

# **The Chicago Council on Global Affairs**

**“In Jeopardy? Europe and the Transatlantic Alliance”**

**Welcome:**

**Marshall Bouton,**

**President,**

**The Chicago Council on Global Affairs**

**Moderator:**

**Niamh King,**

**Vice President, Programs,**

**The Chicago Council on Global Affairs**

**Speaker:**

**The Honorable R. Nicholas Burns,**

**Professor of the Practice of Diplomacy and International Politics,**

**Harvard Kennedy School**

**Location: Chicago, Illinois**

**Date: Wednesday, March 28, 2012**

*Transcript by  
Federal News Service  
Washington, D.C.*

NIAMH KING: Good evening. Thank you very much for coming. My name is Niamh King. I'm the vice president for programs here at The Chicago Council.

If you wouldn't mind please turning off your phones or your blackberrys or anything that might make a noise and disrupt our program you could do that now.

We're delighted tonight to have Ambassador R. Nicholas Burns here. He's here as part of our "In Jeopardy" series. This is our second "In Jeopardy" program. Many of you might have remember our first one that we had on March 1<sup>st</sup> with Ambassador Ivo Daalder, who is also here tonight as part of our conference that Marshall will talk about. This is the opening address of a conference that we've organized in conjunction with eight think tanks from around the world, and we're thrilled that they're here. And I'd like to welcome all of the conference attendees who are here tonight.

So as I mentioned, this is part of a series, and we have three more upcoming programs in this series. On April 17<sup>th</sup> we'll welcome Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, who is the former secretary general of NATO. On April 23<sup>rd</sup>, we'll welcome Martin Wolf from the *Financial Times*. And on May 2<sup>nd</sup> we'll welcome Madeleine Albright. So please see our website or any of my colleagues if you'd like information about that.

It's also on our website. We have a wonderful new website that covers all of the issues for NATO and G8, I'd welcome you to check that out.

And just to give some thanks for a the gracious support that we have for this program series, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, The Cooper Family Foundation. Abbot is one of our corporate sponsors, and WBEZ and WTTW are our media sponsors.

We'd also like to thank the Atlantic Council because they're our co-sponsors for tonight's program and the conference. We're now up to 56 partners in our "In Jeopardy" consortium. If anyone has another organization they'd like to reach out to us and be a part of it, we'd be delighted to have you. Please feel free to contact us.

And I'll be back up for Q&A, but now I'd like to welcome Marshall Bouton, our president, to the podium. (Applause.)

MARSHALL BOUTON: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I'm delighted to be here tonight and to be able to welcome Ambassador Burns, for the privilege of knowing him for some time and a great admirer of his work. So I know you all are in for a treat.

Ambassador Burns, we're delighted to have you here to give this second lecture in the "In Jeopardy" series. And his appearance here tonight also marks the opening of a two and a half day conference that The Chicago Council is hosting along with eight partners from North America and Europe.

The subject of the conference is “Smart Defense and the Future of NATO: Can the Alliance Meet the Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?” This conference is of course about the issues that will be discussed at the NATO summit here in the middle of May. We have been told by senior officials in both the U.S. government and other governments that the conference we are organizing with others here in Chicago is the single most important nongovernmental preparatory event that’s occurring in the run-up to the summits. And it’s a great privilege for us therefore also to welcome here tonight a number of the conference attendees who’ve flown in today to start their conversations with us tomorrow.

As I’m sure many of you know, in June 2011 U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, in a major public statement in Europe, stated that NATO, the linchpin of the—of European security and transatlantic relations, faced, I quote, “the possibility of a dim if not dismal future.” However, during the same speech, Secretary Gates also noted that such a future is possible, but not inevitable. It’s been apparent for some time that NATO and the transatlantic alliance at large must address a number of fundamental questions about its future. And the conference we have organized is designed to deal with those questions.

So tonight we are particularly fortunate to have Nick Burns with us to share his insights on these most pressing issues as we look to the next decade in U.S.-European relations. What needs to be done to resolve the dilemmas that face NATO in a post-cold world and eventually post-Afghanistan world and ultimately, what is the future of what has been the strongest alliance in the modern period?

Ambassador R. Nicholas Burns is uniquely qualified to help us gain some insight into these issues. Most immediately, he is at present the chair of a major study commissioned by the Atlantic Council, an organization we are partnering with tonight, as also in the conference. And that study, which is tentatively entitled “NATO 2020,” will offer a far-sighted and broad strategic vision of how the alliance will operate in the world in 2020. And I know that Ambassador Burns is planning tonight to share with you some advance notice of the major conclusions of that study.

But to grasp why we’re so fortunate to have Nick Burns with us tonight, I need to step back from that immediate involvement of his and say a few words about his broader experience. Ambassador Burns is unarguably one of the most skilled and accomplished diplomats of his generation. Before retiring after 27 years in the foreign service, he held the position of undersecretary of state for political affairs. That is the highest post in the State Department that a career officer can aspire to. And he served in that post with great distinction and in dealing with a wide range of issues.

And in fact, throughout his career he has worked in a variety of senior positions in our government across a wide spectrum of geographies and topics, as ambassador to Greece and ambassador to NATO, as a senior director in the National Security Council for Russia, Ukraine and Eurasia, as the spokesman for the United States State Department and in many other important capacities.

He has played leadership roles in dealing with some of the most complex and difficult policy dilemmas that have faced our nation over the last two decades, including the Iranian nuclear program—didn't stay around long enough to solve that, Nick, for us. I'm sure that our government is consulting him; the negotiation of the U.S. Civilian Nuclear Agreement, a transformative international development; our military relationships in the Middle East and most particularly with Israel; and during his time in the White House, the crisis in the Balkans.

Ambassador Burns is perhaps best known to many for his prodigious skills as a negotiator. And I've had the opportunity in recent years to see Nick in operation, and I now understand why he has that reputation. He is extraordinarily effective for many reasons: his broad knowledge; his great articulateness, as you will hear tonight; his personal charm, which is genuine indeed; and his quiet but very steely persistence in the face of determined adversaries sitting across the negotiating table from him.

And in his new life in the private sector, Nick Burns continues his active involvement in the study and practice of diplomacy as a professor at Harvard's Kennedy School, as director of the Aspen Strategy Group, as senior counsel at the Cohen Group and as adviser to a number of foundations and think tanks, including the Atlantic Council.

Now, as a final note, though, I must confess to harboring one real doubt about Ambassador Burns' good judgment. And that is his declared—he doesn't hide it—his declared membership in the Red Sox nation. (Laughter.)

Now I understand – as a New Yorker, I understand that Nick, as a Bostonian, is understandably driven by very strong loyalties. But I would leave you with this question. Given his extraordinary experience in international leadership, how, in his—understanding of great baseball powers, has he made such a bad mistake? (Laughter.)

Now, ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming Nick Burns. (Applause.)

R. NICHOLAS BURNS: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

Marshall, thank you. That was an extraordinarily generous introduction. I'll reply in kind about your allegiance to the New York Yankees in due course.

