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## NATO's Evolving Role in an Age of Globalization

*Anders Fogh Rasmussen*\*

Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the Lázaro Galdiano Foundation (Madrid) on 10 September 2010.

Secretary of State,  
Mr Vice President,  
Excellences,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be in Spain today. And let me begin by thanking the Real Institute ELCANO for organising this event. As you heard during that very kind introduction, I am a politician. And like any politician, I think it is very important to get out of the office. To hear what people *outside* of Government ministries think.

This has served me well recently as I drew on the experience of a Group of Experts – of which the Spaniard Fernando Perpina – Roberts Peyra was a key member – to help formulate ideas on a new Strategic Concept for NATO. But this forum also gives me the chance to share my ideas as well. Which is why I am so pleased to be here, with all of you, to discuss an issue that matters to every one of us – our security.

And I think Madrid is a very good place to have this discussion, for two reasons. First, because this city knows full well what it means when the security, we all take for granted, is suddenly shattered. I only saw on television the terrible images of the bombings that took place here a few years ago. But I have a pretty good idea of how devastating they were. Of the terror so many people must have felt, trying to escape, trying to find their loved ones. Of the grief many people must still feel, when they think of loved ones who lost their lives in those acts of terrorism.

I evoke those images because I think it is important that we never forget how precious our security is. It is the underpinning of our economy. It nourishes healthy democracy. And it must never be taken for granted. Spain, and Madrid in particular, knows that full well.

But the bombings illustrated a second important truth as well: that today, our security cannot be guaranteed solely within our own borders. The Madrid bombings were inspired by Al-Qaeda – a terrorist Hydra, with members from all parts of the globe; with roots in the Gulf, training camps in South Asia and the Maghreb, and victims from Afghanistan to Europe, to Africa, to the United States. They use the internet to plot; they use modern technology to strike and to hide. Border guards are no defence.

So what can we do about it? There are those who say the best strategy is to keep our heads down. To stay quiet. To offend no-one. And to hope they will strike someone else.

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\* *NATO Secretary General.*

I strongly reject that approach. For two reasons. First, because we cannot afford a world where terrorists run free, as long as they go after someone else. That kind of instability would spread very soon, and no one would escape. It is as simple as that.

I also believe, very firmly, that we must stand up for our values. Terrorism and violent extremism must have no safe haven, no breathing space, no training grounds. We must use all the right tools, including supporting education, addressing social exclusion and injustice, and using diplomacy to try to solve the political issues which, rightly or wrongly, feed extremism.

But sometimes, we have to take more fierce action. Unfortunately – and it is deeply unfortunate – there are those who will not be reconciled. Who do not want peace, at any price. Whose goals are extreme, and whose methods are extremely violent. Defending ourselves against them must also include, at times, the use of military force.

That is why we are in Afghanistan, under a United Nations' mandate. Because without help, the Afghan people would not be able to resist the Taliban. And because the Taliban continues to be what it has been for over a decade – an unapologetic host for Al-Qaeda.

I know that, just a few weeks ago, three Spaniards were killed by the Afghan police recruit they were training. Let me express my condolences to the families of those who lost their lives, and indeed to the loved ones of all the Spanish personnel who have paid the highest price in Afghanistan.

But I can tell you this. I have met with our soldiers in Afghanistan. They know exactly why they are there: to protect you here. To keep the pressure on the Taliban; to keep Al Qaeda bottled up. And, as soon as possible, to make Afghanistan inhospitable to terrorism for good.

Now, many of you might be thinking: yes, we know why our soldiers are there. But the real question, Secretary General, is: is it working?

My answer is this. Slowly but surely, it is working. Of course, every day is difficult. Every day. But the big picture is this: in two thirds of the country, there is little conflict, and quite a bit of development.

In the South and East, there is a lot of conflict, it's true. But Al-Qaeda has no safe haven anywhere in Afghanistan; the Taliban is under pressure almost everywhere; and the polls show that beyond any doubt, the Afghan people want us to stay and finish our job.

Things are moving on the political front as well. There will be national elections on the 18th of this month. They won't be perfect. But this is only the second Parliamentary election the country has ever held. And it is not just a footnote that there are 400 female candidates. They are facing real threats, but they are persevering, and that is something to be proud of.

So, there is progress, military progress and political progress. This strategy can work and it is working. But it will take time and endurance.

Which brings us to the question of time: when will Afghans be able to stand on their own feet? How long will all of this take?

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My answer is simple: we have a clear timeline, and we have a clear process to get us there.

Our aim is that, by 2014, Afghans will be in the lead across the country, and we will start handing the lead to them next year.

But I would like to stress that handover doesn't mean exit. It means moving into a supporting role. And it means that forces - freed up by transition – would sometimes be moved into other areas, not necessarily sending them home.

And my aim is to have a clear announcement, at the Lisbon Summit in November, of how and when we will do transition.

I keep hearing this saying: "we have the watches, the Taliban have the time." But it demonstrates a total misunderstanding of what we are doing in Afghanistan. Of course, we won't be there forever. We shouldn't be there forever. But we are training up 300,000 Afghan forces, soldiers and police, and they live there. The Taliban can't outwait them, and we won't leave until the Afghan security forces are ready to take responsibility themselves. In other words: the Taliban can bomb, and assassinate, and terrorise. But they can't take power. They can't win.

