

Anders Fogh Rasmussen: Priorities as Secretary General of NATO

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, a Dán Királyság korábbi miniszterelnöke, a Budapesti Corvinus Egyetem díszdoktora 2009. augusztus elsején lett a NATO új főtitkára. E rövid cikkben kifejti főtitkári mandátumának legfontosabb prioritásait, amelyek közé tartozik az afganisztáni helyzet rendezése, az Oroszország–NATO kapcsolatok fejlesztése, a kapcsolatok előmozdítása a mediterrán térséggel, illetve a NATO és az EU közti kapcsolat megerősítése. A cikk eredetileg a Society and Economy folyóirat 2009/2. számában jelent meg.

Just over a year ago, on 9 May 2008, I had the tremendous honour of receiving an Honorary Doctorate from Corvinus University. I was also accorded the privilege of addressing a most distinguished audience of academics, politicians and students. From that platform, I was able to commend Hungary on its heroic struggle for freedom, democracy and liberty, and congratulate Hungary for the vital role it was playing – and indeed continues to play – in the Euro-Atlantic family, in the EU and in NATO.

At the beginning of August, I was accorded another tremendous honour, as well as a great responsibility, when I assumed the post of NATO Secretary General. I also felt a sense of humility that NATO's 28 Allies should have placed their trust and confidence in me to lead the most successful Alliance in history: an Alliance that is doing more, in more places, than ever before and which remains the ultimate insurance policy for the peace, security and freedom of

900 million people in North America and Europe. It is this transatlantic aspect – this essential link between North America and Europe – that makes the Alliance unique, and the shared interests on both sides of the Atlantic have been one of the main factors behind the Alliance's longevity.

Naturally, since my selection as Secretary General, I have spent a considerable amount of time preparing myself for my new responsibilities so that I can help NATO to fulfil its potential as a pillar of global security. The NATO Alliance has enormous capability, and my job over the next years is to make the most of this unparalleled capability: in our operations; in our partnerships; and by transforming the way we do business.

For me, the first priority is to achieve success in Afghanistan. The Alliance and its many partners in the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) have a clear purpose which is of vital importance to global security – we must help to prevent Afghanistan from returning to the state where terrorists were able to plan the most abominable attacks on innocent people and where the country's own population were denied the most basic of human rights.

A lot has been accomplished already, but we need to build on this success, especially in light of the presidential elections this year and parliamentary elections next year. While I do not believe we should expect to see elections of the same standard that we might expect elsewhere in our own Allied nations, we must at least ensure that they are secure, inclusive and credible, particularly in the eyes of the Afghans

themselves – and in this respect, I believe we passed the test with the 20 August presidential elections.

We must also continue the process of transferring lead security responsibility for Afghanistan to the Afghan authorities. Afghans already have the lead security responsibility in Kabul and I hope that during my mandate as Secretary General we can help the Afghans to assume lead responsibility in the remainder of the country too. However, "lead" responsibility clearly implies that the Alliance will remain to support the Afghan National Security Forces, and I shall be emphasising to the Afghan government and to the Afghan people that NATO and its partners will maintain a security presence in Afghanistan for as long as it is needed. I shall also be emphasising that NATO can't do everything on its own. For Afghanistan to be able to stand on its own feet a coordinated international team effort is required, and we need more effort from the Afghans themselves as well.

In my first week of office, I visited Afghanistan to speak to the political leaders, to the presidential candidates, to the leaders of the other international organisations in the country, to the Afghan people and to the brave men and women in ISAF and in the Afghan National Security Forces. I came away convinced that steady progress continues to be made and that there is light at the end of the tunnel – I was left in no doubt that we are on the right path in Afghanistan and that we can – and will – succeed.

My second priority is NATO–Russia relations and I hope that we can develop our relations into a true strategic partnership. After the Georgia–Russia conflict last August, cooperation was limited, so I view the decision taken earlier

this summer to resume work by the NATO–Russia Council (NRC) at the political level and to restart military cooperation is a positive step. I shall look to build on this and extend our cooperation together in other areas where we share security interests such as Afghanistan, counter-terrorism, counter-piracy, and non-proliferation for example.

However, it is also obvious to me that there are fundamental issues on which we disagree. NATO will continue to insist, for example, that Russia comply fully with its international obligations, including respecting the territorial integrity and political freedom of its neighbours. But I don't believe that areas of disagreement should be allowed to poison the whole relationship, which is why I re-iterate my message to the Russian leadership and people: NATO is not an enemy and is not directed against Russia; let us talk and find areas to work together; let us build a relationship based on trust, cooperation and shared interests. The NRC is an invaluable forum for developing this relationship further and I shall be looking to make this the foundation on which we can develop a true strategic partnership that serves us all.

My third priority is another partnership, namely NATO's relationship with the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia) and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and United Arab Emirates) countries. As with Russia, any true partnership must be built on mutual respect, understanding and trust, and it is on this basis that I am fully committed to building a stronger relationship with the governments and people of our MD and ICI partners. We face many common challenges, including from terrorism, prolif-

eration and the instability caused by failed states, and I am particularly keen to hear the views of our MD and IC partners on what concrete steps we can take, together, to address these and other challenges.