But ladies and gentlemen, it's a pleasure to be here in Chicago. I arrived this morning from Boston, Massachusetts, which, I assure you, is at least 20 degrees colder than Chicago, Illinois.

You have a beautiful city, and I've walked around this city and seen the extraordinary architecture and the revival, what you've done to rebuild this city over the last 30 or 40 years. It's a jewel, and there's no wonder that President Obama has decided that the NATO summit should be here in the third weekend of May. So congratulations to all of you for that great distinction.

And it's a real pleasure to be here—lot of friends in the audience. When I was arriving at the hotel, a bus drove up and off the bus came all of my old friends from NATO, off the same bus. Our ambassador—I haven't had a chance to say hello to him—Ivo Daalder, the United States ambassador to NATO, is here. He's been a really great leader for the U.S. and for the alliance, and you'll hear from him, I think tomorrow, on the program. So we're among friends.

And I just wanted to say what a great time for the city of Chicago. You're going to host this summit. You have a new vigorous and very effective mayor. You've had an early spring. And to reply to Marshall, we Bostonians have sent you a savior— (laughter) —for the Cubs, Theo Epstein. (Laughter.) He remade the Red Sox over the last decade. We won two World Series.

And the thing about Red Sox Nation, Marshall—and Marshall's from the Evil Empire; he's a Yankees fan— (laughter) —the thing about Red Sox Nation is, we identify with suffering. And so while we root for the Red Sox and the American League, we're all Cubs fans— (laughter) —and hope that the Cubs finally succeed, this year or next.

Let me talk a little bit about what these leaders are going to face when they arrive here in Chicago—and there will be many of them, from all across Europe and of course our great friend Prime Minister Stephen Harper from Canada—and talk a little bit about what—about what we Americans are facing as we look out at the international landscape today. I want to do that briefly and then give you some thoughts from the study that Damon Wilson and Fred Kempe and Jeff Lightfoot and Barry Pavel and I are working on for the Atlantic Council—what's the future of NATO, and what kind of strategic choices and changes should the alliance make to stay vigorous and effective, because we need NATO to be that for the future.

And I'd begin, in looking at this international landscape, by describing what President Obama's inbox must look like every day. I mean, think about President Obama. He's got the weight of the world on his shoulders, and he comes downstairs from the White House every day and walks through the Rose Garden and into the side door of the West Wing, which was built by Theodore Roosevelt in 1908, 1909, and he faces his desk, and there's two inboxes.

And the first inbox is a mile high of problems called domestic policy, and I'm not competent to talk to you about domestic policy. I have views but no expertise, so I won't inflict my views on you this evening.

But I know something about the other inbox because I was a career diplomat for a very long time, and that inbox—that foreign policy inbox is also a mile high. What's in it? I would say the most complex international agenda that the United States has ever faced.

Now I don't want to exaggerate. I'm not saying it's the most fateful time for America, because that would have been the Revolution against the British in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. And I wouldn't even say it's the most dangerous time, because that was the Civil War, when our greatest president, from Illinois, Abraham Lincoln, saved the union against the Southern rebellion.

And ironically, given the complexity of America's role in the world today, it's not even the time of our most intensive involvement with the rest of the world. You'd have to say 1941 and '45, when we had more than 12 million men and women in uniform stationed all around the world. That was the time when America was most intensively involved.

But I do think it's the most complex time that Americans have ever faced internationally. And I frankly, looking back on the course of my career over the last couple of decades, don't remember a time quite like this, when we have so many vital challenges facing us simultaneously.

So I start with a lot of sympathy for our president. First of all, I think he's an outstanding person, and I support him. I think he's been a very good president, in all ways. But I feel sorry for him because he has the weight of the world on his shoulders.

The Great Recession—the economists will tell us it's over. Is it over when we have 8.3 percent unemployment and millions of people who have lost their homes to foreclosure and young kids, especially—even our young college graduates finding it really difficult, you know, to find a place in the world? So the president has that, and it's got domestic and international implications.

He inherited the two wars and I think rightly took us out of Iraq in December of last year, just a couple of months ago. But he's had to build up in Afghanistan. We've faced some real troubles in Afghanistan, and the representatives of NATO here who have been out there know how difficult it is—no conventional victory in sight, but we don't want the Taliban to regain any advantage and we know we have to stay for several more years to try to stabilize that very poor and very divided country.

If you start your day or your presidency with the most serious recession since the 1930s and two major land wars—and we've never fought two major land wars simultaneously in the history of our country, with the sole exception of the two-front war in the Second World War – that is a prodigious and daunting and compelling agenda.

But that's not the full agenda in that inbox, because behind the recession and the two wars are the two countries, Iran in the Middle East and North Korea in Asia, seeking a nuclear weapons capability, in the case of Iran; has already obtained nuclear weapons, in the case of North Korea; and both countries represent a real threat to peace, to stability and to the balance of power which we—which is in our favor—in the two most critical parts of the world, the Middle East and Asia.

And think of the rest of that inbox: the fact that our strongest partner in the world, the European Union, that the European members of NATO have been in economic crisis; a near economic meltdown, which is—which is hopefully going to be avoided, of the eurozone; an existential political crisis, in some ways, in Europe about the future of the European Union itself. And that's our closest partner in the world, and we have symbiotic economic ties with that part of the world.

And beyond that, the Arab revolutions of the last 15 months, the most important event, the most transformative event in the Arab world, probably since the collapse of the four empires at the end of the First World War, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire that created the modern Middle East. It's that consequential.

And I haven't even gotten, by the way, to the heart of that inbox, because the heart of the inbox – and it's the same inbox that President Bush faced as well, and President Clinton before him – there are the transnational challenges that globalization has produced.

Now there's a bright side of globalization, and we can talk about that, but there's also a dark side. And think about these problems that are going under our borders and over our borders and right through our borders. Eighteenth and 19<sup>th</sup> century Americans could choose to be engaged in the world or not, because we had these two great oceans and we had this great continent. And Chicago's right in the middle of it. But we now live in a globalized, highly integrated world, and we can't escape the world's problems.

So the heart of the inbox, climate change—and we can't deny it, the science. It's happening, and we are laggards. We're the largest carbon emitter in the world, and India and China are right behind us, and none of the three of us are leading, but the Europeans are. And so we have no solution available unless we find the leadership to transform our economy and make really difficult decisions about industry and environmental standards.

Climate change is there, and trafficking of women and children, which is a scourge on every continent in the world, and international crime cartels, international drug cartels, the threat of pandemics, the threat of global food shortages. This is what the president faces every day.

The nexus of terrorism and WMD—think about that for a minute. We were attacked on 9/11, and all of us remember exactly where we were and what we were thinking and how horrible it was. But in a way, if you reflect on the tactics of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, they used the most crude means available to attack the symbol of economic power, Wall Street; the symbol in reality of our military power, the Pentagon. We don't know where Flight 93 was headed for sure, but likely the White House and the Capitol building. And they used the most crude means. They used conventional means. They flew airplanes into buildings, and the resulting crash and explosion and fire and falling buildings killed 3,000 Americans and citizens from many other countries.

