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Transcript

International Security Challenges and the Future of NATO

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(2002-04; 2008-11)

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Patricia Lewis:

Welcome everybody. My name is Dr Patricia Lewis, I am the research director here for international security, and it's my great honour and privilege to introduce to you today Mr Franco Frattini who is Justice Franco Frattini from Italy, who is the official candidate of Italy for the secretary-general of NATO, and he's going to speak with us today on international security challenges and the future of NATO. This is on the record, this whole meeting, it's not under the Chatham House Rule. You can comment via Twitter on #CHEvents. If I could ask you please to put your phones onto silent mode so that you're not embarrassed at any point by somebody ringing you. We're going to speak for a short while together asking and answering some questions, and then I'm going to open up the question and answer session to the floor. We only have an hour I'm afraid for the whole thing.

I'm sure that Justice Frattini needs little introduction. He has been the president of the Italian Society for International Organization since 2012 and he is the co-chair of the European People's Party Group for Foreign Policy. In 2013 he was appointed as member of the Commission for Constitutional Reforms, probably known to everyone here as minister of foreign affairs in Italy from 2008 to 2011 and previously in 2002 to 2004. I've been hearing some very interesting things about work that he's been doing on corruption in football and trying to prevent that in his capacity as a judge, and in 2012 Justice Frattini was appointed by the Italian government as the Italian candidate for the role of secretary-general of NATO in 2014. As I understand it in the forthcoming weeks, decisions will be made officially and unofficially. We don't know yet about other candidates, and then some kind of decision will be made in the spring in the lead up to the NATO Summit which will be held of course in Wales in September. So, Justice Frattini, tell us a bit about why you want to run to be secretary-general of NATO, it's not a job that anyone would really, not everyone would like.

Franco Frattini:

Somebody said it is very strange that somebody runs for NATO secretary-general in a moment where people are even putting in doubt the relevance of NATO in the 21st century. I think all these opinions are wrong. I think now more than ever NATO's relevance is important. It's a pillar to continue to defend our common values through producing security, cooperating on security, granting stability and helping, stabilizing regions in the world where security is at stake. The role of NATO is even more important in a moment where we are approaching the post-2014 moment where there will be the

withdrawal of the combating forces from Afghanistan and we will have to deal with other potential or real crisis regions in the world. And, in addition to that, we are living through difficult times of financial constraints in a moment where being European, being Italian, I can understand perfectly how important it is to avoid undermining the credibility of our alliance through horizontal cuts in budget defence and spending in the sector of defence, while of course the government are forced to cut their budget.

So, how to strike the right balance between producing security, not just consuming security at the expenses of United States, this is bluntly what happened in the past, plus there is the risk to happen again and, on the other hand, taking into consideration that public opinions are not so, I would say, attract when one talks about more security, increasing capabilities, much more public spending for new technologies on defence. This is the strike balance that is absolutely necessary because if I compare need for Europe for more integration, I cannot forget that NATO is and will remain the pillar, number one, for the transatlantic security. So, there is the other aspect; how to get the division of labour between Europe, European Union and NATO, for all these reasons, new challenges, striking the right balance between security and financial constraints, how to coordinate better than in the past between European Union and NATO. New geographic priorities, North Africa, Mediterranean, the arc of terror ranging from Yemen through the Horn until Sahel; all these are reasons why I'm attracted.

Patricia Lewis:

Do you think the secretary-general can make a real difference to all of those issues and actually create a system of decision making within NATO that could address some of those issues?

Franco Frattini:

Well what is necessary is not to have leaderism in a secretary-general of NATO but capacity to work in team, capacity to study dossiers in depth, to have a deep knowledge and, in my view, to have deep knowledge of both NATO machinery organization and European Union, very complex institutional machineries. Having been for four years deputy vice-president of European Commission in charge of security among others, I know quite well from inside what European Union is, not only what NATO is, having been foreign minister of Italy for six years, but success will depend on the capacity to invest on partners, non-NATO members but partners, because NATO

cannot be the global cop everywhere at every time. Success will depend on the capacity of managing budget, even the courage to undertake difficult reforms like, I would say, cutting all the duplications and overlappings that unfortunately still exist in some cases between NATO and European Union defence.

