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NATO 2.0: Reboot or Delete?
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Featuring:

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SARWAR KASHMERI: The EU has just approved the 28th mission, the 28th mission, and guess where that mission is approved for? It is called "EUFOR Libya." I am just thrilled to be here, and I want to thank the Foreign Policy Association, which has placed such an important role in the development of what I do. And I want to thank Colonel Jebbs [phonetic], and all the cadets who are here from West Point. West Point is one of the most inspiring places that I've had the privilege to go to, and every time I go there, I am just in awe of the career that these young women and men have chosen. And so, I simply cannot start without saying, "Thank you for your service."

NATO, I believe, is an increasingly dysfunctional organization. And if it continues to go the way it is now, it will become rather inconsequential for the security of Europe and the United States. That's kind of the theme of my book, and I also believe, however, that NATO is extremely important, and that it has, in some way, to be redone. And so let me reveal the mystery of this book, you know, "Reboot or Delete?" If you're coming in and someone says, "Are you going to give away which one it is?" and I do that, it's reboot, not delete.

I wrote this book for everyone. I wrote this book because I think it's terribly important for young people to understand what NATO was, what NATO is, so that they can then play their part in supporting people who are trying to change it. Interestingly, the name that I chose, "2.0: Reboot or Delete?" ran into some difficulty with the search engines on online bookstores. You know, when you go in and search for a book they say, "If you like this book, you'll really like these other

books"? Well, all the books they were picking out were computer books, "How to Make your own Computer," "How to Reboot," so I think they have that fixed.

NATO is one of those institutions that was set up after the Second World War, to help both keep the peace, and to reconstruct a world that had seen total devastation. And it has existed from that point as a very strong anchor of the European American Alliance, the Transatlantic Alliance. And it's my argument that it is now beginning to do the reverse. Instead of holding the two sides together, it's beginning to chip away at the relationship.

And that relationship, the transatlantic, the wider [phonetic] transatlantic relationship to me is still enormously, enormously important. We live in a time where China, and Brazil, and India, and so on, the galloping economies, are going to be the biggest markets in the world. But I always like to start off by telling the audiences that today, today, the 800 million people of the United States and the European Union produced almost two-thirds of the world's economic output.

Fourteen trillion dollars in sales are generated by these two economies. They employ four million people. Just as many Americans work for European's firms, as Europeans do for American firms. European investment contributes 10 percent of New York's GDP. One New Yorker out of 20 has his or her job because of the investment from the European Union. So that, to me, is the ultimate prize. It's the ultimate prize also because these two regions are two of the very few in the world that really understand what the position of an individual is in society and in government.

Freedom, all of those other things that we take for granted are engrained in the DNA on both sides. And so, I would submit to you that keeping that relationship strong is extremely important, and that's where, when I started to think about NATO and where it came from, and where it's headed, I thought, "This is not working. We need to do something about that," because it's that relationship which is starting to suffer. As you know, NATO was set up in 1949, right? And it had a very clear purpose, and the purpose was to stop the Soviet Union from invading Europe.

In fact, the best description that I've ever heard of NATO, and some of you may have heard this, was by its first secretary general, who was asked by the reporter, "What is NATO for?" And he said, "NATO is to keep the Russians out, the Germans down, and the Americans in." In one sentence he encapsulated the entire purpose of what NATO was. So, NATO goes through the Cold War, right? We end the Cold War without NATO firing a shot. The Soviet Union collapses, and then the question was what to do with NATO.

In those heady times, and by the way, for this book I've talked to over 50 people on both sides of the Atlantic. I've talked to probably all of the key military leaders

from the European Union and a lot of the political and military folks here in the United States. So, that's the background of the research that I've been doing for this book. So anyway, so the Soviet Union collapses. We still have NATO. The question was, "What should we do with NATO?" And in that heady time, people just didn't think it through, and what we wanted to do was, we wanted to make sure that all these newly freed countries in Central Europe and Eastern Europe were all given some form of stability.

And Mr. Byshinsky [phonetic], the former security advisor, makes a very wonderful point by saying, "You couldn't leave these countries in the middle of Russia on one side and the West on the other, kind of in limbo." And they all wanted to join NATO. And so we started absorbing those countries and NATO went from a very tightly knit group of 13 to now 28 countries.

