

BRUSSELS FORUM 2009

NATO at 60

Craig Kennedy

President, GMF

Good morning. It's great to see you here for this last day of the Brussels Forum. Every year we think about how to make Sunday morning as exciting and interesting as possible. And I think we really achieved quite an excellent program.

As I think all of you know, we're approaching a very important NATO summit, important both because of the date, 60 years, important because of Afghanistan as we heard yesterday, important because of French re-engagement.

So it's our special pleasure to open up this morning with the Secretary General of NATO, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. Now I've already warned him I'm not going to do the usual lengthy introduction because he truly is the man that doesn't need an introduction. He did warn me that next year I'll probably have to do a little bit more detail at this point -- but maybe not.

It is especially significant that he is here today because this will be his last speech before the NATO summit. And we very much hope that this will be the place that he really sets out the agenda and his thinking as we approach this 60th Anniversary Summit.

Secretary General, the podium is yours.

Special Opening Address

The Hon. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

Secretary General, NATO

So, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen and dear friends, it must I think be a law of nature the closer we move towards the NATO Summit, the more we and I can tell you get overwhelmed by organisational nitty-gritty. Do we have the right conference venue? Are the seating arrangements politically correct, I can tell you? Are our security precautions sufficient?

After more than five years as Secretary General of NATO, I know only too well how this kind of stuff can threaten to occupy our minds. Thankfully there is always a reliable antidote to such pre-summit tunnel vision and it is called the German Marshall Fund. The GMF always focuses on the bigger picture and Craig and Ron and their team have done so once again today.

And they've asked me to offer some reflections on NATO's future. And I'm more than happy to oblige because I consider it crucial that we look beyond the next few weeks, beyond the Strasbourg-Kehl Summit and examine NATO's longer term development. And let me add, it is also necessary that we do in an honest, open but also self-critical manner.

Why should I emphasise this? I emphasise it because I believe NATO has arrived at a crucial juncture. On the one hand, the relevance of the alliance is more widely accepted than ever before. Just remember in this regard, NATO's 50th anniversary in 1999. That summit took place against the backdrop of a controversial air operation in the Balkans. I say controversial, but nevertheless necessary. At its 40th anniversary in 1989, it even looked as if NATO could break apart of differences of how to respond to the Gorbachev challenge.

By contrast today, no one seriously argues that NATO's days are numbered. Two new members are on the verge of joining NATO. And France is about to take its full place again in our integrated military structure. And that's all very good news you'll say and I say.

But it is not the whole story. Because NATO's growing appeal also raises its very own challenges. NATO is expected to help set Afghanistan on the right course. It is expected to reconcile the continuing desire of several nations to join the alliance with the need for a solid NATO-Russia relationship. And it is expected to find a convincing answer to new and unconventional threats. This makes for a pretty full plate. And predictably some observers have warned of a growing mismatch between

mounting political and military commitments on the one hand and dwindling resources and political will on the other.

So what are we to make of all this? Should we simply accept that NATO's future is being a Jack of all trades and master of none, and thereby take the risk of strategic failure? Or should we pull the emergency brake and limit our agenda to a few essential tasks at the risk of ignoring the tremendous potential we could bring to the real world?

Clearly the time has come to take a hard look at NATO's future evolution. And I would like to do so first by identifying the key drivers of this evolution and then sketching out what we must do in order to steer this evolution in the right direction. And mind you, the future of NATO will be determined by three key factors.

First, of course, the evolution of the global security environment. In other words, what are the challenges that we need to confront in the years ahead and how do they affect us.

The second factor is the sense of common purpose among the allies. In other words, do we share a common perception of the threats and of the responses? And if so, can we muster the political will to act?

The third factor relates to NATO as an institution. Can the organisation generate sufficient political influence and military means in order to perform what we expect from it?

Let me briefly address these three factors.

The first is as I said the evolution of our security environment. This evolution of course does not proceed entirely independently from NATO. Indeed if we use the alliance wisely, we can shape our environment to a considerable degree, as we have been able to do in post-Cold War Europe. But I think it's fair to say that in an age marked by globalisation, our ability to shape our environment will diminish.

Just compare our Afghanistan mission to our Balkan engagement. Bringing peace to the Balkans was not just easier in military terms. There we could also offer attractive political and economic incentives such as NATO and European Union membership. In other words, there in the Balkans we could offer a compelling package to bring South East Europe back into the European mainstream. In Afghanistan, in that region and without any doubt in other future contingencies, we have far less clout.

And that is not all. Many challenges will not lend themselves to purely military solutions. Some challenges will be regional in nature as we see in Afghanistan and may not affect all allies in quite the same way. And while some of those challenges

may require instant, perhaps sometimes even preventive action, others will require long term costly and risky engagement far away from our own borders.

In a nutshell, our future security environment can divide us just as easily as it can unite us. In the Cold War the threat we faced was both visible and measurable and our responses were largely institutionalised. But this can no longer be the model that guides our thinking or planning. In the past, solidarity was almost automatic. Now today when we go beyond the NATO's core business of collective defence, important as it is, solidarity needs to be generated case by case and then carefully sustained.

So what do we do about this? And this in essence brings me to the second factor that will shape the future of NATO -- the degree to which we can shape common purpose among the allies for the challenges we face in the 21st century.

We need to come to a new understanding about the meaning of shared security. It's not enough to invoke the imagery of a community of values and it's certainly not enough to go into NATO's past achievements. Images of NATO as a knight in shining armour will only distract us from the serious task of shaping consensus on what we should do together today and how.

Now as you know, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, for decades NATO has been described as a 'Transatlantic Bargain'. This was and I think is still, an apt description. NATO enlists North America, the United States and Canada for the defence of Europe. It gives those North American democracies a say in the evolution of European security. It provides the United States of America with likeminded partners to face global challenges and it gives Europe a voice in Washington. It gives a united Europe a voice in Washington. The word united is not in my text but it should of course be in my text.

We all know that this bargain, this transatlantic bargain was never uncontested. In the Cold War, as many of us will remember, Americans would sometimes complain that the bargain worked to their disadvantage as they were effectively subsidising European defence. And Europeans would occasionally complain that the bargain was unfair to them since it did not provide them with sufficient influence over US policies.

Yet this transatlantic bargain worked. It worked because everyone knew that transatlantic cohesion was essential to cope with the challenges at hand. It worked because everyone understood the logic of give and take. In short it worked because each nation could easily see the advantages that the bargain offered for its own security.

Now this notion, ladies and gentlemen of a transatlantic bargain, I think remains, eminently sound. However, in a far more complex security environment, that bargain needs to be extended to cover a wider range of concerns and interests from territorial

defence through regional stability all the way to cyber defence, energy security and the consequences of climate change.

Now adapting the transatlantic bargain, as Ron Asmus recently reminded us, also means something else. It means balancing our policy of engagement with Russia with strategic reassurance for our allies that their security needs are being met. That's an important notion. And frankly we have a broad range of views in NATO when it comes to Russia, from the very cautious to the very forward-leaning.

However, one thing is certainly true. The more reassurance NATO provides for its members, the more confident they will be to engage with Russia on a wide range of issues. The more the perception of threat is gone, the more the possibilities for a true partnership will open up.