The success will depend finally on the capacity of, I would say, engaging Europeans in this moment. I would say our American friends are concerned. Why? Because they are afraid that because of financial constraints, because of the public opinion, reluctance to engage in supporting government to spend more in security, European members of NATO are gradually even more disengaging from their commitment to NATO. This is the main concern of our American friends that understand perfectly that all the governments will have to make financial and budgetary cuts. The success will depend on how the next secretary, the next team of the secretary will be able to engage more Europeans rather than less than in the past.

Patricia Lewis:

Do you think, though, that the problems that we've had in Afghanistan and Iraq really have led many Europeans to question the leadership that's been shown from the United States within NATO, and whether or not what we're being asked to do is essentially support some kind of adventurism in that way, taking us into unwinnable wars and footing the bill and being told all the time that we need to contribute to that, which wasn't of our making necessarily?

Franco Frattini:

Well I think Afghanistan and Iraq are two different situations, but many lessons had to be learned because, frankly speaking now, if you look at the situation today in Iraq we see so many difficulties on stabilizing that country, so many bloody clashes, not only between Sunni and Shi'a but within Sunni communities that frankly speaking is not the responsibility of NATO to take under control. But if you consider the perspective of Afghanistan after 2014, there are many reasons to be concerned, frankly speaking, particularly in the case where president of Afghanistan, the current one and the next one, will not sign the agreement to guarantee, I would say, training units instead of combating troops to stay and a limited number of troops to stay to guarantee security. In that case we run the risk to give back the keys of the country to Talibans that we have been fighting for 10 years now.

So leadership of the United States is not, I would say, put in doubt but there is something that everyone should understand, America cannot be in the lead everywhere in the world because the multipolar system of the world of today made for America necessary to indicate priorities, and this is exactly why NATO is so important and European members of NATO, for example, in Mediterranean should take the lead as NATO with America helping from behind. We cannot pretend that America is always in the lead, always providing us with the capabilities, we should be able to share capabilities, to avoid duplication as European members of NATO. I made the example of Mediterranean because to me a southern dimension of NATO is the future of NATO, keeping very firm of course Article 5 and the eastern protection and defence of members of NATO, this is absolutely granted but nobody can imagine that Mediterranean, North Africa, the southern dimension is not the priority, I would say number one, in the near future of NATO.

Patricia Lewis:

And what would you say that, if you looked back over the last 20 years say in NATO, what would you say you would keep from that time and what would you make if you could changes in, in the near future; what are the very specific things?

Franco Frattini:

Well I would say by using examples drawn by my institutional career as foreign minister, we have an experience that should be farther consolidated, that should be kept. The experience of training and building security structures in non-state entities. At the very beginning what we found in Iraq was, for example, not a non-state but a state with a bloody dictator. On the contrary, in Afghanistan after Taliban's domination we found a non-state situation and this was exactly why United Nations authorized in 2001 the action to be undertaken, not against the state of Afghanistan but against the Taliban regime, which is different because it was an entity not representing the concept of the state. In these two cases, training of thousands and thousands of police people and military people in both Afghanistan and Iraq is an experience not only we should keep but we should repeat and expand. If I think about Libya, about the future of Libya, training and creating a military well-functioning system is badly needed in a situation where there is not a state but there is a non-state because of [Muammar] Gaddafi's 30 years of domination.

Another example on the opposite side, again drawn from Afghanistan, and the other example drawn from Iraq, we made a serious mistake in Iraq by dismantling overnight all the structure of the Ba'athist administration. All the people that we sacked overnight, they lost their job at once and immediately they reverse against us, but they were not terrorists, they were not partisans of Saddam Hussein, in the large majority, I suppose, they were military people, they were people working in the public administration. The fact that we decided to destroy the structure of the Iraqi state we paid a very heavy price.

