North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Adapting NATO in an Unpredictable World

Speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the École militaire in Paris
2017-12-19

(As delivered)

Thank you very much, General, for that warm welcome.

Officers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlement, I'm really honoured to be able to speak here at the École Militaire, and this is really a place which is so famous, and I'm told that this academy was established by Louis the Fifteenth, and also that Napoleon himself studied here.

So I feel that I am really at a historic location, both for the French military, but actually also for NATO, because the original seat of the NATO Defense College, which was established by the first Supreme Military Commander of NATO, Dwight D. Eisenhower—that was also located here at this academy. So this is a historic place for France, but actually also a historic place for NATO and the transatlantic Alliance.

I will say some words and then I will be more than ready and happy to answer your questions after my speech.

And I know that among those who are in the audience now there are of course French officers, but also officers from different NATO allied countries and partner countries, too.

This is just one example of the many different valuable contributions that France is making to the Alliance.

France has long inspired the world, with your ideas, your culture, and your willingness to change the way things are done.

After the Second World War, France was at the forefront of the creation of our international institutions, including our Transatlantic Alliance.

And today, France is playing a crucial role in helping to modernise NATO.

In my meeting earlier today with President Macron, we agreed that our Alliance must continue to adapt to changing times, particularly as we look ahead to next year's Summit of NATO leaders in Brussels in July.

Our history has taught us that our ability to adapt is crucial to our success.

Again and again, faced with a changing world, the Alliance has evolved.

As you know, NATO was created back in 1949. For forty years, the Alliance focused on collective defence in Europe, and kept our nations safe without a shot being fired, allowing our nations to recover, to integrate and flourish after the Second World War.

Then, in 1989, the Berlin Wall came down, and the world changed.

NATO's focus shifted away from collective defence to managing conflicts beyond our borders, helping to end two wars in the Balkans, and fighting terrorism in Afghanistan.

2014 was another pivotal year for our security.

The world changed again.

Russia illegally annexed Crimea, the only time since the Second World War that one European country has seized part of another by force.

And Daesh captured Mosul and Raqqa.

Declaring them part of its so-called caliphate.

As a result, NATO has to both strengthen our collective defence at home and manage crises beyond our borders at the same time.

Since 2014, Allies have implemented the largest reinforcement of our deterrence and defence since the Cold War.

We have tripled the size of the NATO Response Force to 40,000 troops, including a high-readiness force, ready to move within days.

We have also stepped up our military exercises and enhanced our air policing in the Baltic and Black Sea regions.

We have deployed almost 5000 troops in four multinational battlegroups to the east of the Alliance, and earlier this year I met the highly professional French soldiers serving in one of the battlegroups in Estonia.

We continue to increase defence spending, ensuring we have the capabilities we need.

We have strengthened cyber defences, and our defences against missile attacks.

At the same time, we have a robust nuclear deterrent to preserve peace, prevent coercion and deter aggression, and we are committed to arms control and disarmament.

The NATO Command Structure is being updated and modernised to enable us to move forces more quickly across Europe and to keep the sea lanes of communication across the

Atlantic free and open. General Mercier, one of our two Supreme Allied Commanders, is playing a key role in our transformation.

NATO's actions are defensive, proportionate and in line with our international commitments. Our aim is not to provoke conflict, but to prevent conflict.

We don't want a new Cold War, and we don't want a new arms race.

Russia is our neighbour. That is why our approach to Russia combines strong defence with meaningful dialogue, and we are making progress.

After two years without any meetings of the NATO-Russia Council, since 2016 we have had six meetings in the NATO-Russia Council, and France has had an influential voice in this dialogue with Russia.

We have addressed the situation in Ukraine, and the need for transparency and risk reduction. We have initiated actions on air safety in the Baltic Sea region and discussed Afghanistan.

From my own experience as a Norwegian politician, I know that dialogue with Russia is not always easy, but that is exactly why dialogue with Russia is important.

We have worked hard since 2014 to bolster European security. That security isn't just about what we do inside our borders, but also beyond our borders, too.

And we have stepped up our efforts to project stability in our neighbourhood and to fight terrorism.

Since 9/11, NATO Allies have stood together in solidarity against terrorism.

And as Secretary General, I marched here in Paris in the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo attack, and we have responded in many different places, in many different ways.