What if al-Qaeda had used nuclear suitcase bomb technology on 9/11 or chemical weapons or biological weapons? They would have killed multiples of 3,000 people, but that is the threat that all of our NATO partners, all countries around the world and our country face every day because there are terrorist groups—American terrorist groups and foreign terrorist groups—if they could get their hands on nuclear, chemical, biological weapons, they'd use them, and the president just spent three days in Seoul at the nuclear security summit focused on this issue. How do we keep the most powerful weapons out of the hands of the worst people in the world? Vile, evil, nihilistic terrorist groups, and we've seen what they're like and what they're capable of doing.

This is a tough inbox. It's a tough set of problems for the United States, and I think we have a president who has responded extraordinarily well and effectively to it. That's my personal view. But, boy, I don't relish the fact that our country has to be the world leader, still the only superpower in the world and face this array of problems every day.

Now NATO fits into this. And you'll see this if you're from Chicago, when you see the NATO leaders arrive here in about six weeks' time. NATO is vital to the United States of America. And when I say "vital," we can't live without it.

We're about to celebrate the 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the alliance, April 4<sup>th</sup> of this year. It's the most important alliance to which we've ever belonged in the history of the United States. It's the most powerful alliance in some ways that has ever been created in human history, and it's got a great track record.

Now I don't want to say that NATO won the Cold War. The people of Central Europe and the people of the former Soviet Union – they won the Cold War because they took the risks in 1989 and 1990 and '91 and in decades prior to that. And some of those people are here today with us representing their countries as new members of NATO. Ten of those countries, thank goodness, are now part of our alliance. But NATO still matters greatly, and the reason I say that is because, you know, cynics and critics will say, well, NATO's that old musty institution that what – helped to win the Cold War; why do we need it in 2012? And the reason we need it is because Europe still matters greatly to the United States.

And the reason I bring up that point is because the president made a very important speech in Canberra in mid-November, when he was on his Asia trip, where he said – and Secretary Clinton talked about this as well—the United States is now going to focus as a priority on Asia and the Asia Pacific region. And it's hard to argue with that because the rise of China's probably the most consequential issue of our time. And there's a lot of good in the rise of China, but there's a lot that we have to fear perhaps about the rise of China. And the fact that China, India, Indonesia, Australia are providing most of the global growth right now, the emerging economies, the fact that it's – the strongest militaries in the world will be in Asia in the future means that we, a Pacific nation, right now the guarantor of power in Asia, have to be smart and present. And the president was right to suggest that's the central arena of American engagement because we are witnessing quite an historic change of power shifting, from the last 3(00) or 400 years, where it's focused—the locus of global power has been the Mediterranean and Western Europe; it's surely now going to be the Indian Ocean, the Western Pacific and Asia.

The problem is not the policy; the problem maybe is in how people have described it. We're pivoting to Asia, but that means we're pivoting away from someplace else. And in my conversations with Europeans, including last weekend in Brussels at a major conference, I get the feeling that Europeans are pretty upset about this because if you say your priority is here and not where it's always been since the beginning of American history—Europe's been the focal point of our efforts since the beginning of the republic—then you're sending a message to the Europeans you don't want to send. And I'm not saying that the administration is doing this. But now we talk it about in academia and the blogosphere and the press; suddenly this pivot has taken on a life of its own.



And I'd like to suggest simply that Europe still matters, and it is a place of vital importance to the United States, and NATO remains our vital institution. And if you're not European here and you're an American, let me just give you three reasons why Europe is vital.

Europe is our largest trade partner by a mile. Europe is our largest investor. The amount of European money investing in the American economy dwarfs the money coming from China.

And most importantly for me in my realm, politics and foreign policy, Europe is the largest collection of American allies in the world. There are 28 members of NATO: the United States and Canada and 26 European countries. We have no similar weight of allies anywhere else in the world. Europe matters greatly to our future. And for—and in the conventional wisdom, in the press, in our national discussion, for peoples to be suggesting that Europe's a beautiful museum, a nice place to visit, but no longer where the political and military action is, it's just completely wrong if you think about trade, investment, military power and politics.

I'll give you a fourth reason. When the chips are down, I found, when I undersecretary of state, when I was ambassador to NATO, where Ivo is now—when the chips are down, the Europeans are with us, and I found that time and time again in my career. When we had our back against the wall, when we were in trouble, the Germans or the French or the British or the Dutch—I don't want to leave anybody out, but I should probably stop—the Europeans were with us. And even in a very difficult time—I was ambassador to NATO during the crisis of 2003 when the United States invaded Iraq, and that split the NATO alliance down the middle. Eighteen of our allies supported the intervention in Iraq, but some very important allies did not. France did not, and Germany did not, and Belgium and Luxembourg did not.

And it was an existential crisis for us because we'd always been together, and I think what we learned—what I learned personally from that experience is when we fight, which we often do, and argue, we have to fight fairly. And I think both of us maybe fought unfairly. The Europeans castigated—some of them—the personal integrity of our president, which we didn't appreciate. We, on the other hand, changed the name of french fries in the congressional cafeteria and outlawed French wine in congressional dinners, which didn't make much sense to me. So we were about – both kind of out of line, and I think, you know, fortunately, we made up. President Bush and Chancellor Schröder and President Chirac have made up.

And what I really want to credit President Obama with doing, I think he's just brought the alliance back together, and I think he's earned a lot of credibility for our country in the way that he's acquitted himself in office, in the way that he's conducted his policies, and we're back together again. But every American must know how important Europe is to us and, by extension then, the NATO alliance.

Now, what do we want NATO to do in the world? Well, here's a list, which is not exhaustive and not encyclopedic and people might argue with elements of it. We need NATO to preserve peace and unity and democracy in Europe—no small task. When President Bush 41—President George H.W. Bush—when he presided over the end of the Cold War for the United States, he used to say, we want a Europe “whole, free and at peace” because Europe had not been

any of those things for the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but even for the centuries prior to that. And now because of the rise of the European Union and the power of NATO, Europe is “whole, free and at peace.” NATO’s first job is to keep things that way and to never see again the continent divided or never to see an autocratic totalitarian power try to exert its will, as the Soviet Union tried after the Second World War on the rest of Europe.

Second, we need Europe to stabilize the Balkans because if you look at Europe, there is this pocket of very important countries—Serbia and Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania and Montenegro and others who have not seen the economic growth and development and prosperity or the political stability, who are still dealing with the breakup of the Soviet Union, you see that with Kosovo and they need NATO and the European Union to help them pull them out into prosperity and into peace. That’s a second job for NATO.