Now it goes without saying, ladies and gentlemen, that Afghanistan has been the forcing mechanism for us to broaden our concept of what a common approach to security means today. Some might call it a trial by fire.

Now let me be clear. It would be naïve to believe that 26 and soon 28 different countries with different strategic cultures, different constitutions and parliaments would engage in Afghanistan in perfect lockstep. And I think it would even be counterproductive to make that happen. We must allow for a certain degree of flexibility or else NATO will become a straitjacket and lose the support of its members.

Yet flexibility must not come at the expense of coherence and effectiveness. We must not create the impression that Afghanistan can be neatly divided into regional compartments. Afghanistan, and I can add the region, is won or lost as a whole.

Nor should we cling to the illusion that peacekeeping and combat can be neatly separated or that they represent different moral categories. One of the most important notions I take away from five years being Secretary General of NATO and five years Afghanistan, peacekeeping and combat cannot be neatly separated and they do not represent different moral categories.

Why am I saying this? Because I think realities on the ground are telling a different story. The transatlantic bargain for an alliance that is engaged in operations must be based on these operational realities. It must be based on a clear appreciation that nations may choose different approaches. And any NATO ally thinks its approach to development, cooperation and reconstruction is by far the best, by far.

So let them choose different approaches, but let them all work towards the same end. And that is especially pertinent now as we speak, as we approach what has been called the 'Big Tent' meeting in the Hague on the 31st of this month and then of course the NATO Summit.

There will be a lot of talk of strategy with regard to Afghanistan including of course the so necessary regional approach, more forces in the south of the country, stepped up civilian efforts and a greater coordination between all the elements of the effort, civilian and military.

I support all those ideas. They make sense. But we will have to ensure that we deliver on what we agree, which means coordinated action and more resources. From time to time, and I see many of my colleagues in the room today, I tell the ambassadors assembled around the table in the North Atlantic Council, we, as we sit around this table, are not the editorial board of the Economist. We are the ambassadors of the North Atlantic Alliance which is not a talking shop but which should take action.

And in Afghanistan also in the short term, we need action. We need deliverables. That is the key word as we approach this summit in Strasbourg and Kehl. So analysis is fine. Action at the moment is much more important. So I hope that my words will reverberate across the NATO table in the coming week. Or will they not, dear colleague ambassadors?

Which brings me to the third and last factor, that will shape NATO's future -- its performance as an organisation. Safeguarding our security requires more than a common assessment of the challenges and the political will to act together. It also requires an institutional tool to translate a shared vision into common action. And here too NATO cannot afford to stand still. The new security environment requires the organisation to evolve.

In business terms, NATO must provide a faster and more comprehensive service for the customers than ever before. Much has already been achieved. The number of committees has been cut. The command structure has been streamlined and partner countries that are associated can now work in ways that were unthinkable just a few years ago.

We've set up an Allied Command transformation to create a focal point for new concepts. And we have reached out to other international organisations and non-governmental organisations.

But also here we must do even more. We need to take a hard look, a very hard look indeed at the way we plan and generate forces, at the manner in which we fund our operations and at the promise of acquiring more commonly owned assets. We also need to look at ways to streamline our decision-making, in upholding the principle of consensus of course, to better integrate the different strands of NATO's work and to use our resources more efficiently.

But we also need to further expand NATO's role as a forum for political debate. Given the growing diversity of the challenges before us, our responses as I said will

not be automatic. They will have to be generated through informed debate and this means that we must be willing to discuss critical subjects such as nuclear proliferation, energy security or the security implications of climate change, early and openly.

And even if current operations of course will continue to occupy most of our time, it is no longer appropriate to look at NATO merely as an instrument for force generation. This organisation must give us more and I think it can give us more.

Now coming to grips with the new diverse security environment, generating a new transatlantic bargain and adapting NATO to be better able to implement that bargain, all this of course constitutes a truly Herculean task. It is not something that you achieve in a few weeks, let alone in a 1.5 days summit. Still, our meeting in Strasbourg and Kehl and Baden-Baden, can be a big step in the right direction.

The political constellation is favourable. There is a new United States administration that is determined to take a fresh approach. There is I see a European willingness to respond positively to this new approach. The return of France in NATO's integrated military structure will strengthen the alliance and as important, help reduce the ambivalence in the NATO-European Union relationship. And the temporary freeze in the NATO-Russia relationship is thawing.

Now we must translate all this into political momentum and we will -- or at least we'll give it a try. The summit will endorse a short but powerful so-called 'Declaration on Alliance Security'. And this document will reiterate NATO's fundamentals as a strong transatlantic community where security is indivisible.

But even more importantly, I expect this summit to give the green light to start work on a new strategic concept. This process will engage all allies in a major intellectual exercise about all aspects of NATO and in particular the meaning of solidarity in our new security environment. And if we do it right, this can be a catalyst not only for NATO's own evolution but also for the broader network of institutions that we so urgently need.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, as I said in the beginning NATO is at a critical juncture. We have never been in greater demand, yet we have never been confronted with bigger challenges. And this explains why we cannot and do not consider our 60th Anniversary Summit next month as only a commemorative event. On the contrary, that summit is very much about the future of this alliance.

And if one considers the tremendous journey that NATO has travelled since its creation, one cannot be but optimistic about its future. From a mere piece of paper, the alliance has turned into one of the world's premier international organisations. From just 12 member states, we went to 26 and soon 28. And from a purely Euro-centric alliance, NATO has evolved into a security provider that is engaged on several continents, working with a wide range of other nations and institutions.

A pretty impressive track record I think. A strong testimony as well of our collective ability to meet any kind of challenge. And above all, a very good reason to look to NATO's future with a lot of confidence.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you very much for your attention.

Panel Session

Craig Kennedy

Thank you so much. We have to restructure the stage for just a second. Since this is the last day I want to thank again all of the people that have made this possible, the Government of Belgium, the Daimler company, the Czech Republic and German Marshall Fund I guess, as well as the Ministry of Defence for the Republic of Latvia, Bertelsmann Stiftung, Fortis Bank and the Tipping Point Foundation. We're very grateful for their support in putting on this event.

We're especially lucky today to have as one of the -- I guess the penultimate panel of this conference, a really extraordinary group of people to talk about the future of NATO. And I think just about all of them have been involved in other GMF events. Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher who spoke at our conference in Bucharest before the Bucharest NATO Summit, Radek Sikorski, the Foreign Minister of Poland who has been involved in Brussels Forum since the very first one, when he was Minister of Defence at the time, Peter MacKay, who's also been involved in every one of the Brussels Forum, first as the Foreign Minister of Canada, and now as the Minister of Defence and obviously the Secretary General will join as well. And as part of our good relationship that we've developed with the BBC, we also have Jonathan Marcus to do the moderation.

So Jonathan, why don't you bring your panel out and we'll get ready to go. Thank you.

Jonathan Marcus

Diplomatic Correspondent, BBC

Okay, good morning. It's good to see so many of you here despite the relentless pace and the late night sessions. So the good news is that there are no night owl sessions this evening. You can actually get some sleep.

Well, the introductions have been done for me. I have to point out one or two small additions to the biographies because the GMF in its unnerving ability to get just the right panel for just the right subject. Ellen Tauscher, Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher is kind of double-hatted here. Not only is she Congresswoman and Chair of the Subcommittee on Strategic Weapons I think -- Forces in Congress but also I think it's expected that she's going to become Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security. It's certainly been leaked to the media. Anyway I'd remind you that's John Bolton's old job, a name that strikes fear into the hearts of Europeans everywhere. But what can you do?