The other example of what was another mistake in Afghanistan, for example. In Afghanistan at the very beginning we tried to impose and to export our human rights constitutional, I would say, democracy's principles to assist them, which is absolutely different from our system. This was a mistake that led to the rejection of so many proposals that led to wasting a lot of time, for example, to adopt the new Afghan constitution, because we had been trying to impose even to change this or that article of the constitution that was under preparation. Of course there are some red lines. We couldn't accept the submission of women that was in the constitution first draft version. We couldn't, and we said, we are spending the lives of our soldiers, this is not acceptable. But for the rest, the idea that a mission like NATO mission in Afghanistan tries to export our model into a system or state which is completely different, it was a mistake that shouldn't be repeated. These are the examples of what was our mistake and was it, on the contrary, a key that we have to keep.

Patricia Lewis:

And do you think we've actually learnt those lessons in reality; when it comes to the next situation? Will we be able to apply what you've just explained?

Franco Frattini:

Well I can make the example of today, the example of Libya. We run the risk to make another mistake. We won the war; we are losing the peace, we are losing the stabilization. Why? Because we have been, at this moment not as NATO but unfortunately I would say as European Union, reluctant and too late on helping rebuilding the state in Libya, and now those that know as I do the Libya tribal system should have understood six months ago, a year ago, that the tribal structure of the state would have led to the partition of Libya. And now you know there is the self-proclamation of the Cyrenaic autonomous

state of Libya which is absolutely absurd, but if we had been working on the contrary on helping building a federal structure of the state in Libya instead of waiting and seeing as we have been doing, as Europe mainly because it was not the responsibility of NATO to do so, it was the EU soft power responsible for that, helping institution building, helping proposing a model of constitution through the Venice Commission for example.

This is what has been necessary a year ago and now this is the other mistake we run the risk to make, because when the Prime Minister of Libya is asking for NATO cooperation on building a national police corps, something like that and helping to create a Ministry of Defence which does not exist as it should be, it is asking the support of NATO as military partner, but we should offer support of European Union to help creating prosperity and stabilization conditions. How is this possible to imagine, and as Italian I know perfectly that the oil production is cut by half because the tribes of Tuareg are surrounding oilfields in the South East of Libya because of negotiating problem with Tripoli at the expenses of oil production which is the richness for the people of Libya. This is a big mistake. So, these are examples drawn by my knowledge on the ground of the situation.

Patricia Lewis:

And that's what you would change; how would you change, how would you take NATO forward in a way?

Franco Frattini:

We do need more political leadership on European Union neighbourhood policy.

Patricia Lewis:

And that's different to leaderism?

Franco Frattini:

Absolutely different.

Patricia Lewis:

So what's the difference between leadership and leaderism?

Franco Frattini:

Well, to me leadership is the capacity to build consensus by sharing ideas and mutual understanding. Leaderism is to say I'm the only one that can succeed in a multipolar world, even not the most powerful state of the world like United States, and we praised President Obama for his multipolar approach to the global issues, and this is exactly the difference between a leader, and President Obama I think is a leader, and leaderism.

Patricia Lewis:

So Afghanistan, if we look at what's happening there and we look at the withdrawal now in 2014, we have the NATO summit also taking place here in September, how do you see the future of Afghanistan and how do you see continuing involvement in the development in humanitarian aid and so on, and can you see a stabilization? We're very concerned about some of the discussions that are going on about legal changes, protection of human rights issues, of women's rights issues and so on; what can you see happening there?

Franco Frattini:

Well, first of all, I will not consider failure as a possible option because otherwise we lost lives, UK lost lives, America lost a lot of lives, that not possible even to think about leaving back Afghanistan in the hands of Taliban. What to do? The first is to try to avoid the nightmare scenario that President [Hamid] Karzai is successful, don't sign the agreement for the presence of foreign troops after 2014. We need a limited number of troops and first of all we need the presence of training forces, training like those that are now training police and military people, those that would be ready, and this is a good cooperation I would see between European Union and NATO, public administration and civil servants. These are the experience that Europe has. We have shown that experience in the Balkans. The Balkans was a success story. NATO and EU working together and with the magnet of European accession we transformed the failed former Yugoslavia into a number of states, some of them are members, some of them will be members of EU. In Afghanistan we need stabilizing a country, stabilizing means, for example, avoiding making the confusion between those Taliban tribes that reject the constitution and those that are likely to be engaged, they want to be engaged into the reconstruction.