Third, we need to work with Russia. We may not like dealing with the Russians every day of the week—and I’ve got a lot of scars from my three decades dealing with the Russian government—but, boy, we have to work with the Russians. They may be—they’ve been very difficult and cynical on Syria by vetoing the U.N. Security Council resolutions to help the Syrian people. On most days, I think their primary goal is to block the United States and Europe from doing things; I don’t see a positive agenda in Moscow. But we need them for strategic arms reductions and President Obama negotiated a very important reduction in strategic arms, the START treaty with the Russian leadership. We need them on counterterrorism, where they’ve been helpful, on counternarcotics, and we need them in Afghanistan, where they’re helping to provide an avenue for the resupply of our troops. That’s why, when you have major presidential candidates, as we’ve had this week, say that Russia is the number-one adversary of the United States in the world – the number-one adversary? Al-Qaeda. Two, Iran. Three, North Korea.

Russia? We disagree with Russia, seriously, on human rights, on lack of democracy, on all sorts of issues, but we’ve got to work with Russia and we can’t demonize the Russian people or the Russian government. We spent too much time doing that in the past. We’ve got to be bridge builders and do our best to work with other countries. So that’s important for NATO. On the NATO-Russia Council, Ivo and his colleagues work with the Russian ambassador and try their best to work with Russia.

Fourth, NATO is with us in Afghanistan. We went in together on August 11<sup>th</sup> of 2003. Of course, the United States and Britain had been there since October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001, shortly after 9/11, but it was a great day to see that the NATO allies volunteered. All of them have been there and all of them have stuck it out. And it’s been difficult, but it’s important. And we have an agreement that NATO will stay in until 2014. Some countries, including our own, will have to stay beyond that to train the Afghan army, to deal with the terrorist problem on the Afghan-Pakistan border, but we would be in big trouble if we didn’t have our NATO allies in Afghanistan.

Next, NATO can help us not collectively as an institution, but the leading members of NATO are the leading members of the anti-counter Iran coalition that President Bush and President Obama have built up. We have no stronger ally in Iran (sic) than Nicolas Sarkozy, the French president. He has made a real difference in the efforts to sanction and counter Iran, as has

Angela Merkel, as have many other leaders of NATO and the European Union. We need NATO—individual NATO countries to be with us in that.

And we need NATO to be the world's most capable first responder. NATO's the strongest military force, the best-trained in the world. And sometimes, and hopefully very infrequently and with great reluctance and only as a last resort, we deploy into battle together. Other times we respond to natural disasters. We train together because we want to be good peacekeepers, and of course NATO is still keeping the peace in Kosovo, and Europeans are still keeping the peace in Bosnia and the two wars that we ended together in the Balkans, that President Clinton helped to end in the 1990s. So NATO's a first responder.

NATO's fighting Somali pirates that are a great danger to human life and international shipping off the coast of Africa and the Indian Ocean.

And finally, NATO needs to reach out to the Arab governments, the new Arab governments, in Tunisia, and to Libya, where NATO did such good work last summer, in Egypt after the elections, to see if we can have modern cooperative relations with the Arab world and with Israel so that NATO's reach is south as well as east, as well as in the Middle East as well as in South Asia.

Those are just some of the reasons why NATO is vital and the jobs that NATO's doing for the American people and the European publics. But what must NATO do to strengthen itself, what challenges must it overcome, in order to stay strong? Well, the challenges are prodigious. And as Marshall said, Secretary Bob Gates – and there's probably no more respected – no more respected individual in our country than Bob Gates – he gave a very important speech where he said NATO faces – could face a dim and dismal future if it doesn't deal with its major structural problems.

And the major problem is declining European defense capabilities and declining European defense spending. The reality is that we're a one-for-all, all-for-one alliance, but the reality is that the United States normally shares an undue share—part of the burden. It's not fair in a democratic alliance for that to be the case. Now, we've always been unbalanced. The United States has always had a larger, more powerful military. We've always spent more money on our national defense than our European allies. But I don't think it's much to ask, even in a time of economic crisis, or especially at a time of economic crisis, that if the United States is going to continue to spend over 4 percent of its GDP on its national defense, is it right that Germany, Italy, Spain spend just over 1 percent? Is it right that some countries believe they can make draconian cuts in their military because they know we'll be there in the end to provide the backbone of a NATO alliance?

I don't think the American taxpayers —and I'm one—or Americans in general want to see that state of affairs. And I think Secretary Gates had a right to say – was right to say what he did, and one would hope that Europeans would begin to think more broadly about smart defense—you'll be debating over the next couple of days—and that we'd see some response from the European leadership to do more.

Second, we need a stronger Germany in NATO, from my perspective. And I don't want to be disrespectful for any of the Germans here, because we really value Germany in NATO, but sometimes I think we need a much stronger Germany in NATO. Germany's the largest country in Europe. It's the most powerful. It has the largest economy, is an economic heavyweight. It has great influence. But in NATO we don't see that influence in a political and military sense.

And the alliance has a structural problem if your largest continental member is not spending enough on defense, not modernizing, doesn't have the capacity to deploy the way that France and Britain do, and is not shouldering some of the political weight. Germany stayed out of Libya, to the great regret of many of us who are great friends of Germany. We need a stronger Germany in NATO.

Third, we need the special relationship with the United Kingdom. I know it's not fashionable to talk about special relationships, but there is one. And Britain is a great friend and has a uniquely capable military, but Britain is facing defense cuts that threaten to undercut the effectiveness of the United Kingdom as a partner to all of us, and that is very much worrisome to the many friends of the United Kingdom in this country.

Next I'd say this, fourth. Turkey is a really interesting country, and boy are we fortunate that Turkey's in the NATO alliance. Turkey's celebrating, I think, Ambassador, its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year as a member of the alliance, as is Greece, and we have the Greek consul general here and a very distinguished ambassador of Turkey.

Turkey—if you think about the Arab revolutions and the recession—Turkey has been growing in political importance, especially in the Middle East. Turkey's economy has taken off during the recession. Turkey is rising as a political, military and economic power, and I think it's probably the only country in our alliance that can say that, based on growth – economic growth data and based on political influence. I would even think, based on conversations I've had with many Arabs, that Turkey may now be the most influential of the European countries in the Middle East. That's an extraordinary development. But it's happening.

Now, Turkey also has responsibilities to the alliance. It's currently, I think, impeding NATO's ability to work with Israel, certainly impeding the development of a normal NATO-EU relationship, and so Turkey needs to face its responsibilities. But I would think that we in NATO ought to open up leadership possibilities for Turkey. We have never had a Turkish Secretary General. We've never had Turkey leading, on a consistent basis, our military missions, although I know Turkish generals have led the ISAF mission in Afghanistan from time to time.

I'm talking about all of us recognizing that sometimes power balances change, and we're seeing it happen right now. And we are so fortunate to have Turkey in this alliance. It strengthens the alliance. And so therefore, it would be my sense—and I'm just speaking personally here—that we in NATO, all of us who support NATO ought to open up possibilities for Turkey to be a leader and be recognized as a leader and to have the kind of influence in the alliance that it deserves.