In Afghanistan we have transitioned from combat operations, to the training and advising of local Afghan forces. But we are now increasing the number of troops serving in our mission to 16,000 NATO soldiers in the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan.

NATO is also a full part of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, or Daesh.

We provide support with our AWACS surveillance planes and with the training of Iraqi officers, and we are helping to build the defence institutions of other partners in the Middle East and North Africa, such as Jordan and Tunisia.

France makes a major contribution to the fight against terrorism as a major partner in the Global Coalition and through your operations in the Sahel region. And we highly value the French contributions to the fight against terrorism.

So NATO is strengthening its collective defence and, at the same time, projecting stability in its neighbourhood.

Both of those are more effective when NATO and the European Union work together.

We are natural partners. 94% of the EU's population live in a NATO country. We share common values and common challenges.

That is why, last year, President Tusk, President Juncker and I signed a Joint Declaration on how we can strengthen NATO-EU cooperation.

We called for a 'new impetus and new substance to the NATO-EU strategic partnership.' Since then, we have made unprecedented progress in strengthening the NATO-EU cooperation.

We have boosted our cooperation on cyber defence, maritime security, fighting terrorism, and countering hybrid warfare, among many other things.

Federica Mogherini, the High Representative/Vice President, and I inaugurated The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki a few weeks ago, and NATO's maritime presence in the Aegean Sea is helping to implement the EU-Turkey agreement on migration by supporting FRONTEX and the Greek and Turkish Coastguards.

Neither NATO nor the European Union have all the tools to tackle the challenges alone, but together we are a formidable force for good.

And France, as a founding member of both NATO and the European Union, has a key role to play to ensure the coherence of our efforts.

My country, Norway, is not a member of the European Union, but I feel very European. Actually, I fought hard for Norway to join the European Union, but we lost the referendum in 1994. Actually, we have lost twice, because Norway is the only country in the world that has applied for membership in the European Union, negotiated an accession protocol, and then voted it down in a referendum two times. So I don't know when we'll try for a third time. That's a risky project.

But I strongly support European defence. I make this clear every time I address the European Council, as I did last week.

I am convinced a strong European defence is good for the European Union, it is good for Europe and it is good for NATO, as long as it respects three key principles.

First, it needs to focus on building the necessary capabilities: spending more and spending better.

That means, for instance, tackling the fragmentation of the European defence industry.

Let me give you a few examples which the European Commission, President Juncker, has focused on many, many times, related to the fragmentation of the European defence industry.

The US has one type of main battle tank, while Europe has 17 different types.

The US has four types of frigates and destroyers; Europe has 29.

The US has six types of fighter planes; Europe has 20.

That doesn't mean that everything needs to come from one single supplier, but think what it means for our ability to work and fight together and the unnecessary costs involved.

Second, a stronger European defence also needs to involve non-EU Allies to the fullest possible extent, of course respecting the autonomy and integrity of the European Union.

NATO has members who are not in the European Union but who make significant contributions to European security.

NATO as a transatlantic alliance is responsible for the collective defence of our European Allies.

That role is, and will continue to be, irreplaceable.

Our Allies on both sides of the Atlantic continue to be engaged in European security.

For the first time in years, the United States and Canada are increasing their military presence on our continent. And, after Brexit, non-EU Allies will account for 80% of NATO defence spending, and 3 of the 4 battlegroups in the eastern part of the Alliance will be led by non-EU Allies. So there is no way the European Union can replace NATO. The European Union can strengthen NATO, strengthen the European pillar inside NATO, but not replace NATO.

Third, a stronger European defence needs to complement, not duplicate, NATO's own efforts, and that is a view clearly expressed by European leaders.

On duplications, for instance, NATO already has a well-established defence planning process. We've had it for decades, and as part of that process, we identify in detail the capabilities that each Ally needs to deliver to ensure the Alliance has the tools it needs to do its job.

It would be a mistake for the EU to duplicate that process. Capitals should not be faced with two conflicting lists for capability requirements.

I'm absolutely certain that France, Germany, Italy, many other Allies who are members, both of NATO and the European Union, they don't want to end up with two European institutions, or NATO and the EU, presenting different conflicting force requirements to the same nations.

When it comes to complementing each other, national forces and capabilities generated by the EU need to be available for NATO use, too, because the nations which are part of both the EU and NATO simply cannot afford two sets of forces and capabilities.