Obviously Peter MacKay, Defence Minister of his country. Interestingly in the biography we have here, it says that he's also described -- I'm not sure if it's a misprint -- as a critic for the Prime Minister. In which case the Canadian Prime Minister is a very lucky man, he only has one critic. I think Gordon Brown would be interested in adopting maybe the same system.

We heard yesterday about Radek Sikorski's amazing unarmed reconnaissance in Afghanistan before the alliance was going to become engaged there. But nonetheless what's interesting is that again in the German Marshall Fund, we have two of the more dynamic younger ministerial leaders of the alliance, both of whose names obviously have been in the frame to succeed the Secretary General, both of whom represent countries in the southern group if you like, in Afghanistan, whose forces are very heavily engaged there.

You set an agenda Secretary General, very clearly so let's begin with the forthcoming summit itself. There was a lot of talk here about honeymoons or a honeymoon for the Obama administration, a honeymoon maybe in relation to the [pre-NATO] and the United States. Well, in Strasbourg-Kehl there's clearly going to be an opportunity for the reaffirmation of the marriage vows. As somebody once said there are more than two of us in this marriage. There's quite a lot of people in this NATO marriage.

But if I could ask you Minister, first of all and this isn't just a ceremonial occasion obviously, is it an opportunity to push the reset button on NATO.

The Hon. Peter MacKay - Minister of Defence, Canada

It sure is yes. And just before I respond I want to thank the German Marshall Fund again for the invitation to come, to be on this venerable panel and participate in what is an extremely open inclusive forum, which is symbolic I think of NATO itself.

I think that NATO and Jaap have set the agenda like a buffet. There are a lot of great ideas that have been introduced not only in his opening remarks but certainly in the work that he has done in his five years as Secretary General, very aggressive and forward-leaning approach. And certainly the run up to this summit allows us to not only press the reset but I think re-examine where we are today and how we're going to get there in a very strategic approach, which is of course a comfortable place for NATO to be given the military alliance that it is.

And we can never forget NATO is a military alliance. As Jaap said, it's not the multi-lateral, multinational talk shop. It has action in its core. It has military capability. So it is capabilities, it is operational and it is partnerships that we look at.

On the operational side obviously there have been challenges. The issue of burden sharing has been front and centre throughout the mission in Afghanistan. I think what countries need to do and what, as a Canadian, as a representative of a country that as you said is in the south, is in the fray, what we ask of all participants in NATO and non-NATO - and I'm quick to point out that there are countries like Japan and Australia and New Zealand who are also making significant contributions, and others. But countries have to look at what their capacity is and what their contributions are and marry them up. If they can't send troops, if it's not boots on the ground, is it financial? Is it the ability to do more on the humanitarian side? This whole joined-up approach requires a lot of coordination, getting everybody focused and pulling in that proper direction that will ensure success.

People have said Afghanistan is the litmus test, the crucible for the Alliance. And I agree. Failure is simply not an option. There's too much at stake. I heard Bob Zoellick yesterday talk about the financial crisis of course and how this is affecting people, how it's affecting their livelihoods, their life savings. Afghanistan is affecting human life. And not only the people in Afghanistan, we know that the ability of Afghanistan to project outwards as the incubator of terrorism, that it was prior to 2001 and at other times in its past. We have to get it right.

On the partnership side I think what NATO has to do is continue to look out to other countries as future participants, either inside or in partnership with NATO. How we get along with the European Union, extremely important. As a Canadian I have a different perspective of that, but I see that NATO's ability to manage the relationship with the European Union and the United Nations, and dare I say again those countries outside of NATO, that's an extremely important function of NATO. So there's a great deal and an ambitious agenda coming out of the summit.

Canada has a very strong vested interest as a sixty-year founding nation within NATO. We follow events extremely closely. We participate actively, pre-NATO both Wars, Korea and missions leading up to Afghanistan.

I'll finish on this note. I had the opportunity yesterday to do something that many Canadians consider a pilgrimage and that was to go to Vimy Ridge. Someone described that as the founding of our country. I was reminded again of the human cost of conflict. Canada has 100,000 of its citizen buried on this continent. I called four parents and spouses yesterday as a result of recent casualties in Afghanistan. There is so much at stake. We can't fail in Afghanistan, we can't fail in this important Alliance. And the world is depending on us.

Jonathan Marcus

Ellen Tauscher, what are the Americans hoping for from their European partners at the summit?

The Hon. Ellen Tauscher - Member, US House of Representatives

Well I liked the analogy of a honeymoon. I'm getting married myself at the end of June. So I'm hoping for a very long honeymoon and a very rich relationship. But of course, honeymoons always start with the basics. And it means having good partners. And I think from our point of view in the United States, I think in North America we know we have a great partner in our Canadian friends who always step up.

I think at home, some of my other colleagues, I think, have spoken eloquently over the last couple of days. When I was on Wall Street we had a thing called deal fatigue. Now I think we've got lots of deals and lots of fatigue. Certainly we need a narrative at home for exactly what is going on in Afghanistan and why it is important. I think we not only need it for the American people, but I think we need it for our partners in NATO and, writ large, the folks that that are supporting our efforts there.

For I think many of us there was a success in [completing] Iraq and Afghanistan, which was probably one of the bigger mistakes that was made. And now we've got to step back and make clear what is different about Afghanistan, why Afghanistan is so important. Why that geographic space that has had such an unfortunate history, such high illiteracy, not a lot to really commend itself other than hardworking good people that deserve a chance, why that space needs to be occupied until those people can do it responsibly. We know clearly what happened when that space was not occupied, when that country could not govern itself. And we cannot allow that to happen again, not only because of what happened to us in the United States, but for what it means for others that could also be laid prey to by those very bad people.

So I think what we want in the United States is a sense of common narrative, that we actually understand what is important about Afghanistan, what is at risk. As someone who is a very big fan of NATO and a supporter of NATO, I need to be able to tell my 657,000 constituents what's happening. Why this has been a hard slog, why this has

been a struggle. What is it that we're now going to do that's going to be different? I believe that our commitment to add 17,000 troops and others is the beginning of a new clarity and a new commitment. But once again we need to have a sense at home that we're not disproportionately going to be at risk, that we're not going to, after sending our military in Iraq for so long, now that things are doing better and we're going to be rotating out, that the stop loss policy that has been so burdensome on families and for our military is now going to be harder to get back into the right size because of Afghanistan.

So there's a lot of this I think, frankly, that's about the narrative. What is the story, what are the opportunities? Clearly part of it is to setting expectations. But let me be clear, that is not dumbing down expectations. That is not - I think my friend [Cindy McCain] is very wise in talking about, as we clarify and redefine what the mission in Afghanistan is, that we do not make it minimal, that we do not say that this is about going and then getting out. In the end this is going to take a lot longer than I think we expect. It's going to be losses in the short term, more than we want. But I think that it is clear that this is something that we have to do together. And as Jaap has said, this is a defining moment for NATO and we have got to get this right.

Jonathan Marcus

Radic Sikorski, another summit, another lengthy document - at least it will be in preparation. It will emerge in due course. Why is this new strategic concept for NATO so crucially important?