Fifth, I'd say this. NATO's never going to be a universal, global organization by membership, because we're trans-Atlantic. But NATO has to act globally, and so starting with President Clinton, and certainly for President Bush when I served him at NATO, and now with President Obama, the United States believes that we ought to have strong partners for NATO in the Middle East as well as in the Pacific. So think of the United Arab Emirates and Jordan and Israel as strong partners potentially for NATO. And think of Australia and New Zealand and South Korea and Japan, perhaps Singapore, maybe even, for nonmilitary activities, nonwar activities, India in the future. NATO should create a series of partnerships around the world. We've found that when we deploy to the most difficult places, like Afghanistan, sometimes these Pacific partners are on the front lines doing the most difficult work. I'm thinking now of Australia and of New Zealand and of Japan. They've all been vital to our efforts in Afghanistan. So we think of NATO in global terms as well, and that's going to be an issue, I would imagine, for Chicago, for the summit. It's an issue all of us need to reflect upon.

And finally, my final thought here is that the United States needs—NATO needs good, solid, consistent leadership from the United States of America. I don't worry about that too much. I think all of our presidents, including President Obama, have been fundamentally committed to the alliance. I'm thinking not about our presidents and our governments; I'm thinking about us, the 305 million American citizens. And I think we need to avoid the twin dangers of isolation and of unilateralism. And we've been prone to both, and both would fundamentally undercut NATO. We've been prone to both in our history.

Think of the isolationist sentiment in this country, from really Jefferson, who believed that our empire of liberty should be here at home, not overseas, all the way through to the tea party, which is a quite an isolationist political force in our country. Isolationism may have been a logical, rational choice for the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but for the highly globalized, highly integrated global community of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it's a disaster. It's irrational. It's nonsensical. It's an emotional response which will weaken the country.

And unilateralism is no better. Now, fortunately, the unilateralists have been mostly discredited. They were the people who said, particularly after 9/11, it's our way or the highway, and you know, if you're not with us, you're against us, and we'll go it alone if we have to. But we found out what that's like, and it didn't work very well for our country.

We need NATO because we need to be integrated, involved and leading in the world, and this is the perfect institution for us to express that leadership with the countries that are our closest friends and most like-minded in terms of our values, what we believe in, democracy and liberty and trade. That's why we need NATO.

I think you'll hear from the United States and from our president in Chicago a recommitment of the United States to NATO because that's what we believe as Americans.

So let me conclude on one point. If I haven't convinced you yet that NATO is still modern, vital, and actually, perfect for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, perfect for a globalized country like the United States, think of this. On 9/11 I had been ambassador to NATO for exactly 12 days. And we were all meeting, the ambassadors, together in the middle of the afternoon when we heard

about the plane flying into the first of the towers, and then we were together when we got the terrible, tragic news of the plane going into the second tower. We knew when it hit the second tower this was not an accident. We knew it was terrorism, and we knew we were in big trouble.

And later on that afternoon I was sitting in my office at NATO, and we were cut off from Washington. I had been trying to call Condi Rice and people in the State Department. Of course you remember what happened: the State Department was evacuated. Secretary, then-National Security Rice – Adviser Rice and Vice President Cheney had to go into a secure bunker, and there was a period of time with no communications with Washington.

I call a call from the Canadian ambassador to NATO, David Wright. He was the dean of our diplomatic corps at NATO at the time. He said, have you thought about whether we should invoke Article 5 of the NATO treaty? And I said, David, if we try to invoke Article 5 and the European allies hesitate, and if we take days or weeks to debate this, we will send the worst possible message to the American people. Article 5 is the key provision in the NATO treaty, our treaty with Europe and Canada. If one of us is attacked, we are all attacked. If one of us is attacked, we all respond together.

And David said, Nick, I think the NATO alliance, the European allies, will stand up and support you. And we talked to Lord Robertson, our magnificent secretary general, and Joe Ralston, our supreme allied commander. We got together, and that night we decided to go for it. I remember calling Condi Rice, I think at 4:00 a.m. her time the next day, September 12<sup>th</sup>, and I said, Condi, we've been meeting here at NATO—the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup>—all of the allies are ready to go to war with us, without even knowing exactly who it was that had attacked us, because we hadn't established for sure it was al-Qaeda. And she said, go for it. I said, don't we need the president's permission? She said, go for it.

And when Americans woke up on September 12<sup>th</sup>, the first thing they heard was that Canada and our European allies had said, we are with you, and we're going to support you. And they were. And there was that famous editorial in Le Monde, of all newspapers, "Nous sommes tous Américains maintenant." We are all American now.

And a couple days after that my wife and I were in this beautiful Belgian city called Leuven. There's a magnificent town hall there. And there was a long line of people lined up to go into the town hall. And we wondered what this was about. We went in. It was to sign a condolence book to the American people.

These are the kind of allies we have. No other group of countries in the world responded to 9/11 the way this group did.

I rest my case. NATO is vital. We need it. We need to be good leaders of it. We have a great president who can lead it and is and will. And the summit should be a great success, I hope, for the alliance in a couple of weeks' time.

Thank you for listening to me. It's been a great pleasure to be here. (Applause.)

MS. KING: Thank you, Ambassador.

We'll now like to go out to the audience for questions. If you could please raise your arm, wait for a mic and identify yourself, we will call on you.

Yeah, the woman right here, please, in the fourth row. The mic is right there.

Q: As a graduate of the College of Europe, I am definitely with you on the European allies being there for us and NATO being so pertinent. I do have a question that kind of pertains to the focus of NATO, though. You said that one of NATO's objectives is to secure peace and democracy in European countries. But I feel that there is a country that we have kind of forgotten about, and that would be the dictatorship of Belarus, which has recently—with Russia, it's receiving millions for—or will be receiving millions for a nuclear power plant. So in this discussion of potential nuclear threats, I've not heard a whole lot about that area of the world, about Eastern Europe and the focus there. And so I'm wondering if potentially it's being ignored a little bit for political reasons. We have these allies in NATO who might not want us to discuss this. But as an alliance, it's very important that we address all questions and all threats, not just in the Middle East and Asia. So what are your thoughts on that?

MR. BURNS: Thank you very much, and thank you for the question. I think – did everyone hear the question? Everyone could hear the question.

So, you know, Belarus has been a uniquely difficult country for all of us to work with. And unfortunately, Belarus is run by a guy, Alexander Lukashenko, who is authoritarian, closed-minded. He denies his own people political liberties. He arrests his political opponents. He throws them into jail without due process. He's – they have shown very little inclination to work with NATO or the United States over the last 20 years.

Ironically enough, I was with President Clinton at the Budapest CSE summit in 1994 you all might remember this—when Lukashenko had just been elected. And President Clinton was willing to give him a chance. We had a very long meeting. But Lukashenko violated all the promises he made to us and to Europe. And it really is a very sad state of affairs that in the heart of Europe, you have this dictatorship with no reform whatsoever. And unless I am missing something, unless NATO is able to reach this country, I don't think—it's not been a good partner at all. And one can just hope that over time the government will change and a more reasonable, more democratically oriented people will take power in Belarus.

Thanks for your question.

MS. KING: Yeah, right here, please. Chris O'Day (sp) in the third row.