We share 22 members, so to compete would be like competing with ourselves. That makes no sense.

Our roles are distinct but mutually reinforcing. We must work together in a coherent way.

Ladies and Gentlemen, among you here in this room are many of France’s future military leaders, and Allied leaders, too.

In the years to come, I know that I can rely on you to use your energy, commitment and creativity to help guide the Alliance, to achieve the changes we need in a changing world.

So with that, I’m looking forward to your questions and to interact with you after this speech. Thank you so much for your attention.

Moderator: Secretary General, thank you very much for your very comprehensive and insightful presentation. Now we have, I don’t know, 20-25 minutes, maybe slightly more, for a Q&A session, and let me ask you the first question.

The north Atlantic alliance is by far the most powerful military alliance in the world, there is no doubt about this, and the probability of a direct military attack on the alliance is again pretty low, but the alliance is facing challenges from outside, and these challenges are not direct, are not always military, and these challenges are commonly called like hybrid challenges or hybrid attacks. It's a combination of propaganda, cyber, etc. So how the alliance is facing these challenges and what are the means mobilized by the alliance to face these challenges?

Jens Stoltenberg (Secretary General of NATO): You're absolutely right that the probability for any conventional military attack against any NATO ally is very low, and that's because NATO has been able to respond, to adapt to a more demanding security environment with a more assertive Russia in the east but also with the turmoil to the south. We have implemented the biggest reinforcement of our collective defence since the end of the Cold War and we provide credible deterrence, sending a clear message to any potential aggressor that we are able, we have the capabilities, we have the resolve to respond if attacked, and that's the credible deterrence which prevents a conflict and attacks on NATO allies. It has proven successful for decades.

So the challenge is that we have aggressors, we have adversaries which are trying to attack us below the Article 5 threshold, without triggering our collective defence clause, and they do so in different ways, with hybrid and cyber tactics. We see cyberattacks daily from state and non-state actors in varying agree of seriousness but at least it's something which is ongoing. When we speak about conventional attacks then we speak about something that may happen in the future; cyberattacks is happening every day. Hybrid is also happening almost every

day, meaning that we have disinformation, propaganda, we have this combination of covert and overt operations, we see what is going on in Eastern Ukraine, and so on.

So our challenge is that we need to be able to respond to this kind of threats. We do that by significantly increasing our cyber capabilities. We have increased our own capabilities to defend NATO networks. There is no military conflict without a big cyber component. We have to be able to keep our cyber networks, which are so crucial for command and control, safe.

But we also have to help allies, nations to protect their network, and therefore we train, we share best practices, we have this Centre of Excellence in Tallinn, Centre of Excellence on cyber threats where we help all the allies to improve their networks, we have established some guidelines for civilians to protect civilian infrastructure, and we have also actually decided that cyberattacks can trigger Article 5 because cyberattacks can be as serious, can destroy infrastructure, can cause human suffering, as a conventional attack. So we decided back in 2014 that cyberattacks can or may trigger Article 5 if we deem that necessary. And everything we do also to increase the readiness, the preparedness of our forces, is also a way to respond to more cyber and hybrid attacks.

So we do a lot more but these are at least the main ways NATO is responding to a security environment where the line between peace and war is more blurred than before. In the old days it was either peace or war, and actually nations declared war, they went to the ambassadors and declared war. That's not the case anymore. It's very hard to…, the war against Daesch, it's hard to say exactly when it started, it's very hard to say when it ends, and it's actually hard to say where it takes place. It has taken place in Iraq and Syria, but also in many other countries and in cyberspace. So there's a much more blurred line between peace and war than ever before in human history but we have to be able to respond to also that.

Moderator: Thank you very much. Now, I'm going to pick questions from the audience. Please raise your hands. Please.

Q: Mr. Secretary General, thank you. Lieutenant [inaudible], United States Air Force. What is the future of Turkey in NATO and what is the impact to NATO?

Jens Stoltenberg: Turkey is an important ally for the whole alliance for several reasons, not least because of its strategic geographic location. I think we have to understand that the battle, the fight against ISIL, Daesch, has been very much dependent on that we could use the infrastructure in Turkey. Turkey's bordering Syria and Iraq. The fact that we were able to close the border has really impacted the flow of foreign fighters into Syria and Iraq, and the use of infrastructure, Incirlik, Konya, other bases, for the coalition, for the NATO AWACS planes, for coalition fighters, has been critical for the fight against Daesch. So just the geographic location, if we look at the map, then you see how big Turkey is and Turkey is really bordering all the turmoil to the south and I think we all have to understand and recognize the military importance of that territory being available for NATO and for coalition forces to fight Daesch.