The Hon. Radoslaw Sikorski - Minister of Foreign Affairs, Poland

Because the old one is ten years old and you need to update it. Jaap has already mentioned the declaration on Alliance security. It's a good document. We hope it will be the basis for the new concept.

But I'd like to point out the situation has changed too. Ten years ago, when we were joining, everybody assumed that we would be consumers of security. Well today we don't have any American or Alliance troops in our territory, but there are Polish troops in Afghanistan. And indeed we have taken part in every NATO operation since then. So we are a contributor and we want this to be recognised. And I think what the Secretary General mentioned is very important that our part of the NATO territory still needs some reassurance, some strategic reassurance, because we will be able to contribute to operations the more we feel that home territory is safe.

And then I think what the summit should do is give an even greater sense of urgency, that Jaap conveyed to us, mainly that this is not an ordinary time. It's not business as usual for NATO. We have to decide whether we're serious about winning in Afghanistan and whether we need wartime leadership, and that means perhaps overriding some of the procedures we have inherited from the past, from a different time. We have procedures for generating forces, for example, that were set up at a time when NATO was assumed to be preparing for total war. And when there is total

war, people don't spare forces. But for a more limited engagement, I think we need rules for sharing the burden fairly on the troops' side and on the cost side.

Peter McKay

Those who send the troops actually foot the whole bill.

Radoslaw Sikorski

Indeed. And we also need procedures for sending those troops to the theatre for them to be used according to military logic and not according to political logic. And it's very difficult to do. But unless we do, we won't reverse the trends in Afghanistan which are not favourable right now.

Jonathan Marcus

Secretary General, the Alliance needs to be put almost on a war footing. Ellen Tauscher talked about getting a narrative of the events in Afghanistan, the important of Afghanistan, over to Alliance populations. That's something that certainly many countries, governments have failed. Why is that? Why have they not been better able to make the case? And is that something that perhaps NATO as an organisation might be able to devote funds towards, better public information, better engagement with the Alliance populations.

The Hon. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer - Secretary General, NATO

Certainly better public information. NATO of course, as I tried to indicate in my introduction, NATO's most important operational priority is Afghanistan. NATO is of course more than about Afghanistan, but Afghanistan brings a number of the crucial issues together in this regard. By the way when you interrupted, Radic, I do not think that we should go to a system where every nation only funds its own forces. I think that we should go to a system financing our operations where there's a bigger solidarity than we have now. Now we have a lack of financial burden sharing - I add political burden sharing is also very important, political burden sharing. But we certainly have a lack of financial burden sharing.

But I think the narrative, Ellen Tauscher, quite rightly, is speaking about, is the narrative of, first of all, to be serious. How can we be serious about the integrity of the NATO territory which is the Washington Treaty which is Article 5? But how can we, at the same time, be serious that we can help to get Afghanistan and the region right? And I spoke about not being in different moral categories in the reconstruction and development and in the war-fighting, because let us not forget - and that is perhaps where public opinion is a bit of a more difficult story to tell - let us not forget that in that area we are fighting on the front line in a fight against terrorism.

Now that is more difficult to understand, perhaps, for an European audience than for a United States audience because I still see a perception gap between the United States of America - Canada Peter is a better judge - and Europe. And I'll explain. 9/11 was

a terrorist attack to the very heart of the United States of America. And every US citizen perceived it like that. In Europe, when a terrorist attack happens where we saw the horror in Madrid or in London or elsewhere, it is of course deplored and it considered dramatic, but it is, because Europe is not yet finished, it is not considered to be an attack against the heart of Europe. It is an attack in a specific European country.

In other words, when you come to the public perception and public diplomacy, I do think that the notion of terrorism is still differently perceived in the United States of America than it is in Europe. And that has nothing to do, before I'm misunderstood, that has nothing to do with what kind of administration there is in the US. That is a perception and a mentality question. Very, very relevant for NATO if we are in Afghanistan because everybody likes reconstruction development, but much less people like to be on the front line in the fight against terrorism. And that is why Peter says failure is not an option in Afghanistan because failure there will also affect heavily the credibility of NATO, but it will simply bring those guys, not only to Afghanistan, but to us, in Warsaw, in Ottawa, in Austin Texas -- excuse me, in California or wherever we like. So that is a major challenge for NATO.

And if I may, finally, go one step further, that does mean, and that's why this Big Tent meeting in The Hague is important, if we want to get that region right, we need Russia. We need Russia for many more different and complicated and complex questions. We need, and that's the interesting thing of the 31st of March, you need Iran as well, as a neighbour of Afghanistan and as a player in the region. Now if you can combine - and that's why I think the idea for the Big Tent is - on second thoughts, on first thoughts I was not that keen but I'm keen now - is an interesting idea because, at the same time, the US hopefully gets the opportunity to bring Iran into an equation on other dossiers than Afghanistan. And for us it is important because we have not only the region but also other major players together. And if I say other major players, NATO is not only about Afghanistan, NATO is also very much about our relationship with Russia, which brings again into the equation Radic's comment on NATO's core function plus NATO's operational expeditionary capabilities in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Jonathan Marcus

Let's go to what NATO does. I mean in your speech you mentioned energy security, global warming. And NATO has become involved in partnerships of every kind. I'm not seeking to diminish these activities, but there does seem to be a growing groundswell in the Alliance that it should somehow get back to basics, get back to the core principles.

Radic Sikorski you said that the Alliance needs to make the traditional security guarantees credible again. Why are they not?

Radoslaw Sikorski

I believe that they are, but in my part of the world we have a historic experience of guarantees that they need to be backed by capabilities, even by logistics. And if you look at events of last August for example in the Caucuses, Georgia was of course not a member of our Alliance yet, but it was widely assumed that she was a special partner of the United States. And when push came to shove the logistics decided, as usual, and we were not able to help Georgia much.

Jonathan Marcus

Peter McKay, you're a back to basics man.

Peter McKay

Well I am a back to basics man and I think the Secretary General mentioned Article Five. Article 5 is of course the collective security, the principle of solidarity, if one country is attacked, we're all in, which sends a chill over Georgia again as to what could have occurred. Some would argue the attack perhaps wouldn't have happened because there's a deterrent element in NATO. And I think, what Radic has said very eloquently, is there is a feeling that countries have territorial defence and expeditionary capabilities. And some are worried about the ability to do both. It's a false dichotomy. NATO has to do both. There is the principle that we have to be able to ensure our own territorial sovereignty and stability, but also be able to come to the aid of others, as we're doing in Afghanistan. And in Afghanistan, just to revisit the core principle there, it's to stabilize, secure, enable and leave. What we want to do, obviously, is ensure the capacity of the Afghan security forces to secure their own borders, once they're determined where they are, and to get on with what may be the next mission.

We're seeing countries - again and I credit both Poland, and I think another good example that is on the cusp of NATO membership is Croatia - countries that were recipients of territorial expeditions and are now significant contributors. And that, to me again is a hallmark of success about the Alliance, the ability to embrace those countries and to make them part of the NATO family, the alliance that has this global responsibility.