Q: Hi. Thanks for coming. Chris O'Day (sp) is my name. You mentioned the two – the two kind of twin dangers, isolationism and basically...

MR. BURNS: Unilateralism.

Q: ...unilateralism. But in—you also seemed to start, though, with a kind of a third option, which was maybe just kind of “different friend-ism,” you know, Asia instead of Europe. So that was what – you wouldn’t really be applying either of those two great threats, but you have yet a new one that could result in less focus, attention, et cetera, on the EU and NATO.

MR. BURNS: Thank you very much for that question. It’s a really good question.

I would say that, you know, one of the great advantages the United States has is that we have two great alliance systems. We’ve got the NATO alliance, which we’ve talked about, and we have and have had since the end of the Second World War a series of defense alliances in Asia and the Pacific. So Australia, Japan and South Korea have the same type of treaty commitments with the United States as the European countries do, and we have defense agreements and important defense obligations to the Philippines and to Thailand.

And beyond that, what’s been emerging in a really fascinating series of events focused around the South China Sea is that like countries like Vietnam and Singapore and Thailand and India have been seeking a much closer military relationship with the United States, in part because no one wants to live in a Chinese-dominated Pacific and Asia. They want the United States to keep our naval and air forces there and our ground forces in Korea and in Japan.

We are the strongest military power in Asia. We have been since September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1945. That’s the day that General MacArthur presided over the surrender ceremony with the Japanese on the USS Missouri. We have the responsibility of protecting the sea lanes and commerce and the security of all those countries. And it really is to our advantage to have this second alliance system and all the other partners in Asia that’s been – that developed over the last decade.

And we don’t seek conflict with China. Quite the contrary. You’d have to have your head examined to seek conflict with an incredibly powerful country. We just want China to play by the rules and to respect the rights of other countries. And so in the South China Sea, Secretary Clinton has been very courageous and very effective, I think, in standing up to the Chinese leadership. And I think, you know, we’ve worked out a way to work – deal with the Chinese, but they’ll respect our strength.

So I don’t think we have to choose. As a global superpower, we need both of these alliances, and we need partnerships in between in the Americas, in Africa, and certainly in South Asia. So I don’t think we can deny the fact that we’re a global superpower. We can’t roll that back. We can’t just bring all the troops home and forget about our commitments, because that would be very much against our self-interest, were we to choose that course, which, happily, I think we shall not under the current president’s leadership.

MS. KING: Thanks. Right here in the third row, please, with the glasses.

Q: Jonathan Nile (sp). I instinctively agree with everything you say, so please don’t take this question as being mischievous.

MR. BURNS: (Chuckles.)



Q: But you mentioned...

MR. BURNS : Something tells me we all will – (inaudible). (Laughter.)

Q: No, no, genuinely. You mentioned two very important dossiers, Russia and Iran. But it's fair to say that on Russia the biggest advances were bilateral between the United States and the Russians over the last few years, including some promises made over the last few days of more room for maneuver, which were unfortunately picked by a microphone.

On the NATO side, there has been much less, for all the reasons that we know, but there has not been much progress.

On Iran, there's been a lot of coordination between key NATO members, as you rightly mentioned. But can you conceive of NATO actually deciding on a joint policy on Iran?

So when the media says this alliance is a busted flush, of course it is wrong. But there are two important dossiers where—how should we put it—NATO is taking a backseat, for reasons that we all know.

MR. BURNS: Well, you know, that—thank you very much for your questions, Jonathan. And it shouldn't be surprising that NATO is not at the center of everything. NATO was never at the center of everything, even during the Cold War. It's a military alliance, it's a political alliance, but it cannot be involved and lead on everything. We have to be selective.

I would say this. My suspicion would be that every member of the NATO alliance supports the U.N. Security Council sanctions against Iran, and every member of the alliance undoubtedly supports the EU financial sanctions and America's financial sanctions, that all of us wish to see Iran at the negotiating table. So I think there's a high degree of commonality. I would not suspect that if it comes to war, that all of NATO would be with us or willing to deploy with us, but perhaps we should hope that we will not arrive at that point.

And in this respect, I think it's been an important couple of weeks on Iran policy. The president made, I think, the most important statement of his presidency on Iran three weeks ago at the AIPAC summit in a series of interviews he gave. And what he essentially said was this. We will deny Iran a nuclear weapons capability. He said that. He doesn't believe in containment, because he fears that will lead other countries in the Middle East to try to become nuclear weapons powers themselves if we allow Iran to achieve that status. And he said he has Israel's back.

That's all good and true. But he said something else—and I thought he made this argument in a passionate way—we ought to try diplomacy. There's enough room and space for it. Iran's nuclear future is not imminent. There's time. And we have France, Britain and Germany with us, as well as Russia and China, in one group. And I hope that there'll be negotiations under way by the time the NATO leaders meet here in May. I don't—I'm just a private citizen; I don't know that for sure. But I hope we will.

And I hope we won't give these negotiations a week or two. Some of the critics are going to say—if President Obama is at the negotiating table with Iran, after a week or two they'll say, see, you can't work with the Iranians; you better turn towards the military option. Diplomacy takes time. And the incredible irony is we have not had a sustained conversation with the Iranians on any issue—sustained—since the Jimmy Carter administration.

I was the American point person on Iran between 2005 and early 2008. I never met a single Iranian, because I wasn't allowed to meet Iranians. So I spent all my time— (chuckles) —with my European brethren cooking up Security Council sanctions resolutions. We need to sit down with the Iranians. We don't like their government. In fact, we detest it. But Yitzhak Rabin said, you don't negotiate peace you're your friends, you negotiate with unsavory enemies, was the word he used.

And I saw Secretary Jim Baker – Secretary James A. Baker III on Charlie Rose last night, and I – we're hosting Secretary Baker at Harvard tomorrow—in fact, that's why I'm flying back tonight we're honoring him as the Great Negotiator 2012. We haven't had a more effective secretary of state in the last 40 years. He said on Charlie Rose —I was really struck by this—we ought to have enough self-confidence, because we know we're good at diplomacy, to sit down with the Iranians and outsmart them—my words. I'm not quoting him literally, but that's the sense I got.

I think there's bipartisan support for this in the United States. I think there are very few Republicans who believe we should turn to military force now. If you look at all the presidential candidates, I think the Romney position is almost indistinguishable from President Obama's position. I worked for President Bush, and I can tell you the Bush policy and the Obama policy are nearly identical on Iran. So I think we ought to have a confidence in our diplomats.

Now, if diplomacy works, we avoid war. If it doesn't work – and Secretary Baker made this point on Charlie Rose too—we always have the option of military force, but down the line as a last resort, not as a first impulse, after you've exhausted diplomacy. You know, we've got to learn from our mistakes. We might want to – we would reroll or rewind the film on the Middle East perhaps in hindsight. We might not attack. We might begin to negotiate, and then only attack if we absolutely had to. Hopefully, we've learned that lesson—I think we have—on the case of Iran.