Turkey is also important because it's bordering Russia in the Black Sea. And then we all know that there are challenges, there have been many terrorist attacks, there has been a very violent brutal coup attempt in the summer of 2016, July, and of course Turkey has the right to defend itself.

Jens Stoltenberg: I have stated several times that those responsible for terrorist attacks and those responsible for the failed coup attempt have to be prosecuted according to the rule of law, and that NATO is based on some core values, the rule of law, democracy, and individual liberty, and I expect all allies to respect those values, but at the same time I very much believe that it is important to understand that Turkey is an ally which has proven extremely important for NATO.

Moderator: Thank you. Sir.

Q: [Inaudible] French Centre for Working and Teaching of Commands, Land Commands. Thank you. Mr. Secretary General, thank you very much. I had two questions but actually thanks to our US colleague I have only one.

So to follow on the first question, I just came back from the position of French defence attaché in the Baltics, and I came back with the conclusion that finally the main problem or the main issue I would say in this region is A2/AD, so anti-access/area denial. So I would like to know in your opinion what the alliance could do more I would say than EFP, which is of course part of the answer to A2/AD, but how the alliance could tackle this main issue in the Baltics? Thank you very much.

Jens Stoltenberg: So we are taking A2/AD capabilities into account when we do our military planning, so it's not a surprise for us that there are access-denial capabilities in the Baltic Sea region. So that's part of what we take into account when we do our military planning. We are responding in different ways, partly by increasing our presence in the region. So one of the reasons why we have both increased the NATO presence with four battlegroups, combat-ready troops, multinational troops, in the three Baltic countries and Poland, is to make sure that we have troops there already and also to help reinforcements if needed.

I also welcome that in addition to the NATO troops also the Baltic countries and Poland are strengthening their own military capabilities. All the three Baltic countries will next year spend 2% of GDP on defence. Poland is already there, Estonia is already there, they'll be joined by Lithuania and Latvia next year. So these countries are also investing heavily in their home defence forces. On top of that we have the NATO troops, and on top you have also some bilateral US presence with a new brigade and with some additional US forces. So there is significant NATO and NATO ally presence in the Baltic region, partly as a response to the access denial capabilities of Russia.

Then, one of the reasons why I believe it extremely important that we invest in modern technology, and why we are requiring from our allies not only to increase defence

expenditures to 2% of GDP but also to spend 20% of that on investments in modern technology, is that we know that we need the most advanced technologies, the most advanced weapon systems to be able to penetrate the A2/AD capabilities. So that's another part of our response.

And the third element of our response is to improve military mobility, because the whole idea is to prevent a conflict, and the way to prevent a conflict is to have credible deterrence. We have credible deterrence now with an increased NATO presence, the US presence, and the home defence forces in these countries, but if we see that the risk for crisis is increasing then we will deploy more and therefore we need to be able to deploy, to reinforce before the outbreak of any conflict, to deter a conflict. And that's the reason why when we now reform and adapt the NATO command structure and when we work with the European Union, one of the key elements is military mobility, meaning how can we move forces quickly if needed to prevent conflict into for instance the Baltic region if that's there where we need reinforcements.

Moderator: Thank you. More questions. Yes, please.

Q: [Inaudible] and former director of OCCAR. Thank you Mr. Secretary General for your speech. I'd like to come back to what you said on the principal systems, on the number of systems in Europe, which is a source for a lack of efficiency and higher cost for defence.

Jens Stoltenberg: I’m able to hear, but…

Moderator: Yes, but that's why I repeat. You've mentioned the number of different systems in Europe, which is a source of inefficiency and a source of higher cost in Europe in terms of capacities for defence, and this is coming obviously from the low-level of cooperation in Europe between European nations for armaments. I mean the level of cooperation is about 20% of the amount of defence investment, and this percentage has been the same for more than 20-30 years. And you've said that we should not duplicate in Europe what is done in NATO, but obviously I mean the military planning in NATO has not been able to cope with this problem for the last 60 years.