NATO has gone global. That's one of the great accomplishments in our 60 years, the ability to reach out, to identify niche capabilities, which again I think is an important part of the re-examination or re-start. If you don't have the same military capability obviously, and with the greatest respect of the United States, there are many other roles for NATO countries. And that's not to say that it is a buffet. We all have important responsibilities, combat being perhaps the greatest need right now. But to get it right, this comprehensive, joined up, common approach that we are seeing now take hold in Afghanistan will work because, again, it's a very basic concept, in my view, of team. Radic can be a great striker; Ellen can be a defender; Jaap the goalie. Each country has an ability to play an important role on the field. But again you have

to ask yourself and ask for the most from the team, the management, the players and the participants to do their best and to finish the job.

Jonathan Marcus

Ellen Tauscher you've never been out of the expeditionary business. You went global much earlier than NATO did, perhaps. Are you reassured by the sorts of things you're hearing here?

Ellen Tauscher

I am. But I think - let me just take a little different tack than back to basics because I think you can only go back to basics if you assume that nothing has changed. And I think that everything has changed. Certainly the asymmetry that we find to be so threatening, the non-state actors, I hope - and I'm speaking as a Congresswoman not as somebody that potentially could do something else in the future, I think non-proliferation has to be a big part of NATO's future agenda. I think that we can be as expeditionary and ready as we want to be. We can figure out how to have force structures and share capabilities and who's got the C-17s and who does bio. And we can do all that and split the portfolio and absolutely be agreeable and congruent all day long. If we don't get this non-proliferation issue right, if we don't understand how to strengthen international regimes and if we don't understand what the asymmetry threat is - I also believe that we need to have a layered network, short and medium range missile defence system, in Europe. I think that whatever the United States does in the future to expand our long range capabilities - I see, sitting in Washington and in California, a tremendous threat, especially to southern Europe right now. And I see no capabilities. That is something that in the United States we have to say to ourselves, I feel a little naked to being called upon to do something. And I think NATO not only in planning, but absolutely in putting out their capabilities and investments, has got to begin talk about this kind of thing.

Russia, obviously our relationship with Russia is evolving. It's like one of those complicated long term relationships. On a ten storey building with Russia, on the first floor we're smiling and having coffee, on the second floor we're slapping each other silly, and on the third floor we're handing each other cheques and on the fourth floor we're demarching ourselves. It's a very complicated relationship. We need START renegotiated. Obviously we want to have a strong relationship ongoing with Russia, but clearly what happened to Georgia is still a problem.

So I think that the challenge for us is to understand what has changed. And to be able to move more quickly in planning and in execution to be much more twenty-first century in how we have our systems and operations and certainly in how we make our decisions. But at the same time, I think the values that created NATO 60 years ago are even more important now and are fundamentally where our peoples want us to go. I also believe that we need to get our peoples and our parliament's understanding exactly what a great deal NATO is and why it is, and that is part of the conversation, I believe, and the narrative that we have to develop.

Jonathan Marcus

Secretary General does the Alliance have resources to be able to deal with all of these new issues, but also adequately to address the core functions that everybody is stressing need more attention?

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

Not if the intention would be that NATO would be the jack of all trades. Yes if we could define Peter's buffet approach more thoroughly than we have done up to now, what is NATO's added value. NATO is not in the climate change business. That's not why I mentioned climate change or global warming. But if you look at the high north in Europe, there could very well be security consequences of the falling of the polar ice cap. The North West Passage energy, NATO is not in the energy security business. But by the way, in the present strategic concept of '99 there is already a notion of the free flow of energy. What needed a tank division 50 years ago is now an energy lever to be closed. And we saw those pictures on television didn't we. We saw them, we saw a man closing those levers - or levers as Ellen would say. You needed a tank division to paralyse a country. What do you know now? You organise a cyber attack. Let me mention Estonia and how that can paralyse a nation. In other words that all has security implications and NATO has to define its added value.

If NATO would think it would be the jack of all trades, it would go totally wrong. It would forget about its core responsibilities. But we should realise, and that's why I say with Ellen and with Peter, the security environment has changed in the sense that in 2005, after the earthquake in Pakistan, could NATO have said no when the Pakistanis came to us and said, you are the only organisation in the world which can bring in heavy engineering equipment, which can bring in hospitals. Be careful because it's Kashmir, by the way, and it's a political minefield literally and in another sense as well. In other words, saying no and say ring the neighbours doorbell if these issues come up, is awfully difficult and, I think, impossible. The discussion we had about Pakistan is what are we going to send? Are we going to send the NATO response force? Who is going to pay for that NATO response force?

So we have a number of very hot issues to decide upon. Financially and politically we do have a NATO response force, but we have a very difficult debate what the NATO response force is for. And as long as we do not seriously take a decision, not discuss it, not the editorial board of the Economist, but if we do not take a decision what is the NRF and when and under what circumstances we're going to use it, I can guarantee that in five years, when my successor finishes his term or her term, there will not be a NATO response force any more.

In other words, let the discussion and the notion about a new strategic concept be an argument for this Alliance to act. To discuss first and to organise seminars or have a group of wise men, that is up to the heads of state or government to decide, but let us address a number of very fundamental issues because otherwise the answer to your question will be no. And I say with Peter the same forces we do need for the core

function, for the Article 5 function, expeditionary, are the forces we need for Afghanistan and elsewhere, because if it would ever come, heaven forbid, to the defence of Alliance territory, we also need expeditionary forces. Those forces cannot stay where they are. They have to be transported. We need the C-17 transport aircraft. We need to be much more inventive about what we buy collectively, not only C-17s but helicopters, hospitals, logistics, then we can have a less uneven burden sharing in the financial sense and as a consequence in the political sense, because those two elements, unequal burden sharing politically, unequal burden sharing financially are two of the major challenges I do see for the coming period.

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

And the EU.

Peter McKay

And the EU, of course. Again it speaks to Ellen's point about how we need to modernise the organisation to match the changing, evolving threat security environment that we're in and the very real challenges that NATO will have going forward.

Jonathan Marcus

Thank you. Let's go to some questions now. I liked the analogy of the apartment building. Let's hope we're not chucking each other off the roof when we get to the top floor, but let's have some questions. So there, if we can get a microphone? And what I think we might do is spend quite a lot of the remaining time on questions.

Q&A Session

From the floor

A question to the Secretary General. Sir, five years ago you addressed a GMF event on the sidelines of the Istanbul summit about the Black Sea. And after that, after your speech, there it was still necessary to ask you in the Q&A period, what is actually NATO policy in the Black Sea region? I think it is a case for repeating that question now five years later. What is NATO policy in the Black Sea region, on the issues of enlargement, on the issue of Russia's compliance with CFE treaty and Istanbul commitments? Somebody was saying yesterday at the Georgia panel that Russia should fulfil some of the Istanbul commitments. What is NATO policy on issues of peacekeeping and on resolving the frozen conflicts?

And finally, as an overarching question, do you feel that placing Afghanistan is the absolute top of the list of priorities? And as NATO and the United States are seemingly plunging headlong into Pakistan after Afghanistan, will that result in downgrading the NATO's Eastern neighbourhood on NATO's list of priorities. Is the Eastern neighbourhood a bridge none too far?

Jonathan Marcus

Let's take two questions at a time. If you could pass the microphone to the lady behind you.

