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NATO after the Warsaw Summit

A TRANSATLANTIC TALK WITH CONGRESSMAN MICHAEL TURNER

American Leadership in NATO

At the conference, Congressman Turner discussed and praised the change in leadership style the US displayed at the Summit in Warsaw (July 8th and 9th, 2016). Until then, the Obama administration had followed a laissez-faire approach towards Russia and NATO. Russia made use of this absence of US leadership by expanding its military influence into Europe while other able actors within NATO did not step up to the plate. This left the NATO more vulnerable and less likely to properly respond to military threats.

Turner reiterated the importance for the United States to continue its active engagements regardless of who the next president is, as "the whole world is begging for United States' leadership." Without strong US leadership, Turner believes that NATO, its European members and consequently the US would be weaker and an easier target for military attacks.

Responses to Russian Aggression

In his paper, *Deterring to Defend*, Turner stated that, "Russia has made clear through both words and deeds that it perceives NATO as a threat." Since the end of the Cold War, Russia has been adamant about not having post-Soviet states join Western organizations, and thus regarded the ad-

mission of former members of the Soviet Union into NATO as a provocation by the West. Even to this day, Russia protests against NATO adding Georgia and Moldova as member states.

Then again, Russian hostility towards NATO's actions has caused reason for NATO to act. An exit strategy out of this cycle of aggression, Turner believes, is to have NATO place a stronger emphasis on deterrence. If NATO modernizes and strengthens its forces, making, as Turner puts it, "the cost of aggression unacceptable", it would deter future acts of aggression by Russia. At the same time, Turner makes it clear that deterrence alone will not secure NATO, but that "you have to have dialogue."

Ironically, Turner gives most of the credit for NATO's sudden unity to President Putin. In response to Russian aggression in Crimea, Turner wrote, "Russia's annexation of Crimea effectively ended debates about Russia's political and strategic direction under Putin. It also put a brutal end to 25 years of efforts by NATO to build a strategic partnership with Russia." Because of NATO's failed attempts at creating a relationship between them and Russia, it has caused Russia's aggressive tactics to be one of NATO's most pressing concerns. This has also given ample reason for NATO's members to unify together in order to properly respond to the emerging threats from Russia.



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Turner was optimistic that a balance between deterrence and communication could keep the situation from escalating, as Russia is aware of its comparative economic and military limitations. This reasserts Turner's necessity for a US president who maintains dialogue about these issues. By using dialogue in conjunction with deterrence, it can lead to compromise between both sides. Striking a balance with the Russians is essential for maintaining an effective presence for NATO, and to prevent external military aggression from compromising its goals as an organization.

NATO and the EU

Since the end of the Cold War, Europe has not experienced any major security challenges. As a result, Europeans have felt safe, and "have – understandably – reduced the proportion of GDP spent on defense." Presently, Europe faces the largest wave of refugees since the end of the Second World War, and is struggling in response to the recent rise in terrorist attacks. Thus, security issues have begun to receive increased public attention. However, the European Union is currently lacking the cooperation needed to properly handle the situation. In contrast, NATO has been a flagship for security by having kept its members safe since its inception.

These concerns along with increased Russian military aggression have caused formerly critical European parliaments to become more willing to expand its commitment to NATO. European commitment, in Turner's opinion, is crucial in securing support for NATO from America, as the US is unwilling to continue acting as the only policemen within NATO. Only if its European allies take concrete actions, such as meeting its defense quota, is the US going to have restored faith and continue showing

the strong leadership it displayed at this year's NATO summit.

Furthermore, Turner believes that the pending Brexit will further strengthen NATO. By losing an important net contributor to its budget, the EU is even more prone to share security responsibilities with NATO. Additionally, the UK will be eager to show commitment to its Western allies.

With a look to the upcoming elections in the US, Turner expressed confidence that both candidates would continue to display renewed strength and leadership in NATO. While any administration would have to make changes, Congressman Turner remains optimistic regarding NATO's future as he projects that "together we are obviously invincible, the largest, most successful military alliance in history." Consequently, NATO will be able to achieve its goals and successfully adapt to new challenges.