So don’t you think that some capacity of military planning, capacity planning in Europe could help to cope with this difficulty, I mean to help European nations to increase their cooperation for armament, for defence investment?

Jens Stoltenberg: Yes, I think that perhaps not a military planning process in NATO but NATO could help to induce or to stimulate nations to go together. And actually we do that because we try very much to promote that nations when they develop, when they invest in new capabilities, that they go together, and have what we call smart defence or framework nation approach.

So we have some examples where for instance I think it's Denmark and the Netherlands they're now working together with some other countries to develop precision-guides munition together, some other countries are working to develop new drones, and so on, and NATO very much encourages allies going together to develop jointly new capabilities to have not so many different types but to then address the fragmentation.

And the good thing is that then you can have a bigger number, and by having bigger numbers you can have the economy of scale, you can reduce the cost both in development, in production, but not least in maintenance, and you also increase interoperability.

But to be honest, I think that perhaps the EU has an even stronger tool because the EU is now developing the European Defence Fund. We try to urge allies to go together, but we don’t have the money to stimulate, and money helps always. So a NATO smile is nice, but it's even better to have some EU money, meaning the EU with a new defence fund. The whole aim as far as I understand after many meetings with the EU leaders is that they will then fund joint capability developments, and that I think will really help. And again, of course everyone understands that the European Defence Fund should go to European entities, but hopefully it can be also open to work together with non-EU allies, not funding them but joint projects, then it's something we just should welcome. And hopefully that will be one of the main outcomes of stronger European defence.

Let me just tell you a story, which I've told many other audiences, because this is about big national sensitivities, because this is about defence industry, it's about jobs and national pride. And in Norway we don’t build cars, we don’t build armour, we don’t build many kinds of military equipment, except for ships. Norway we regard ourselves as a big shipbuilding nation. And when I was prime minister back in 2000 we were going to build five new frigates, and we had an open bid, and the problem was that it was a Spanish shipyard, I think it was Navantia, that was actually better than any Norwegian shipyard, and cheaper. That was a big problem, but we decided to build the five frigates in Spain. It was close to civil war in Norway after that. And I really believe that one of the reasons why I lost the election the year after was because we decided to build the best and the cheapest Norwegian frigate in Spain. I would never do that again.

So the thing is that this is extremely sensitive. What we saw afterwards was actually that the Norwegian industry had many contracts because they delivered much of the equipment, much of the IT and so on to the frigates, so it just underlines that we can go together, we can have jobs for everyone, but the problem is that we have to overcome some of these national sensitivities to address the fragmentation of the European defence industry.

So I really hope that the European Union will succeed. That will increase the competitiveness of the European industry, it will reduce the cost for European defence, it will get more defence out of the investments, and it will increase interoperability. So this is one of the reasons why

we really believe in a strong European defence because I think that's the best tool to address the fragmentation of the European defence industry.

Moderator: Thank you very much. So we learn that you were on the verge of civil war in Norway. According to your standards we're in civil war already in France every day ! So now the next question please.

Q: [Inaudible]. I may ask you a question now that I'm not in a position as a commander. Before I was supposed to answer. You are better placed than anybody else to assess the will of the US current administration to keep its commitments in Europe. You know as well as us that there is a creeping idea in Europe and some European countries that they could reduce their commitment, even their presence, and we are sure that you have very intensive discussions with President Trump on that.

Jens Stoltenberg: First of all, thank you. I appreciate very much the time we worked together, and I think you raise an important question. I've told some parliamentarians, some members of the National Assembly here in France earlier today, that we have to remember that NATO is an alliance of 29 different nations with different elected leaders, with different views on many issues, and it has been like that for decades, meaning that sometimes we disagree on issues.

There have been disagreements between NATO allies since the alliance was established -- on the Suez crisis in the 50s, on the Vietnam War in the 60s and the 70s, on the Iraq war in 2003, and many other issues. And that's also the case today, because NATO allies they have different views on climate change, the Paris Accord, on the question of whether Jerusalem is going to be the capital of Israel, or trade issues.

The strength of NATO is that despite all these differences, despite that we are different nations with different culture, different political views on many issues, and leaders from the left, and the right, and the centre, and many different political angles, we have always been able to agree on the main task of NATO and to unite behind the main task, and that is that we protect each other, that we defence each other, and that we are stronger together than alone, based on the message from the three musketeers: one for all, and all for one. That's the founding act of NATO I thought. So that's also the case today.