My fourth priority is relations between NATO and the European Union. It was perhaps prescient that in my remarks in Budapest last year when receiving my Honorary Doctorate, I focussed primarily on the importance of preparing the EU for the challenge of globalisation, and that I had concluded by saying ".....we need to strengthen the EU's cooperation with NATO. The NATO Alliance has long been the cornerstone of European security and our link to the United States; a link that we must nurture and protect. The EU and NATO complement each other." I now have the opportunity to put my words into practice. I am a strong believer in the European Security and Defence Policy, and after France's decision to resume its full place in the Alliance integrated military structure, I believe the time is right for improving the links between the two organisations. Without undermining the autonomy of decision-making of the two organisations, there is considerable scope for more political consultation – both formal and informal – and for more practical cooperation. After all, the two organisations are definitely not competitors, and by working more closely together in a complementary and cooperative manner both NATO and the EU stand to benefit, as do the members of the two organisations and the international community more broadly.

So far, I have highlighted four priorities, but of course NATO's agenda is much wider and I have clear aims in these other areas too. For example, in Kosovo, by the end of my term, I would

hope to see KFOR reduced to just a small reaction force, or even out of Kosovo altogether. Such a reduction in force levels must not be rushed and each step will need to reflect the security conditions on the ground, but I believe that we are steadily approaching the time when it will be right to retire KFOR with success.

Another operation that NATO is currently conducting successfully is in the Gulf of Aden. In recent years piracy has emerged as a security challenge for many Allied nations, and I want to see NATO having an anti-piracy role in support of the international community.

NATO's current operations, as well as those the Alliance has conducted over the past 15 years, highlight the need for the Alliance to have available the right quantity and type of forces, with the right training and equipment, and at the right state of readiness, that can be deployed and sustained on operations. All Allied armed forces need to be transformed, but so do the processes and procedures in NATO headquarters if we are to get the best from our military capabilities. We need to be far more flexible in our approach, in our way of thinking, and in the way we use the Alliance. With global finances the way they are, we face a particular challenge and we shall need to ensure that our limited resources are used to best effect. I intend to use my mandate to reform the NATO Headquarters and to push for more efficient, modern and, where appropriate, multinational approaches to defence.

This year is the 10th anniversary of Hungary's accession to the Alliance. And the Open Door policy that paved the way for Hungary's membership is one to which I am particularly committed. NATO enlargement has already demonstrated its power to spread stability and

promote reform, but membership is not a right – it has to be earned. Those countries that currently aspire to NATO membership must continue their reforms to be ready and to fulfil the necessary criteria – and I am committed to ensuring that NATO continues to assist them.

Last, but by no means least, I intend to lead the process of developing and agreeing a new Strategic Concept. A new Strategic Concept is an essential prerequisite for achieving many of the goals I have highlighted, as it will help Allies come to consensus on how to take forward our operations, strengthen our partnerships, and develop our capabilities. These are very early days in the process, and I don't wish to pre-empt the outcome, but in my view there are a number of important principles that should guide the work on the new Strategic Concept: while re-iterating that Article 5 remains the core of the Alliance, it should take a holistic view of security – for example, cyber, energy, environmental – and then set out how NATO can play its part; it must be ambitious, but also realistic with regards to resources; it should firmly establish NATO as a part of the global community of international actors; it should not neglect reform of NATO itself; and it should also be by far the most open and the most inclusive process of policy development NATO has ever conducted.

I want to hear the views of the public on what NATO should be, and what it should do, in the future. The NATO website provides full details of the roadmap for the work on the Strategic Concept, and it also includes a forum where anyone can post their views on how NATO should evolve. I intend that everyone who wishes to express views should have their voice heard and that their opinions will be fed into the process for

consideration. I encourage all of you reading this article to engage in that process and to post your views on the forum.

The whole process is a major undertaking, but I firmly believe it is necessary, and that it is most timely. Since the last Strategic Concept was adopted, 10 years ago, the Alliance has almost doubled in size and it has taken on missions and operations against threats in ways and in places that no one could have imagined at the time. The development of the new Strategic Concept provides the ideal opportunity for the theory to catch up with the practice and for all Alliance members – old as well as new – to chart a common way forward. I will lead this work personally, with support from a Group of Experts who will consult as widely as possible: within NATO, with our partners, governments, think-tanks, academia, NGOs, other international organisations, the private sector, and the general public. On receiving the conclusions from the Group of Experts, I shall then lead the final phase of negotiations with the nations and prepare the final document for approval by Allied Heads of State and Government at their Summit meeting, in Lisbon, next year.

I have outlined what is undoubtedly an ambitious set of goals for my mandate. None of these issues is easy, and none must be seen in isolation, but taken together they are a set of goals that I believe to be essential for the Alliance and that I am determined to achieve. The Alliance is unique because it brings together sovereign states that share the same values and work together to defend those values. For 60 years the Alliance has achieved everything that has been asked of it – I intend to do everything in my power to ensure that it continues to do so.