MS. KING: Thanks. Rachel Bronson here, please, our VP for Studies at the council.

Q: Thank you, Ambassador. I was wondering if I could return you back to the pivot of Asia, because some of the conversation suggests that resources are plenty. And it—and I think that the pivot to Asia might be the right term. If we're very serious about turning to Asia, we've got to make some choices of what we won't or what we won't do in Europe so that we can refocus on Asia. It's not just about the president showing up there more often. So if we are focusing more on Asia, which I think you endorse, where do we cut back? What kind of capabilities do we have to cut back on? What kind of priorities should we downgrade?

MR. BURNS: Yeah, that's a really good question. I think this is the choice that the president and Congress will have to make in 2012 and the new Congress will have to make with either President Obama or Governor Romney after the elections.

We're in deep economic crisis. We all know that. And we've got big budgetary problems that are looming just over the horizon. And we're going to have to cut the defense budget, I hope in a very rational way, in a way that retains the muscle of our military. But clearly, I think the administration has been right to suggest we need to build up in Asia with the stationing of the Marines in Darwin, Australia, with the building up of Andersen Air Force Base in Guam, not reducing our carrier presence in the Pacific. China is the major concern there.

You will have to make choices, and I think the administration is right to suggest that we should decrease the number of American troops in Europe. We'll have enough troops after the reductions to meet our obligations to the Europeans. But it will ask the Europeans to do more. It will ask Germany and Italy and Spain to do more, to spend more, to take up some of the slack from the departed Americans. We have to make choices.

And the correct choice is to say we cannot afford to cut our military, reduce our strength in Asia. We can certainly afford a rational reduction, a measured reduction in Europe, in my judgment, having been out there in Europe for a number of years as ambassador to NATO.

MS. KING: Yeah, right here, the conference delegate, please.

Q: My question is about – you mentioned earlier Russia – working with Russia more, and I know that President Obama yesterday was out there meeting with Medvedev.

MR. BURNS: Yes.

Q: My question, though, is it feels to me like there's this kind of – and you would know better, I – you know, there's this kind of ingrained antipathy in the Russian government toward working positively with our interests because, I mean, we saw obviously in '08 with Georgia, it almost feels like Putin and his government is intent on trying to rebuild some kind of, you know, neo-Russian empire in their near abroad. And I—you mentioned earlier also about them being obstinate, and I wonder if—is there any real practical way of working with them on, say, Syria, when they've taken such a starkly opposite opinion to what we have?

MR. BURNS: That's another – there are no softballs from Cub fans, I can see, in Chicago. (Laughter.) That's a tough question. I'll give it my best. You know, I do think part of this is generational. You know, obviously, the current Russian leadership was formed – as people, as civil servants, as KGB officers, as military officers – during the Soviet period. So it's hard to – and I was formed during the Cold War. And so you try to be modern; you try to – (chuckles) – change with the times. But you are a product of your education, your formation and your early professional development. And so I recognize that in some of the Russians with whom I worked very closely and battled constantly during my NATO career in particular.

Having said that, you know, I think there's good and bad here. The good is that President Putin was the first leader to call President Bush after 9/11. So I think he identified—because Russia has been the victim of terrorist attacks frequently, all too frequently, he identified with that and wanted to support us. That was a very important gesture that he made. And Russia has been a pretty good partner of ours on issues that really matter for us.

Pursuing criminal terrorist groups, preventing them from striking out at any of us—the Russians are hard-nosed about that, and they share an interest. Narcotics—I mentioned this earlier. You know, narcotics is a major problem, both the transport of narcotics into Russia and, unfortunately, as in our society, abuse by young kids. We identify with the Russians and we try to work together in narcotics. Despite the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan, the Russians have chosen after—well, in a very inconsistent way, but they've chosen to be somewhat helpful to us in some respects in the Afghan mission.

So, you know, we don't want to throw all that away. And part of the tension here is the tension you always have in foreign policy, especially for Americans, because we need to be realistic to a certain extent to protect those pragmatic interests. And we need to be a little bit idealistic to protect our values. So we work with the Russians on narcotics, traffic—prevention and counterterrorism and Afghanistan, and we battle the Russians on democracy, on human rights, on whether or not we should be intervening to save people in Libya, as NATO did, or to save human life in Syria, as the United Nations should on a humanitarian basis right now.

So you see the cynicism in the Russian leadership when they vetoed those resolutions. And sometimes I wonder, what do they stand for? I know what they're against. They tell us that every day in their urge to block us. But what do they stand for? And here's a test of the two former Cold War superpowers. We have a collection of friends and allies around the world that is endless. America has friends everywhere, countries that want to identify with us and support us and, in the case of our European allies, go to war with us. The Russians have nobody. They've got that guy Lukashenko—every odd month, because he's mercurial – in Belarus. That's it. No one else believes in their way, and no one else wants to go to war with them.

That answers the question for me. I think we're on the right path. We do our best with the Russians, but we don't have illusions about them. We battle them, we cooperate, and it all kind of fits together in one policy. But we can't call them the greatest adversary we face. That's not accurate, and it's not wise to say that.

MS. KING: Right here, please, the gentleman in the tie.

Q: Thank you. Miri Kusky (ph), consul general of Macedonia. You mentioned that NATO and Balkans countries need each other. What is your opinion about the invitation from Macedonia, having in mind the decision of International Court of Justice, and also having in mind that members of NATO are also members of the U.N.? Thank you.

MR. BURNS: Thank you very much, Consul General. And you know, I'm going to have to disappoint you. I left the State Department nearly four years ago, and I'm just not up to speed on every issue, including on the issue you asked about. But obviously one would hope that

Macedonia would take its place in Europe and in association with the United States. There's a road to travel there. I know there are problems with Greece. I used to live in Greece. And I hope those can be resolved. But I just can't answer your specific question, but maybe one of the ambassadors could do that in the next couple of days.

MS. KING: Yeah, the woman right there, please, in the second row.

Q: Oh, yes. Mine is more maybe a comment rather than a question. As an American of Lithuanian heritage, I would just like to mention how eagerly Lithuania strove after regaining independence to become a member of NATO. And now it's participating in Afghanistan with NATO in the (Ghor ?) Province. And it's very grateful for NATO's presence because it is a guarantor of independence and democracy in Lithuania. And living all these years next to our great neighbor Russia, I think we need to remember what – I think it was President Reagan who said it to us, but verify –

MR. BURNS: Yeah, it was.

Q: – so we need to be careful. Thank you very much.

MR. BURNS: Thank you very much.

MS. KING: Thank you.

MR. BURNS: May I comment just briefly on your—on your comment, if you wouldn't—you would allow me to? I think—I was at the Prague summit, November 2002, when Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia came into NATO. And boy, was that a great moment. You look back over the last couple decades, that's one of the greatest, because these three countries were forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union by Stalin in May 1940. They were the victims of the Hitler-Stalin Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939. They lived 50 years as prisoners in the Soviet Union. They liberated themselves in September 1991.