I'm not denying that there are different views, but I'm saying that when it comes to the core responsibility of NATO, that we defend each other, that we stand together, that we provide credible deterrence and defence, then we are actually stronger than we have been for a long time, because we have strengthened our collective defence. The world has become more dangerous, but NATO has become stronger, so we are responding.

And this is not only something I say, but it is actually something that is happening. Canada left Europe after the end of the Cold War, land troops. The US has gradually decreased, decreased, decreased, every year since the end of the Cold War. The last armoured brigade,

the last US armoured brigade left Europe in 2013. Now they have redeployed a US armoured brigade to Europe. The US has three brigades, combat-ready brigades in Europe, they are significantly increasing the number of troops, armour, equipment, supply, exercises of US forces in Europe. Canada is back. Canada is leading one of the battlegroups in Latvia, and the US is leading another in Poland, and they are deploying, in addition to the NATO troops, they are deploying on bilateral agreements US troops. They have 70,000 troops in Europe now.

So I say to you that actions speak louder than words. The US is increasing their military presence in Europe; Canada is back; they [the US] have tripled the funding for US presence in Europe, so that's part of the NATO adaptation. It's actually that the transatlantic bond has been strengthened with more US in Europe but also with the European allies stepping up, increasing their defence investments and making their forces more ready, and actions to strengthen European defence which I regard as a contribution to strengthening the European pillar within NATO. So there many problems and many challenges, but it's not true, no, it's not correct to say that the US is leaving Europe; the US is actually coming back to Europe.

Moderator: Thank you. Please.

Q: [Inaudible].

Jens Stoltenberg: You need a microphone, and we have two. One is working and one is not working. Pick the one that…, yeah.

Q (French Gendarmerie): Major Belcourt, French Gendarmerie. Sir, following your last answer and regarding the current geopolitical situation and Russian position, do you think NATO should or could extend to new members or strengthen its position and internal relationship in order to improve its cohesion and coherence? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg: Sir, you asked about new members? Yeah. Well, NATO's door is open, meaning that in our founding treaty, the Washington Treaty, Article 10, it's clearly stated that NATO can be enlarged with new members if they are European countries and if they adhere to the NATO standards. The best proof that NATO's door is open is that we actually enlarged this year with Montenegro. NATO went from 28 to 29 allies when Montenegro was invited in or became a new NATO ally this spring.

Then the question is whether we are going to have new members. Well, we have some aspirant countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, and also Ukraine has stated that they would like to also move towards NATO and EU membership.

My message is that whether these countries are going to become members of NATO or not it's only up to the applicant or aspirant countries to decide, and the 29 allies. No other country has the right to interfere or to try to veto that process. And that's not only something I say, but

that is a fundamental principle in for instance the Helsinki Founding Act that every nation has the right to choose its own path. We will never accept that big powers can establish a kind of sphere of influence where they decide what the neighbours can do.

And again, coming from Norway, a small country, five million people, bordering Russia, it's extremely dangerous to accept that big powers have some kind of influence, some say over neighbours. Small countries, big countries, medium-sized countries, have all the enshrined right to decide the path they would like to go themselves. If they want to join a military alliance it's up to them and of course the members of the alliance to decide.

We are helping Bosnia and Herzegovina, [inaudible], Georgia, and Ukraine, and other aspirant countries with reforming, with modernizing, and then at the end of the day it will be the 29 allies to decide, no one else.

Moderator: Thank you. So a few more questions. Please. I can give you the microphone.

Colin Cameron (Association Europe-IHEDN): Colin Cameron, I'm from the Association Europe-IHEDN. A little side just before I begin, Secretary General. You've mentioned the two referenda in Norway. I think if the European community had kept the term community rather than union there might have been a different result. And just on the same theme, I was [inaudible] a few years ago when you had a vote on whether you could dispose of some Mauser rifles you had found under a mountain, and the answer was yes they could sold to the hunters, but certainly not to the Swedes. This is the theme of union, again. Would you care to say something about your relationship with Sweden, with Finland? The attachés from these countries are in the room today.

And could you say a little about NATO's further relationships now that the area, NATO area, seems to be a little more pervious than it was previously, say Australia, Pacific, out of area in a big way? Could you say a few words on that? Thank you.