Gitte Bech - Chairperson, Danish Foreign Policy Committee

Hello, my name is Gitte Bech. I'm the Chairperson of the Danish Foreign Policy Committee. I have a question about the future of NATO because, instead of looking what we're doing now -- and we could discuss burden sharing in Afghanistan for the next three hours. I would like to ask you where do you see NATO in 10 years or 20 years' time. Because I think we have to look into the future, and we have also to consider what will happen if Russia asked to be a member of NATO in 20 years' time, 30 years' time. It might not be possible, but at least we discussed it yesterday. So if you could give me, or us, the perspectives of NATO, I would be very pleased. Thank you.

Jonathan Marcus

Ok, Secretary General, perhaps, first off.

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

Well, on that last question, I've done my best, I think, preceding this Panel discussion. By the way, picking up one point, I do see that it should be possible if you go for a timeframe of 15/20 years, I hope, at least, that you would see further rapprochement between Russia and NATO and change the political environment in that regard. I have never heard any ambition from Moscow, so this is still a rather virtual scenario, that they would be thinking in the same direction. But I did my best on NATO in the future, so I'll ask my colleagues to comment on that.

The other question, or questions, rather, were many-fold - let me pick two. I do not think that the fact that Afghanistan is our number one operational priority, and I think with 60,000 forces now under NATO command in Afghanistan, one can hardly -- and the stakes I've tried to identify that high in that part of the world, Afghanistan and the region, one could hardly blame anyone, the Secretary General or any other NATO official, for making Afghanistan into the most important operational priority. But does that mean that we forget about the Eastern dimension? Of course not.

Look at the NATO/Georgia Commission, look at the NATO/Ukraine Commission, look at the decision taken in Bucharest last week - a decision which stands. Look at the way that everyone, including me, is underlining the open door principle of NATO.

On the other hand I say, with the French President, Sarkozy, becoming a member of the democratic family of nations called NATO is not a right in its own right, I should almost say - it has to be earned. Nations have to perform. And then the allies will, at a certain stage, taken a political decision. The allies will take a political decision - not any outside nation will take that decision or will influence that decision. The allies will do it.

I think we are paying a lot of attention to the Eastern dimension. And as far as the Black Sea is concerned, we must realise -- I mentioned the high north, and Peter mentioned the high north. Of course, the NATO policy in the Black Sea, let's say, spearheaded by the relevant NATO allies in that area, is a policy of security, is a policy of stability. And I agree with you if you say that has to do, of course, with the [inaudible], very much so. It has to do with other developments. It's an important region for NATO, as is the high north. Let us, on the other hand, keep NATO as a whole. We should not see that we have a sort of four or five NATOs, where the high north and the Black Sea and the Mediterranean and other regional elements are important. There is one NATO. And let's not regionalise NATO. That is the warning I would like to flag. But it goes without saying that the Black Sea region, giving all those political factors and circumstances, is a very important region for NATO.

Jonathan Marcus

Shall we, perhaps, to go another question?

**Amanda Sloat - Professional Staff Member, Foreign Affairs Committee,
US House of Representatives**

Hi, I'm Amana Sloat from the US Congress. I wanted to follow up on some of the previous comments made about missile defence. Several weeks ago President Obama sent a letter to Russian President, Medvedev, making the comment that, perhaps if we could find ways to dissuade Iran from pursuing nuclear proliferation, then the missile defence system in Poland the Czech Republic might be less necessary.

My question is the Panel's thoughts on the wisdom of that decision, both as a means of improving cooperation with Russia and also the political implications of that in Poland, and particularly in the Czech Republic that expended some political capital on that. Second question is what that means for the future of NATO's own plans for missile defence.

Jonathan Marcus

Ok, while you're thinking about missile defence, let me just pass the microphone to this gentleman here, and then we can answer both of them.

From the floor

Thank you. I'd like to take up Peter McKay's remarks about resources and capabilities. Now there's a hell of a burden to share out there, but we won't be able to share it if we

don't have the capabilities to meet it. And I have to say I think the Canadian Armed Forces have done an outstanding job of transformation. But how can we persuade European allies in particular to up their capability development and defence spending at a time when we have an economic crisis? And, to address the key operational requirements of the Alliance and other things, perhaps it might be a question for Radoslaw Sikorski, because I know the Polish Government is facing very interesting budgetary discussions.

Jonathan Marcus

Ok, shall we start off, Congresswoman? Would you like to begin to address missile defence?

Ellen Tauscher

Well, I would think that [Stafford], from the House, should know what the policy is on missile defence.

From the floor

Everybody else might not.

Ellen Tauscher

The policy is clear. The Congress has spoken very eloquently last year. We have very robust systems in missile defence. Certainly, some of them are sold around the world. Certainly, Aegis, PAC-3 and SAD, which is coming online, are some of the best systems in the air for short and medium range. The long-range system which has been deployed has not reached operational effectiveness. It is a system that we have great hopes for, that we have invested billions of dollars in, but the Congress has made clear that until that system is tested sufficiently - probably three to four more tests - and the Secretary certifies that it is operationally effective, that it will not be deployed any further. That has nothing to do with our relationships our relationships with some of our best allies, including Poland and the Czech Republic.

We also believe, frankly, that, as I said earlier in my comments, the current threat is to our allies, our forward-deployed troops and, certainly, the southern tier of Europe from the existing exorbitant threat in Iran of short and medium-range missiles. And we have no - zero - capability right now to defend against that. That is a threat, by the way - unlike the long-range threat - that is very portable. So it is something that is almost existential when it comes to our friends and allies and our territories that we want to protect. I think the Congress wants to see -- and I will not speak for the Obama administration. But what the Congress wants to see if much more of a congruent understanding of these threats and a movement toward a network system.

Now we have worked diligently to prove to the Russians that our system is what it is - it's a defensive system. We've even had General Beliaevsky, when he was the head of the Russian military, to Colorado Springs where he was pushing the buttons to see

exactly how the system worked. So what's really clear here is that we have three important things to do. We have to get a system that works on the long range. Most importantly, what we have to do is we have to get common agreement on what the threat is now, and the threat is short and medium-range missile targeted toward our forward-deployed troops, our allies in Southern Europe, Europe at large and we need to move in a [NATO-wised] way. Eventually, if we could develop a short and medium-range system, and one that we even shared optics with Russia, we could certainly bolt on the long-range system once it has been tested, and create a suite of systems that have complete coverage for everybody.

Jonathan Marcus

Radoslaw, the budgetary question?

Radoslaw Sikorski

Well, I feel I should comment on MD as well because Ellen and I have been at it for months and years. And, as you know, Poland has taken something of a political risk, signing the agreement with the previous administration. Even though there are objections from the Russian Federation, when we started discussing business with the United States, the US assured us that they would persuade the Russians that it's purely defensive and that it would be a non-controversial decision. I'm afraid that Russian Generals, and even the Russian President, still continues to threaten us with the deployment of medium-range missiles in our immediate vicinity. So we signed with the previous administration. We patiently wait for the decision of the new administration and we hope we don't regret our trust in the United States.

Ellen Tauscher

I don't think you will.

Jonathan Marcus

On the budgetary question, I suppose?