Well, during that time, by the way, the bureaucracy expanded to about 14,000 people. There are 300 committees, and equal number of subcommittees, and so, this has become a huge, huge, huge structure that comes through today. That's being whittled down, by the way, because one of the rules in NATO is unanimity. All decisions are made by unanimity, and making decisions with 300 committees, unanimity, as well as the board of directors, I don't know if anyone but Chairman Gonzalo [phonetic] who can handle that kind of a crowd.

So we come to the stage where NATO has expanded, and let me go through to 1999 now, when NATO makes the decision in Washington that they will now go anywhere in the world to fight, that that's the new purpose of NATO, the so-called "out of area" purpose of NATO. And we go along, and I want to short circuit this because I want to leave some time for questions, and I want to bring you to 9/11, and by the way, my book has probably the first description of what was taking place at NATO headquarters on 9/11, a first-hand account of that.

But here we are at 9/11. The NATO treaty, the treaty that set up NATO has in it a number of articles. It's a very short treaty, and Article V is a very key instrument in the treaty. It basically says an attack on any member of NATO will be considered an attack on all. And it was they key article, if you will, that connected America to the defense of Europe, because Europe, by that time, was flat, flat on their backs. They didn't have the money. They were destroyed, and they knew when [phonetic] the Russians came in, the only way to defend Europe was with America, and America's might.

And so, that's what this article did. Well, after 9/11, the very next day, NATO got together and decided to invoke Article V, which had never been invoked before. They said, "We'll go to war with America. An attack on America, our leader, is an attack on all of us," huge, huge, huge statement on the part of all of these folks who were there. And that story, itself, is interesting, and you should buy the book just for that story, as to how that came out. Sorry, that's the last time I will plug the book.

Anyway, the United States decides it's going to go fight alone. It turns around and tells all these NATO allies who had stepped up to the plate, declared Article V, said, "Let's go to war." We said, "No." We said, "You know, this is a real war. Why don't you take it easy, and when we need for you to come, we'll call you. That was the first sign on the European side that something was not right. Something was not right. Then let's move on to Afghanistan. There came a time when--by the way, if you haven't read about the account of what the few hundred special forces and armed CIA people did in a few weeks in Afghanistan after 9/11, it's really worth reading. We basically destroyed the Taliban camps, sent Al Qaeda running, just a few hundred of them, including some wonderful Calvary horse charges on wooden saddles in Afghanistan. It's quite a story.

But in 2003, the United Nations said we need to now start stabilizing Afghanistan, and NATO took over the Afghanistan campaign. And there we find yet another fault [phonetic] line developing in NATO and that is a fault line, the so-called "caveat." It turned out that some European allies simply did not wish to make war, that they wanted areas where there were no shooting battles going on, others didn't want to fight at night, some didn't want to fight unless they had helicopters, and so on. So, there were all these rules, and pretty soon we started to see folks who wanted to send soldiers out into the field consulting, almost consulting check lists, to see what soldiers you could send out, what soldiers you could not.

All right, so this starts to develop. And by the way, I'm very careful when I make the statement about caveats, because I don't mean, in any way, to cut down on the bravery of the troops who are helping us Americans out there. I mean, the Germans are not very willing to fight there because of a very historical precedent. It is very difficult for Germans to get over the Second World War history, so I say these things just as matter-of-factly, but please don't impute any other motive into that.

So now you have these caveats. You have Afghanistan where we were not prepared to use the allies, because this was a different kind of war, and technology had, in some ways, left them behind. And we move now to 2007 in Estonia, where Estonia started to do something the Russians didn't like, and before they knew it there was a cyber attack which basically flattened the Estonian government. No one knows whether that came from Russia. There's a good reason it may have, but it has never been conclusively proven.

But within a matter of a day-and-a-half--Estonia is one of the most wired countries in the world, by the way--and in a day-and-a-half Estonia had ceased to work, the international banks, the post office, the licensing groups and so on, out. Estonia was a member of NATO, right? So 9/11, "NATO headquarters, help, we are being destroyed?" "How?" "Computers, cyber, don't work." Back came the answer, "Oh, that doesn't work on Article V. Our Article V does not cover cyber defense," another fault line.

And let me move along to 2008, Russia-Georgia, right? You may recall that there was a tiff between Russia and the country of Georgia at that time. And for some

reason, and I've never really understood it, the president of Georgia decided that he should pick a war with Russia, a much larger neighbor. Well, Russia attacked in full force, and before you knew it, the Russians had occupied a large part of the military establishment and so on. Well, my hunch about that war is this. Georgia was being encouraged to join NATO. Russia had laid down a line on the sand. Many of you probably know this, but Ukraine and Georgia are very different from the other Central and Eastern European countries. They have historically been an integral part of Russia.