Moderator: Partners, you mean?

Jens Stoltenberg: It may be a bit naïve but I think you have a valid point, that the fact the EU changed from a community to a union had a negative impact for those who advocated Norway joining the European Union. My grandfather, no, yeah, actually my grandfather, he became 100 years old, he voted in 1994, he remembered the union with Sweden, and I believe that he voted no because he's by principle against unions, because for Norwegians a union that's to be ruled by Sweden. We like Swedes but we don’t like to be ruled by them.

And since I'm in France I can also tell my favourite story that Norway is a very strange country because the main street in Oslo goes from the parliament to the castle, and that's named after a French general, Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte. We call him Karl Johan. And the biggest statue in Oslo is the same French general, and we march along that French general every 17th of May. We don’t know exactly who he is but we are in favour of that man. And he

became the Swedish king, and the first thing he did was to invade Norway. But we named the main street, then the main statue in front of the royal castle, and we celebrate him every year. So we like Swedes and French generals.

But then having said all this, let me just add that I think that Sweden and Finland, and this I would have said regardless of who is in the audience, I think that the Nordic countries is an example how peace can win over war and how peace is stronger than conflict in the long run, because you have to remember that in the Nordic area we fought each other for centuries, from the Viking era until the Napoleonic War. We fought, and fought, and fought. And Norway was almost always on the losing side, but we were partly on the Swedish side, partly on the Danish side, but we lost all the time. And really, the Nordic countries were a kind of mini Middle-East. Then after the Napoleonic War there has been absolutely peace and you can hardly find any countries in the world which are so peaceful, so friendly, and which like each other so much as the Nordic countries.

So for me that inspire me when I look at all the regions in the world when they tell me that it's impossible to love our neighbours or to trust our neighbours. It is possible, because when we can trust the Swedes then there is no limit for what people…, then the reality is that people can trust each other and they can become friendly regardless of the history. That's the same actually in other parts of Europe: France, Germany, the same story.

Then, on the question of countries further away, well we have an excellent partnership with New Zealand and Australia, we have a strong partnership with Japan and South Korea, these are partnerships which are very important because they address also some global security challenges, including for instance North Korea and the ballistic missile threat and the development of nuclear weapons. I recently visited South Korea and Japan, and we work with them also in addressing for instance the threats from North Korea.

Moderator: Maybe one last question. Please, the gentleman behind. And please be short if you can.

Q (British Liaison Officer at École Militaire): Mr. Secretary General, Lieutenant-Colonel Mark [inaudible], the British liaison officer here at the École Militaire. Thank you very much for your exposé, for what you've given us. You've identified two specific areas of threat: one to the east, and one from the southern flank. How can NATO balance those two threats when some countries, including my own, view the east as the major threat, other countries such as our French allies here view the southern threat from immigration and terrorism coming from Africa as a major problem?

Jens Stoltenberg: The short answer is that we don’t have the luxury of choosing either to address the threats and the challenges from the south or the challenges stemming from the east. We have to do both at the same time. And in my speech I briefly touched upon how NATO has been able to adapt to do both crisis management beyond our borders and at the same time strengthen our collective defence in Europe. And I'm actually quite impressed by

NATO and NATO allies because we have conducted a huge and fundamental adaptation of the alliance since 2014, because the world changed.

And the reason why NATO is the most successful alliance in history is that we have proven again and again able to change. As I said for 40 years we did collective defence in Europe, then after the end of the Cold War we did crisis management beyond our borders and we were not very focused on collective defence, after Crimea, Ukraine, Daesch, ISIL, Mosul, Raqqa, then we have proven able to both do collective defence in Europe and address crisis beyond our borders at the same time. So there's just no way we can choose, we have to do both at the same time, and I'm absolutely confident that NATO is able to do that because that's exactly what we have done since 2014.

Moderator: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary General. I join my thanks to the thanks of the director and we're really honoured you chose to come here and make your presentation, your speech. Thanks again, and on this optimistic note that we can fight against two enemies simultaneously I thank you again and I wish you all the best for you and for the alliance. Thank you very much.

Moderator: Secretary General, thank you very much for your very comprehensive and insightful presentation. Now we have, I don’t know, 20-25 minutes, maybe slightly more, for a Q&A session, and let me ask you the first question.

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