away from their own countries.

And therefore, I think that the best answer we have is to train local forces, enable forces in their own country to fight terrorism and stabilise their own countries. And that's exactly what we are now doing in Afghanistan. We were more than . . . we were 140,000 NATO troops at the top. Now we are roughly 16,000. And what we do in Afghanistan is to train, assist and advise, enabling the Afghan forces to stabilise their own country. And we have made huge progress. There are many problems, many challenges in Afghanistan. But the big difference is that now the Afghan forces do what 140,000 NATO forces did, not so many years ago. So we are committed to train, assist and advise the Afghans, to enable them to fight terrorism in their own country. As we also do in Iraq, training the Iraqis. We do that because we think that the best way to create the conditions for a peaceful, negotiated solution in Afghanistan is to send a clear message to the Taliban that they will not win on the battlefield. And as long as Taliban understands that they will not win on the battlefield, they have to sit down and engage in real peace talks and make real compromises.

So the paradox is that the more we convey a message we are willing to stay in Afghanistan – and we are sending that message – the more likely it is that actually Taliban one day will

understand that they have to make real compromises and agree to a peace deal. I cannot tell you when that will happen. But the good news is that European … NATO Allies and also, not least Germany, is committed to stay in Afghanistan to create the conditions for a political solution. And then we . . . very often in NATO say that we went into Afghanistan together, we will make decisions of our posture, our presence, together, and when the time is right, we'll also leave together. And that's the message we send to, also to all Allies.

MODERATOR: Mr Secretary General, ladies and gentlemen, time is up. Unfortunately, there are still loads and loads of issues to be discussed, which means you have to come back to Körber Foundation and next time you'll get some good breakfast, I promise. Thank you very much for being here. Thank you all for actively listening, for your good questions. Let me also add, Mr Secretary General, that today you really rocked the Körber dialogue Middle East. In April, I think, you rocked Congress. So I really believe next time you're in town, you should also rock the German Bundestag. Thank you very much.

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