I make again the example of the province of Herat where Italians are. We have been trying to engage some tribal group of Taliban by offering to them a legal job and we succeeded. There are some small companies on marble production in the region of Herat where people that were Taliban producing poppy, illegally of course, replace that job with working in a marble production company. This is a small experience concerning not more than 100 people in the province of Herat that I know personally, but this is the example that should be repeated on a larger scale offering opportunities to get legal jobs. This is another mistake. We decided to simply destroy poppy production but not replacing poppy production with a legal agricultural production. Now we realize that, for example, producing saffron is much more productive for farmers than producing poppy because, of course, the price of saffron is higher than the price of poppy. This is just another example.

What is necessary to do? First, is to sign the agreement, secondly, to guarantee the presence of trainers, international trainers for Afghan forces. Three, helping a smooth transition in the areas of Afghanistan that are still not safe, because it's a matter of fact, it's not a criticism, there are regions of Afghanistan that are still extremely dangerous. We have to guarantee transition. Number four, have a regional approach. I believe that for example taking the opportunity of the re-engagement of Iran recently, we should reconsider the coalition policy vis-à-vis the two key regional players, Pakistan and Iran. We like or not these are neighbours for hundreds and thousands of kilometres with Afghanistan. If we don't reach a regional agreement and these two partners become partners instead of reluctant neighbours, it's very difficult to succeed, because one of the problems that everybody knowing Afghanistan knows is the porosity of the borders between Afghanistan and Pakistan. If we don't engage the local tribes in reconstructing security at the borders we cannot succeed. All these elements are necessary, are not legal problems are political problems.

Patricia Lewis:

So before I open up to the floor I'm going to just change tack a bit and talk to you about new emerging threats, if you like, to our security. We've been doing a great deal of work on cyber security, Europe, the United States, others have come under attack, there have been attacks emanating from some places. NATO has been at the heart of that with its cyber policy and its whole approach. How do you see taking that on and what do you see as new emerging technologies that can be used for good or for ill and how to deal with that in the NATO context, and I particularly want you to look at

unmanned technologies, autonomous technologies and the way in which we're going in that?

Franco Frattini:

Well, first of all I think that really cyber security became already a top priority and should be kept as a top priority, not only for NATO, because you know also the European Union is dealing with cyber security. I remember, myself in my capacity as vice-president of European Commission, I was there in 2007 when the cyber-attack against Estonia occurred. I was there. I had to convene immediately a meeting of the ministers of interior to talk about that because it was the first case where not a bank, not an institution, but a state was paralysed for a few hours. Cyber security is a priority having a number of implications. The first implication is a political one, is of political nature.

For example, cyber security is one of the areas where I would suggest to have a deeper cooperation with non-NATO states and in some cases difficult neighbours like Russian Federation. They have the same interest to have prevention and rapid reaction initiatives and capabilities against a cyber-attack. They have the same interest we have. Gulf States, Arab states, they have the same interest we have on cyber security, how to prevent from cyber-attacks. This is the first political implication; cyber security could and should broaden the scope of our cooperation and partnerships. The second implication is an industrial implication. Everyone can understand how big this implication will be in terms of promoting industrial research, how important it would be to promote industrial cooperation and public/private cooperation in the field of security. This is one of the areas where despite financial constraints we should invest more not less, maybe reducing old capabilities.

The other example I have in mind, we have so many member states of European Union having so many unmovable ground forces that in the world of today are no longer necessary, but we don't have enough technologies, drones, air fuelling aircraft, to be shared with the other allies. These are the new technologies and first of all cyber technology because of political and economic implication.

Patricia Lewis:

And space technologies as well.

Franco Frattini:

Absolutely, space technology. Of course I am a partisan of full freedom on internet but it's absolutely clear that when we guarantee, I would say, virtually signed the Hillary Clinton's document on freedom of internet a year and a half ago that I liked very much, when Hillary Clinton put forward this very good idea of working to grant where full freedom of internet is not granted, and there are states where unfortunately is not the case. But we should be clear on that, we need more intelligence for prevention from cyber-attacks, from hackers, from violating state secrets that are at the pillar of the national security needs. So this is the other side of the coin.