In fact, Ukraine used to be the bed basket and used to, you know, until the Mongols came and then the Russians ran up into the forest, and so on. So, they go back a long time, and the Russians said, "Here you will not come." And we wanted to get Georgia, or then the administration wanted to get Georgia into NATO, and the Europeans objected to that. And we basically said, "All right, so we'll give up, but why don't you make a statement saying, 'You're almost as good as members.'" And I'm convinced, to this day, that that was enough for the president of Georgia-- who, by the way, is a Columbia graduate, practiced in New York with one of the most influential law firms, is well-connected into the political hierarchy--and so, it's not the person who would just go off his rocker and go to war with Russia.

I think he went to war with Russia because he really thought that the Calvary would come to his rescue, but we didn't. So, my point that I'm building up to is, so fault lines in Afghanistan, fault lines in Estonia, providing a kind of security that doesn't exist. And I'll just touch--oh, I had an interesting--when I spoke last year at West Point. At the end of the class Q&A, an American cadet, there was some European cadets there, asked me, "Why didn't NATO give Russia a tough time during the Georgia campaign, the Georgia-Russia campaign?"

And I was trying to figure out how to diplomatically answer this when a German cadet said, "May I answer?" And I said, "Of course." And he said, "Well," he said, "Let me tell you. If you had done that you'd be on your own, because Germany has terrific ties with Russia, we have growing business relationships, and you would have been on your own if you'd asked NATO to do that." Isn't that interesting? I'll give you another one like that. France has just completed the sale of a warship called "The Mistral," [phonetic]; it's a helicopter-attack warship to Russia.

When Russia invaded Georgia, it took them 26 hours to go and occupy the neighbor ports. That warship would let them do it in 40 minutes. Now, think about that. A strong member of NATO disregarding the views and the sensibilities of the Central and Eastern Europeans, and making the sale. And by the way, I'm not criticizing France. Countries do what they do, what's in their national interest. So, there's this big divide between the western part of NATO and the Central and Eastern European parts of NATO.

Just quickly on Libya, which you may have some questions on later. You know, I keep thinking that this whole Libyan war was a setup to illuminate the arguments of my book. Well, I know that that is not true. But one of the biggest reasons for NATO is standardization. We've always said, ultimately, NATO people can fight

together, standards. Well, do you remember reading last week that the NATO allies were running out of laser-guided bombs? Well, we have plenty of them there. There's a big, American carrier there. But guess what? They don't fit on British and French attack aircraft. I was stunned to learn that, because I thought if nothing else, that for 30 years we've been practicing, we've been, you know, doing all these things.

I'm going to switch gears and go to EU, but I'll tell you where this idea of the book came from. The U.S. Navy had invited me a couple of years ago to watch carrier operations, and I was onboard one of our atomic, nuclear-powered carriers. Now, that is some outfit, I'll tell you. What they do on those carriers is just out of this world. But I was having dinner and on one side of me, this will be meaningful to the West Point cadets, was the executive officer who pretty much runs the ship. And on the other side was the commander of the fighter squadron.

And there was probably a 14-year, or 12-year age difference between them. So, I asked the XO, the executive officer, I said, "Hey, what do you think about NATO?" By that time my wife had gotten used to me at any dinner party turning around to people next to me and saying, "What do you think of NATO?" So I said, "What do you think of NATO?" And he gave me this whole picture about NATO, and how we could never do without it, that this is the anchor of Western security.

Over dessert, I asked exactly the same question to the commander of the attack squadron, and guess what he said? He says, "You know, you'll really have to prove to me what good this NATO thing is." Now, here I am sitting between two of the most senior American military officers, and that's the reaction I'm getting from either side. And that's when it hit home that, you know, maybe this is an area worth looking into.

So, let me know jump to 1998. The Balkan Wars have just gotten over. Remember there were those wars in Europe's backyard that everyone thought Europe should take care of but they didn't? Right? So the wars get over. We had to involve NATO. The United States had to go in. The wars get over and France and Brittan decide that this is really shameful. You know, we don't have any institutions to build consensus. We don't have any institutions to plan and run an operation. Never again.

