

# INTERVIEW WITH ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN\*

*In this exclusive interview with TPQ, the Honorable Secretary General provides an overview of the major developments of the past two years in Turkey's neighborhood, including the Libya operation and the crisis in Syria, and assesses NATO's stance thereof. He points out that unlike in the Libya case, there has not been a united response from the international community or a UNSC mandate in the case of Syria. Emphasizing NATO's open door policy, he commends Georgia for its commitment to a vision of NATO membership, and underlines the democratic success marked by the recent elections in this country. The Secretary General also notes NATO's decision to enhance cooperation with partners, and include partners that contribute to NATO operations into relevant decision-shaping processes.*



\*Anders Fogh Rasmussen is the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

# C *an you provide our Turkish readership an assessment of how NATO membership renders Turkey more secure than it would be otherwise?*

To threaten one NATO Ally is to threaten them all. Article five of the Alliance's founding Washington Treaty means that 28 Allies stand ready and willing to help one another, following the principle "all for one, one for all." For over 60 years, this collective defense clause has helped NATO deliver significant security benefits for all Allies, including Turkey.



Allied solidarity with Turkey has been clearly demonstrated in the last few months in connection with developments on the Turkish-Syrian border. At Turkey's request, the NATO Council met, at very short notice, for consultations. We condemned in the strongest terms the Syrian authorities' disregard for international norms, peace and security, and human life.

We also made clear that the security of the Alliance is indivisible and that, if needed, NATO stands ready to defend Turkey.

NATO Allies have always stood together in solidarity in the fight against terrorism. In Afghanistan, Allies are putting themselves in harm's way and taking casualties to fight the same kind of terrorism that has hit Turkey repeatedly, for instance in Istanbul – to make sure that Afghanistan never becomes a breeding ground for terrorism again, and that we do not see a repeat of 9/11, or the London, Madrid, and Istanbul attacks.

As I said during my visit to Turkey earlier this year to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Turkey's accession to NATO, Turkey is part of a unique transatlantic family and of a unique transatlantic forum. NATO is the only organization where 28 nations from Europe and North America meet every day to discuss both the political and the military dimensions of security. Every Alliance decision is based on thorough consultation and consensus among all the Allies. This means that Turkey's voice matters. When Ankara speaks, its views are heard across all Allied capitals and it has a major role in shaping what the Alliance does. And although Allies do not agree on everything, they have been able to look beyond bilateral differences to the benefit of the greater good of the Alliance. This cohesion is part of our collective strength.

***How would you respond to those who claim that NATO acts with double standards, protecting civilians against abusive regimes in some cases, namely Libya, but not in others, namely Syria?***

I totally reject these claims. No two countries and no two crises are the same. What we are witnessing in Syria is indeed outrageous, and we continue to follow the situation there closely and with great concern. However, there are important differences from the situation in Libya.

Last year, we successfully implemented the historic mandate by the United Nations Security Council to protect the people of Libya. In doing so, we had active political and operational support from countries in the region. In the case of Syria, there has been no call from the region or from the international community for NATO to intervene. So I believe that the way forward remains a political response. The United Nations Security Council, and the whole international community, must give a strong and united response to ensure this terrible violence stops and the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people are accommodated.

***“Every Alliance decision is based on thorough consultation and consensus among all the Allies. This means that Turkey’s voice matters.”***

***What lessons did NATO learn from its operation in Libya in terms of the institution’s internal cohesion and capacity? Can the Libya intervention serve as a precursor or a model for further NATO action?***

Our mission to protect civilians in Libya showed that NATO remains an essential source of stability in an unpredictable world. It showed that Europe and North America acting together are a tremendous force for good. NATO acted with unprecedented speed. We took the decision to launch a complex operation in only six days, and together with our partners, we successfully completed our mission within seven months. That is why we need to continue investing in our Transatlantic Alliance, militarily, economically, and politically.

In Libya, European Allies and Canada, together with our partners, provided most of the military assets, even in these tough economic times when many nations have to cut their defense budgets. But we would not have been as effective without the unique and critical capabilities of the United States, such as drones,

*“In the case of Syria, there has been no call from the region or from the international community for NATO to intervene.”*

smart munitions, surveillance, and intelligence assets.

At our summit in Chicago last May, we agreed on a new guiding principle for capability development within NATO – “smart defense”. This is all about prioritizing, specializing and looking for multinational solutions, to provide capabilities together that nations cannot deliver alone. This new approach is already producing results.

For instance, a group of Allies will acquire five reconnaissance drones and the associated command and control base stations. This key capability will give NATO commanders the ability to see what is happening on the ground at long range and over long periods of time. Our operation for Libya showed this was a key priority.

One further lesson from our Libya mission is the importance of NATO’s partnerships. Our partners were involved in political consultations and planning from the earliest stages. They broadened the coalition politically, and they also played an invaluable role operationally. Investing in our unique network of partnerships around the world remains as important for NATO as investing in our capabilities.

***Georgia is a European country that aspires for NATO membership. Do you consider the process of admitting Georgia as a member to be merit-based?***

NATO’s “open door policy” has contributed substantially to the security of Allies, and has brought us closer to a Europe that is whole, free and at peace. Over the past 15 years, NATO’s membership has grown considerably – from 16 to 28.

Several more countries aspire to join the Alliance, including Georgia. NATO’s door remains fully open to all European democracies which share the values of our Alliance, which are willing and able to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership, and whose inclusion can contribute to common security and stability. However, there can be no shortcut. NATO membership is indeed merit-based, and it demands much work and much commitment.

Georgia has shown very strong commitment. This autumn, it has become the biggest non-NATO troop contributor to our ISAF mission in Afghanistan.

Georgia has also made substantial progress in important reforms, including restructuring of its defense and security sectors. The recent parliamentary elections were an important milestone in Georgia's democratic development. During my visit to Tbilisi before the elections, I described them as a first "litmus test" for the country's democracy. Georgia passed that test.

It is important now for Georgia to stay on the path of reform and to further consolidate democracy and the rule of law. Of course, we will continue to help Georgia and all other countries aspiring to NATO membership to implement all the necessary reforms, so they can continue to move closer to the Alliance.

*"Smart defense' is all about prioritizing, specializing and looking for multinational solutions, to provide capabilities together that nations cannot deliver alone."*



***How does the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program contribute to the security of the Central Asian partners?***

NATO's partnership programs support the security and stability of our Central Asian partners in many ways. We have established effective mechanisms for practical cooperation and political consultation on a range of issues, including regional security issues such as border security and countering drug trafficking. We provide interested partners assistance with defense, security sector, and other essential reforms.

Practical cooperation on transit for ISAF-related equipment with several of our Central Asian partners supports our engagement in Afghanistan and also benefits security in their region, as well as more widely. We are all determined to see a secure Afghanistan in a stable region – and I very much welcome Turkey's significant contribution to our shared goal.

Today, the Alliance has partner nations on all five continents. As we all live in the same security environment, it makes sense to work together on addressing common security challenges, and dialogue and cooperation with partners can make a concrete contribution. For this reason, NATO Foreign Ministers decided in Berlin in the spring of 2011 to engage more with countries within our existing partnership frameworks and also with our partners across the globe. We adopted a “Berlin partnership package,” offering more opportunities for cooperation with our partners, and we agreed on a new policy that gives partners that contribute to our operations opportunities for participating in the decision-shaping process of those operations. Our partnerships are precious and key to NATO’s future success. We cannot allow the success of our multilateral partnership programs to be vulnerable to differences between individual Allies and individual partners.