Radoslaw Sikorski

We are all affected by the financial crisis - Poland actually less than some other countries. We are still expected to grow this year and we haven't had a single bank failure. But this is a time to re-examine ones priorities, so we are doing that. And because we agree that Afghanistan is the priority, we will be withdrawing our contingents from the Golan Heights where we've been for 35 years with the UN, from the Lebanon and from Chard by the end of the year, so as to be able to re-enforce Afghanistan because that is the priority. So we are withdrawing from the easier peacekeeping missions in order to re-enforce our mission in Gazny which is on the Kabul/Kandahar road, and is by no means easy.

But if I could pick up on the Danish point about Russian -- is there a future for Russia in NATO? Because I think Ambassador [Chisov] yesterday said that in the '90s we talked about it and we no longer do. And, look, Poland is the last country in Europe that wants to be on some kind of a new front line. It's not comfortable to be on the front line. So we've worked hard to improve our relations with Russia. And I regret the fact that we no longer even intellectually think about Russia's possible closer relationship, but let's remember why.

When NATO came to our border, when Germany reunified in the early 1990s, we didn't see that as a threat. Why? Because we defined the relationship as possibly a relationship of alliance. Now Russia defined at some point NATO as not a friendly organisation, but it was her decision. So the question about Russia's membership is a question about what Russia would do - would Russia be willing to become a democracy? We used to have non-democracies in NATO but I think that those days are passed. We now have standards. So you need to have a democratic system of government, you need to have firm civilian control over your armed forces and you need to have resolved your border disputes with your neighbours. And then you need to apply and to be a candidate. So would Russia be willing to do those things that could eventually lead to membership? And I think, if she were, she would have plenty of adherences inside NATO.

Jonathan Marcus

Time is marching on. I'm going to stop it there. I think, though, we should be clear that great changes can take place. I remember greeting former Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld. Well, he was then Secretary of Defence at another regular conference venue in Germany, in Southern Germany. I don't know if we're allowed to mention the name. And it was an era of great divisions in the Alliance. And I shouted out to him, "Secretary, what's it like arriving in the heart of old Europe"? And he looked at me, and he smiled. And he said, "When you get to my age, old is a term of endearment". So there you are.

All that remains is, I think, to thank you, particularly of course to thank our Panel. I think, since this is one of the last public events before the summit, I think it's worth pointing out that the role and the job that the current Secretary General has done -- there's been a lot in the papers about succession and potential candidates and so on. As a journalist you meet, obviously, lots -- you meet the Secretary General and you meet lots of his staff, and it's interesting. You always say to people, "What's he really like"? And there are lots of public figures of whom you ask that question and, I got to tell you, you don't get terribly pleasant answers. And at NATO the other day I went round and spoke to a few people. Two or three people all said the same thing. They all said that the Secretary General is leaving his post at the height of his powers, and I think that actually is a remarkable testament to what he has achieved during a very critical and difficult period.

So if you could thank all of our Panel.

Press Conference

From the floor

[Audio starts in progress] this decision and the evolution of the whole incident, if you are, of course, aware of it. Thank you.

Ellen Tauscher

I was only aware of it after it was reported. Not to be specific about this issue, but let's take the analogy of a house on fire and a volunteer fire department with two fire trucks and 20 people. When the trucks arrive and they are attempting to contain the fire, save the house and save the neighbourhood, you can't have 20 fire department people decide to peel off when they feel like it. When you are there at the mission, you are meant to do the mission. And you have to set aside some of your self-interest and some of your sense of individualism to the collective. And that is why Article 5 is so important. This cannot be a question of taking an attendance of who is going to show up at the moment that Article 5 is invoked. You have to know that the collective will be arriving.

And so I say, not specific to this particular incident, but as just one of 26 going to 28, when the bell rings everyone is meant to show up, and this cannot be voluntary. That has got to be something that is taken for what it's meant to be, which is everyone show up when you're meant to show up. And we can work the details out about what the division of labour is going to be. But at the same time that you're meant to show up, you can't peel off when you feel like it either.

Peter MacKay

And I think it's a very apt analogy. I think NATO is very much like a global fire brigade, and we do have the collective responsibilities. And not only do we have different responsibilities at various times in these missions, we sometimes have to share in the more difficult tasks. That means, yes, some people drive the trucks and carry the hoses, but we have to have all of the 26 at various times ready to run in and fight the flames and save the people. And we also have to rank in priority where the fires are and how we contain them. So I'll leave that analogy aside for now.

I would say this. We just had a very interesting discussion about NATO. And if we weren't discussing how to modernise and improve and be more inclusive and look at new ideas, if we weren't having that discussion we would be having a discussion about how to invest NATO. Because this is the most critical organisation at the most critical time, certainly in my lifetime. What's happening in Afghanistan, what's

indicative of the insurgency there and future insurgencies' demands that NATO continue to modernise, be flexible, look for new capabilities.

And when certain countries make decisions, at a minimum, I think there has to be notice - consultation is preferred - but the notice so that everyone knows what the implications will be. Because when we're involved in a collective mission you have to know who has your back, who's keeping the air hoses going, who's doing those critical enablers and supports. So I think mutual respect within the Alliance certainly demands and dictates that level of communication and cooperation about what the various roles will be.

From the floor

[Gerald Hamoff] [inaudible] I'm here in Brussels. Taking advantage of Canada and the United States here, when you hear a discussion of NATO branching out into areas like Arctic high north security, energy security etc, there is some discussion in certain [forums] about transatlantic relations taking another form that NATO may not be the best forum for that kind of discussion because you have financial discussions etc. So what is your take on that, bringing these subjects into NATO?

Ellen Tauscher

Well, I think that in the end the basic parts of NATO have to be working and be relevant, and be credible and dependable in order for it to move into other spheres. But it is very clear to me that [cyber] -- certainly, Estonia, one of our allies, was attacked and could be attacked again. Energy security clearly has paid a part in destabilising by Russia recently - certainly, the Georgia situation that happened about 17 months ago, with gas lines being refurbished and turned off.

So I think that what we have to do is take stock of what our capabilities are for what we would call conventional missions, make sure that we still are applying ourselves and that we have the full range of capabilities and that we have the ability to deal with those missions. But I think that because we are living in an asymmetrical world where threats are coming at us in many different forms, NATO needs to be -- the force needs to step up and be prepared to deal with those.

Some of those are going to be done, perhaps -- the only analogy I have is like [net jets]. Not everybody has to do some of these things. Not everyone has to have all of those capabilities at this time. We can, through capabilities, assessments and other things, decide, for example, not every country needs three or four C17s, but we need C17s. Not every country needs helicopters, but we need helicopters. Not everybody needs to be able to deal with chemical and biological and nuclear terrorism, but we need those capabilities. So inside the collective of 26 going to 28 we can burden share by having different countries, either individually or in a group, specialise in those capabilities, help themselves get to a level of burden sharing by having a speciality that they actually can deliver to the collective, and then work on making sure that we are covered now for what the new emerging threats are.

That takes planning, it takes investment, it takes narrative. It takes a narrative to make clear to the publics and parliaments back at home why these are important new investments, why these are things that are important for the Alliance to become capable in. And I think that, when you look at North America, we are very, very interested in making sure, because of the distances and the geography, that our forward-deployed troops and our assets that are in Europe, where the rest of our Alliance is, that we can't move a lot of things very quickly, that there are assets here that we can put to bear and will hold at risk and deter whatever we need to deter, even though we might be far away.