We have difficult days, months and years ahead. But NATO will stay the course. We will never allow the Taliban to take power by force. We will never allow Al Qaeda to have safe haven in Afghanistan again. And we will never support any political deals that sacrifice the human rights, including women's rights, enshrined in the Afghan constitution.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Spain has been a staunch Ally from day one. Your troops are doing a great job, and they are making a difference. They are making Afghanistan a better place. And from halfway around the world, they are helping to keep us all safer right here at home.

But the point of our mission in Afghanistan isn't to have international forces engage in endless combat against terrorists and extremists for the rest of time. The aim is to help Afghanistan become inhospitable to terrorism even after we've gone.

Because people trust their government.

Because they get services from the people they elected.

Because they have jobs.

In that kind of environment, terrorists can find no safe haven and grow no roots. Which means we won't need to be there anymore.

That is the only sustainable solution. But the military alone cannot get us there. A fundamental lesson of this mission, as well as our operations in the Balkans, is that in the 21st century, NATO can't do it alone. We need partners – and, frankly, our partners often need us, too. Political solutions, economic assistance and development have to go hand in hand. We have to address root causes as well as symptoms, often at the same time.

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And what does that mean? It means NATO must work much more closely with other international organisations, like the United Nations and the European Union.

During the Cold War, NATO and the United Nations didn't have a lot to say to each other. But that has changed fundamentally over the past decade.

The NATO and UN missions in the Balkans and in Afghanistan work together every day, on the ground.

NATO has helped support the African Union in Darfur, at the request of the UN Secretary General.

At the request of the World Food Program, we have been escorting food supply ships into Somalia for over a year.

And there is now a strategic partnership agreement that sets the stage for more cooperation and mutual support between NATO and the United Nations in future.

That kind of mutual support is exactly what we need to see more of. And the same is true with the European Union.

The days when NATO and the European Union eyed each other a bit warily are behind us. The European Union has become a multi—purpose actor on the international stage, including when it comes to security. In particular when it comes to political engagement and civilian expertise – police, reconstruction, development – the European Union is in the field and making a difference.

And NATO is right there as well, working side by side with EU missions in the field in the Balkans, in Afghanistan, and off the Horn of Africa. There the European Union, through Operation Atalanta and NATO through Operation Ocean Shield are undertaking a counter-piracy operation side by side, facilitating the safe transit of shipping in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We need a comprehensive approach to security. NATO has its strengths. So do the European Union and the United Nations, and for that matter Non Governmental Organisations as well. We need to do our utmost to ensure that those strengths are mutually reinforcing, which means talking together, planning together and acting together, whenever it makes sense.

There is another vital lesson from our operation in Afghanistan – that the Alliance must reach out even more actively to partners around the globe.

There are now 47 countries with soldiers in this operation, 28 NATO Allies and 19 Partners. But we have support from other countries, beyond the ISAF-coalition.

The Central Asian States are providing transit and counter-narcotics efforts.

Russia, too, is allowing our supplies to transit, and helping to fight the spread of narcotics.

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Japan has provided billions of euros to support reconstruction and police training.

And the support we've received from many Muslim countries has made it clear that this is not a struggle between religions or cultures – it is a struggle against terrorism. And this is an essential part of success, because it undercuts the narrative that extremists try to sell.

A lot of that support and understanding has come from countries in our Mediterranean Dialogue partnership. And Spain can be proud of that, because this country championed the Mediterranean Dialogue.

Today we engage seven Mediterranean partners in regular political consultations and practical cooperation on a range of issues of mutual interest. Our Mediterranean partners have come to know us. We have dispelled a lot of misunderstandings about each other. And we have built trust and confidence.

That is the foundation of security, and Spain knows very well that security around the Mediterranean is a shared commodity – one we have to preserve and nurture.

And security is a shared commodity globally as well. This is why I believe NATO should reach out to new partners, and be open when countries approach. First and foremost, to get to know each other. And because there are security issues of international concern, such as terrorism, or piracy, or energy security, or even the security implications of climate change. I think NATO could be a forum where Allies and partners, old and new, could share views on what's happening, and how best to react.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the upcoming NATO Summit in November, we're going to adopt a new Strategic Concept. The strategic concept will set the direction of the Alliance for the next ten years or so.

And I think, the comprehensive approach and the partnerships will have a prominent place in this document - because 21st Century security is more than just military force. If we are to accomplish our security mission, we must improve our capability to interact with organisations and partners that can supplement the military operations with civilian reconstruction, and civilian development, including civilian capacity building and improved governance.

The NATO I'm describing here is not the Cold War Alliance. Of course, the foundations are the same: transatlantic cooperation; firm commitments to defend each other from attack; and a commitment by all Allies to the values that we all hold dear. But it's worth taking a new look at the way we're building on those foundations today: with new partners, and new missions, in new places.

To paraphrase an American expression: this isn't your daddy's NATO anymore.

Thank you and I look forward to any questions and comments.

*Anders Fogh Rasmussen*  
*NATO Secretary General*