So, they met on the island of San Malo [phonetic] in France, and they came up with an agreement. When the European Union was set up, there always was a security pillar in it, but it had been put aside so that they could focus on treaties that affected finance, and capital markets, and movement of people, and bringing the continent closer together. But at San Malo they decided to fire up the security pillar.

NATO is run, by the way, by a board of directors called the North Atlantic Council. Then there's a military committee, and then you have various other committees, but those are the key structures that run NATO. And so, the Europeans set up a military committee. They set up a military staff. They set up a satellite center in

Brussels. And all of a sudden folks woke up in Washington and said, "Hey, what are these Europeans doing? Are they going to take away what NATO is doing? Is there going to be duplication?"

And the U.S., at our direction, but with the U.K. also, we set up some ground rules and said, "You know, this is all okay, but you can't set up a permanent headquarters. And if you launch a campaign you need to use the deputy commander of NATO as the person in charge of it, and so on." And then came to an agreement called the Berlin Plus Agreement to work those things out. Well, that only lasted for one campaign, and after that, over the last ten years, the Europeans have sent 27 deployments from Asia to Africa under what they call their Common Security and Defense Policy, which is a policy as well as an establishment.

Now, I should hasten to tell you, most of these have been very small missions, 100, 200 people, but they have gone all the way from Asia to Africa. Two of them which I want to touch on our very key. How many people know that there is a neighbor force, a European Union neighbor force operating off Somalia? Anti-piracy? It's twice the size of NATO's.

Three years ago at the request of the United Nations, the European Union and the CSDP sent a brigade-level force to Chad [phonetic], that's a little over 3,000 people. They flew them thousands of miles into the center of Africa. I spent quite a bit of talking to General Nash [phonetic], the Irish commander of that mission. They were tested within the first week. They were Polish, French, and Swedish special forces that went in and opened up the airstrips. The force came in, operational within 40 days before it pitched battles. They were deployed for 19 months, and then they turned it over to the U.N. and went home.

Not the size of Afghanistan, not thousands of miles away, but as General Nash told me, he said, "You know," he said, "If we can do it for a brigade, we can do it for three brigades." The E.U. has just approved the 28th mission, the 28th mission, and guess where that mission is approved for? It is called E.U.F.O.R. Libya. One week ago they made the political decision in Brussels to set up a battalion level, about a thousand people, 1,200 people, ready to go. There's a commander appointed. It's been funded for three months, and it's waiting for the U.N. to ask. They get that call; they put in a battalion into Libya. We haven't covered that as much as we should.

So again, this was all part of the research that I was doing there, and I was talking to people, and one side really understood what was happening with the CSDP. I said, my standard questions became to almost every general, "Look, you can handle the security of Europe on your own now, right?" And the answer would always be, "Yes, if we had the political will. If we had the political will." And so one of my editorials a couple of weeks ago is to the effect that Libyan gives America the ideal opportunity to let Europe get its political will.

I think that this strategy security equation, transatlantic equation, has really not been recalibrated since the Second World War. Europe, now, is on its feet. I

mean, there probably will never be a European army, but as we've seen in some of these missions, that is a very strong army of Europeans, and I would submit that that's what it will probably be for quite a while. I'm doing this whole canard [phonetic] about, you know, Europe, they don't fight, and they just negotiate and so on. I ended up talking to General Scowcroft [phonetic] for my earlier book and he said, "Don't let anybody fool you," he said. He said, "When their interests are threatened, there is nobody that can fight as well as the Europeans." And he said, "Well, we can, the Americans, but - - not."

So coming now to where I want to end so we can answer some questions, I think NATO's future, by itself, the shelf-life is very small, because I think the countries that are part of NATO, you know, don't really see eye to eye. Also, I believe the Europeans are quite interested in doing their own thing. And since Iraq, and a little while before that, I simply don't believe that the United States and Europe are totally in sync when it comes to security. I think that whole equation has to be thought out again.

And so, I've just finished a report for the Army War College. They had me speak about the book and they said, "Can you recommend what we ought to be doing?" And I've just finished that report, which will come out in a couple of months. And my recommendation is that the President of the United States get in touch with the leadership of the European Union and start a project to bridge NATO to the European Union CSDP. The Europeans haven't pulled the whole thing together, but they're moving in that direction.

So that's my story, and I'm sticking to it. And I'm ready to engage on your command.