Peter MacKay

If I can just very briefly touch on this as well. A short answer from the Canadian perspective, and we have a tremendous working relationship at a military level, at an economic level, there are other forums, quite frankly, to deal with climate change. Climate change should not be high on the priority list of NATO - it's a military Alliance. Now, I think the previous discussion touched on the fact that the Arctic and the waters in the Northwest Passage in parts of the Arctic are opening up, which creates a new dynamic and, perhaps, a new security threat. And we need to build that into the security architecture of what's happening and the changing threat assessment - piracy, cyber threat, all of that. But we have NORAD when it comes to North America, so that's a separate forum. We have our NAFTA agreement to talk about economic issues. We have other issues to deal with the climate, and international conferences to boot.

But when it comes to ranking the priorities and, most importantly, dealing with them, that's NATO's forum. When it comes to the military capacity, the military operations, having that ability to back up the talk and to be able to protect, project, share those common values - democracy and the rule of law and human rights - we share that, not just with the United States. We share that with the 26 in NATO. And we want to continue to see that we're keeping those priorities straight and actually being a force for good on those files. And Afghanistan has to be given top priority, for reasons that I'm sure you're very familiar.

[Jim Nuger]

Jim Nuger from Bloomberg. I just wanted to ask Minister MacKay about your career plans, whether you have any expectation of moving to Brussels on or about 1 August. Or if you think that honour is more likely to go to Mr Rasmussen.

And if the Congresswoman, from her contacts with the administration, could perhaps shed some light on the US would like to see as the next Secretary General.

Peter MacKay

Well, look, I learned quite some time ago not to have expectations in politics. And I'll answer it this way. I have a tremendous amount of work to do with the Canadian

forces rebuilding effort that we've undertaken in a very ambitious way. We have our Canada First defence strategy. We're upping our game as far as our military capabilities to do the work, both at home and abroad.

And Canada, by virtue of being a 60-year founding nation participant in NATO, is of course very interested in all aspects of NATO, including the leadership. And that's why we've been so engaged, and will continue to be engaged beyond this period of time, beyond this mission. Canada is looking to the future. And this is why we've put in place a 20-year rebuilding plan for our Canadian forces. On subjects such as this I'm very focused at home, very focused when I come to these international gatherings and very cognisant of the fact that the consensus at NATO and the collective security is what all countries have to continue to keep their eye on, and ensure that NATO is up to the task.

Ellen Tauscher

And I learned a long time ago to let the administration speak for themselves. So I have no way to tell what the administration's position on a future Secretary General is. I will just say two things quickly.

I'd like to salute Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, who I think has been an indefatigable, very wise and consensus-building leader for NATO over the last five years. And as a North American, I also want to make the second point that, as a North American, the Canadian Defence Minister is a star for us and our bilateral relationship has always been very strong but, particularly, very strong now with Peter MacKay as Defence Minister. And I just want to say that, from the North American perspective in NATO, we find that we have a very, very strong and congruent relationship. And we're able to speak and think very forcefully because of the efforts of Minister MacKay.

[Peter O'Neill]

Peter O'Neill, Ken West News. Just as a follow up to that, Minister MacKay, I wanted to know if the discussion of you being the next Secretary General, there was a report yesterday on the wire indicating that the US is, in fact, going to support Rasmussen. I'm wondering if you think that this is a strong indication. Obama is looking to the future. He's trying to get Europe more deeply involved into NATO. Canada is pulling out in 2011 anyway, but the current towards a European Secretary General is just too strong for Canada to contend this time.

Peter MacKay

Well, Peter, to quote Joe Biden, I don't think anybody's nationality should be a bar to any position, whether it be NATO or any other organisation. I want to take a moment to follow up on what Ellen has said about Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. I think he's shown tremendous leadership and vision for NATO. I think he has been an extremely positive force in the direction that NATO's taken. And whoever succeeds him is going to have to continue along that path, whether it be at NATO headquarters,

whether it be issues related to expansion, the capabilities and modernisation, the shared assets that are very much a part of the future of NATO.

As far as how the decision is made that, again, is done very much consensus and internally. I read reports. I read newspaper accounts. I'm not going to get drawn into the speculation - I'll leave that to others. All I can say is that Canada is a strong contributor. And I think that the fact that our nation is even being considered speaks mainly to the efforts of our armed forces. And I really salute their tremendous sacrifice and their tremendous commitment, professionalism, courage, and I include their families in that. And that's true of all our military participants.

I think it's so important at this time that NATO is that protective line that runs around the globe, and there's no second defence. That, to me, is so critically important that people understand and that we continue to communicate that to our populations everywhere that the job they're doing allows people to sleep at night; it allows them to carry on with their daily lives. And we can never spend enough time paying tribute to the work of the soldiers.

From the floor

[Inaudible] follow up. More big losses for Canada in Afghanistan. You've been here before talking about burden sharing. Are you becoming sceptical that Europe is going to come through with the kind of troops and forces and finances that Canada and the US have been asking?

Peter MacKay

Well, I continue to be an optimist. And I look at recent events, the return of France, new administration in the United States, ascendancy of other countries, recognition of the necessity of joined up approach and the reality that countries, I think, more and more are recognising that there are roles specific to their country and capabilities that will contribute to success in Afghanistan.

And how do we define success? Well, a country that's no longer in the grip of a terrorist organisation; girls able to go to school; construction happening of roads and water systems and irrigation; immunisation that's saving lives. All of those individual successes at a human level, to me, show that this mission has been moving in the right direction. We just need to do more of it. And we need to draw more people into the effort.

I suspect that President Obama, Prime Minister Harper, other leaders will continue to make those points forcefully at the upcoming summit. And I think we need to continue to embrace this recognition of solidarity of Alliance, and the fact that this particular mission has to succeed. And each of us has a role to play in that. And each of us has to dig a little deeper and try to identify what that contribution can be.

From the floor

I have a question for you, Madam. Success in Afghanistan -- sorry, I'm from Danish TV. My name is [Meta Fikle]. Success in Afghanistan is a must. Does that mean that the next Secretary General must be able to communicate with the Islamic world?

Ellen Tauscher

Do you mean by speaking a language?

From the floor

Well, there is one of the so-called candidates, the Danish Prime Minister, who has a cartoon crisis. Well, Denmark has created a cartoon crisis. And Mr Rasmussen is not very well liked in some parts of the Islamic world. So if NATO is going to succeed in Afghanistan, doesn't it take a Secretary General that is able to talk to the Islamic, that is respected in the Islamic world?

Ellen Tauscher

Well, I will say that, when we were inside, I made clear that one of my concerns is that we need a narrative to speak to publics and parliaments, not only of NATO countries but the world at large, as to what is important in Afghanistan; why the mission in Afghanistan is important, why NATO is there, why, individually, the countries that are members of NATO need to make their contributions and need to be steadfast and why the world should be supporting the mission in Afghanistan - it does have a UN mandate.

So I will not speak specifically about one candidate or another. My guess is that all of these things are being taken into consideration. But I do believe that whoever ascends to the Secretary General job at NATO has a big burden; a big burden to make sure that we have a narrative about the mission in Afghanistan and to begin to make sure that publics and parliaments around the world understand exactly why this is so very, very important and why we have a UN mandate and why we have all of these NATO nations participating.

[End]