And when they came into NATO that day, President Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia spoke for the three countries. And she gave a powerful speech about what it meant for the Baltic countries to be free, because when they came into NATO that's when they were truly free, because they'd be protected from anything that might happen with Russia in the future. So I think President Clinton and President George W. Bush, who both worked on this, deserve a lot of credit – both of them, bipartisan basis, for having helped from an American perspective Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

MS. KING: Yeah, Cecelia Millot (sp), please, here in the front row.

Q: Thank you, Ambassador, for your comments and also just for the way you enlighten us and share. As you talk about NATO and where it's going, even though it's a military alliance, I'm curious—some of the problems you discussed in terms of these—the countertrafficking and human trafficking and the drug trafficking – those are problems that might need some new solutions, and the fact that we have this global interdependence.

Can you speak to what you may be doing at NATO in terms of human security? And possibly, as we do our pivots and take some of our military resources elsewhere, are we looking at civil society as a possible partner and taking it down to the street level? Because I love the idea of making the 300 Americans understand the role that NATO plays and our role in the world.

MR. BURNS: Thank you. And thanks for that question. And again, you know, since I left government some time ago, Ambassador Daalder and his colleagues would be in a much better place to answer what's going on now. But I can tell you, we tried to face this problem of human trafficking as an alliance back in 2004 and (200)5. And we had an initiative led by Norway and the United States to make sure that our troops deployed in Kosovo, Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq were not contributing to the problem of enforced prostitution.

And that's a serious problem around the world. And it's a problem on every continent in the world. And we took an initiative as an alliance that we would work on this problem. And the principal people we were working with were nongovernmental organizations, NGOs, because there are so many NGOs focused on this issue that have the expertise and the commitment and the resources. And there was really, I thought, an interesting union between this military alliance and European and American and Canadian NGOs. That's an important issue of human security.

The other thing I'd say is that NATO has a real capacity for peacekeeping. It's the – I think the leader in the world. And part of our responsibility as peacekeepers when we go into a place after a conflict is to do what you've suggested, make sure there's order, stability, lawfulness and that people aren't being preyed upon by stronger people or criminal elements. And so we have this responsibility to human beings and to civilians. And it's a very important one. So thanks for asking the question.

MS. KING: Yeah. Right here, please—this gentleman with the jacket?

Q: Keeping in mind the complexity of the relationship of NATO as an entity versus other interests that the United States may have which are extra-European and extraterritorial to that general vicinity, how do we reconcile the difficult situation of the relationship between the United States and Russia with respect to missile defense when not too long ago we had Eastern European countries like Poland and the Czech Republic who had apparently, as far as my understanding of the situation is concerned, extended themselves in terms of welcoming missile defenses in that area and we backed down from that?

And that becomes extremely more focused in view of the recent embarrassing situation with the open mic with Obama and Medvedev in terms of what may follow, in terms of subsequent missile discussions, in terms of reduction of arms.

MR. BURNS: Thank you very much. And I'm not just taking the easy way out and dodging the question. I really am not. I'm not in government; I cannot know all the ins and outs of this issue. I'd be really irresponsible for me to try to describe where things stand. But I can just speak in general and make two points quickly.

Missile defense is really important. We brought it to the alliance in 2002, as I remember, the United States government, and began to brief on what we then called national missile defense, which was not a very artful way of describing what you're trying to do to European allies.

We then quickly changed it—encouraged by Europe—to missile defense, because we're all in this together. And I'm a strong supporter of it because we have the technology and it makes sense that if countries like Iran are creating ballistic missile capabilities that would extend their reach into Europe, we want to protect our European allies, the citizens of those countries and American and European military forces. And so here's another example of bipartisanship. And you know, there's so much bipartisanship in foreign policy. President Bush deeply believed in this and President Obama has taken the baton and run with it. And they both are the fathers of this missile defense effort on the American side, and it's a good one.

My second point will be about Russia. The Russians need to think deeply just how often they want to say no and they want to block initiatives. I don't doubt the sincerity of our administration in wishing to work with Russia, but the Russians need to return our sincerity and openness with a little of their own. And that's just a comment from the sidelines because I'm just watching and reading the newspapers like you are. But I just – I'm always amazed by the cynicism of the Russian leadership – struck by it.

MS. KING: We have time for one last quick question. Mike Koldyke here in the front row, please.

Q: Thank you. Question has to do with a Germany that—the reluctant patron or banker of the EU. Is it fair to say that as the EU goes economically, so goes NATO – save Turkey? And the question is the German—many Germans, political parties, look aghast at the Greeks and at Spain and the Italians for their profligate ways. The Germans have really been extraordinary, not only in their huge economy—they led the world in exports until two years ago.

And so politically, will they stay the course? I mean, are they—are they well-suited to be that leader in Europe. It's—they're forced to it. And how will it go? And what will the effect on the resilience and the strength of NATO be?

MR. BURNS: Thank you. This is a good question for us to end on just because Germany is so central and so important. I don't know if Ambassador Erdmann is here. I saw his name on the list, but perhaps he's not—Germany's ambassador was slated to speak at this conference. I was going to actually toss the question to him. (Laughter.)

But I'd say this. I've really been struck by the degree of—you know—Germany has the lion's share of the responsibility in the euro debt crisis, more than any other country.

And you know, there was an uneven path to the present policy to contain the crisis. But you have to credit Chancellor Merkel for having stuck with it in an extraordinarily difficult and complex multinational environment – all these different countries, different level of problems.

She has pressures from German taxpayers. She had elections going on. And I think she's done a very fine job, and she's been a strong leader for Europe.

And there's no question that the—the big problem that Europe has, the European Union, is you've got a—you've got a monetary union but you don't have the institutions that can protect and advance that union. So the Europeans will have to debate among themselves: Should there be a more federal Europe in order to stabilize the economy over the long term and run the euro and manage the euro as the European currency? I would give Chancellor Merkel very high marks.

Now, the only point I was trying to make—and I did it with great trepidation because I don't want to be disrespectful to the German government or my German friends – is, it's striking to me to see that German economic power and to see the self-confidence, which is welcome, on the economic issues, and then to see the lack of military spending, the lack of commitment to a modern defense, the lack of commitment even to serve in the most dangerous places in Afghanistan.

And we need, as a matter of collective self-interest, Germany to play a different role – stronger political power, stronger military power. This is just one American saying this. People might disagree with me. But this is what I believe. And until we get that, with a U.K. that's experiencing massive budgetary problems and probably declining military capacity; fortunately with a very strong France, but obviously there are limitations on what France and Britain can do; this third country in this triangular leadership of continental Europe is Germany.

And so from any American perspective, I would hope that we'd see an increase in German involvement and leadership and military capacity to sustain that over the long term. That's my wish.

But I think the alliance is in great shape. I think the alliance is the institution we need for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And I really wish my colleagues luck and good fortune at the NATO summit. And I thank all of you for being here tonight. I've enjoyed it very much. Thank you. (Applause.)

MS. KING: Thank you very much, Ambassador Burns.

(END)