

Extracts from a speech delivered by Rt Hon Des Browne MP, UK Secretary of State for Defence at the Twenty-Fifth International Workshop on Global Security: An Efficient and Effective NATO on 20 June 2008.

#### Need for International Institutional Reform

We have been well-served by the institutions founded shortly after the end of the Second World War. The immediate post-war years spawned a remarkable new era in co-operation – with the foundation of the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, NATO and others.

Across the globe there are few aspects of our work that have not been heavily shaped by these international institutions, and both our security and our prosperity have benefited hugely as a consequence.

The post-war leaders of North America and Europe were true visionaries. But as Gordon Brown said in his Kennedy Memorial Lecture no-one "could have foreseen the sheer scale of the new global challenges that our growing interdependence brings: their scale, their diversity and the speed with which they have emerged:

- the globalisation of the economy;
- the threat of climate change;
- the long struggle against international terrorism; and
- the need to protect millions from violence and conflict and to face up to the international consequences of poverty and inequality."

These new challenges have tested our international institutions – and although they have shown that they can adapt and change, it is also increasingly apparent that they are starting to struggle with the new strategic environment.

It's not that they can't cope – that is self-evidently not true. But they are not as effective as we would like them to be. And relying on them as much as we do, and supporting them with as much money and effort as we do, their effectiveness matters to us deeply.

Besides their effectiveness there's another related issue - that of internal efficiency. Over time all institutions build bad habits, cumbersome processes, working practices that are more hindrance than help. The great institutions that were set up after the Second World War have fifty or sixty years of accumulated habit and practice - and a lot of it is bad. A habit gained or an interest vested is often a habit ingrained or an interest that no one can ever divest.

They lack internal mechanisms that are strong enough to bring necessary change from within, even if those at the helm are themselves strong proponents of renewal. And if they work by consensus, these tendencies are often reinforced rather than alleviated.

So we need to refresh our vision for the way these fundamentally sound institutions work for us. We need to ensure that they are equipped to deal with new threats and that they work more closely with each other to achieve this objective. And we also need to help them function better, through a clearer focus on what we need them to deliver. Improving working practices, measuring outputs and stripping away bad habits and vested interests.

The effort to achieve these goals needs to be led by us all in our dual capacities both as beneficiaries and as providers. I use the word 'led' advisedly. This is an issue of leadership. We must not shy away from the opportunities that we have to make a difference, not just to our national security, but to international peace and stability. Effective and efficient institutions are a key part of this.

## NATO Reform

For those of us who have the privilege – and it is a privilege – to work in defence, the pre-eminent international organisation is NATO.

NATO is about common transatlantic values, indivisible security and solidarity.

All NATO Allies are in Afghanistan, for example, conducting the biggest and most complex mission ever undertaken by the Alliance

They are in Kosovo where NATO remains a vital bulwark for peace, at a time of continuing tension. Through NATO, allies play an extensive role in training and security sector reform, for which NATO has the most effective mechanisms in the world, bar none. You only have to look at Eastern Europe to see why this is the case.

At the same time, the Alliance continues to grow – with new members and new partnerships. The Bucharest NATO Summit in April was attended by some sixty nations and leaders of key international organisations. In facing problems with global reach, NATO is demonstrating a commitment to work with partner institutions and nations around the globe.

These are not the symptoms of a moribund organisation.

Nevertheless, I am concerned that doing these things is more of a struggle for NATO than it should be. And if it is a struggle for NATO as a whole, then it is a struggle for each individual member state as well.

Three years ago, in 2005, my predecessor as Defence Secretary, John Reid, spoke at this Workshop. Then, he said that "If NATO is to prove its continued relevance on the global stage, it must seize the process of Transformation with both hands." I think that, with Afghanistan, with Kosovo, with international security sector reform, NATO is proving its continued relevance. But now it needs to consolidate those gains, and look long and hard at where reform is needed most urgently.

I suggest we can all agree that reform should take us towards three clear objectives for NATO:

- Well-planned and well-managed operations;
- An ability to help identify and deliver the capabilities needed to support both current and future operations; and

- A framework of partnerships that will allow us to work with others who share our interests and can contribute to them including as part of a more comprehensive approach.

Operations are central to NATO's purpose. And Afghanistan is our most important operation. Through this NATO operation, we are reinforcing our collective security at home, and giving Afghanistan the chance to build a secure and hopeful future for its people. But the requirements for success in Afghanistan also match very closely NATO's requirements for change in its approach to delivering collective defence and security more generally.

Operations there are the Alliance's main driver for transformation presently. Afghanistan is forcing us all to change the way we approach complex 21st Century threats with 21st Century means.

In the British Government, we have thought hard about our approach. Experience in Afghanistan has been hugely significant as a motor for many changes we have sought to make – both in defence and in our wider determination to help international organisations deliver better. But we are not alone. Canada – also in light of its experience in Afghanistan – has carried out a far-reaching analysis of its defence posture and priorities, including through the Manley Commission. An analysis which has reinforced Canada's role as a stalwart and highly capable NATO Ally. The Netherlands and Denmark, too, have examined thoroughly their own transformation needs through their experience in Afghanistan, and so equipped themselves to deal with the complex challenges that we now must deal with in this new century.

I hope all Allies will grasp the need to use this operation in their own transformation. But NATO must also do so.

Now, it is true that, in NATO, we have come a long way in recognising the importance of expeditionary capabilities in dealing with the broad range of threats the Alliance is likely to face. This is particularly true since the endorsement of the Comprehensive Political Guidance at the 2006 Riga Summit. We have developed the NATO Response Force as a means of deploying such capabilities.

But, there remains far too big a mismatch between our aspirations and what actually we deliver. The NATO Response Force is not getting the forces or capabilities it needs in order to carry out the full range of missions for which it was designed. As a consequence, there are concerns as to its longer term viability. We are lacking sufficient capabilities in key areas, such as strategic and intra-theatre lift. Capabilities which affect our ability to prosecute current and future operations in the way we might want. And that shortfall puts strain on the forces and capabilities that are available.

As a measure of what we're doing to improve this situation, NATO has developed targets, including that 40% of land forces should be deployable. Eleven of the 26 Allies still don't reach this target. If all eleven were to do so, we could expect 34,000 additional deployable land forces for operations, including for the NATO Response Force.

I'm glad to say that there is a gradual upward trend towards meeting this target - though the UK would like to see the target itself raised to a level which would allow us to provide fully for all of

our commitments.

But I sometimes wonder whether the concept of improving usability in NATO is not embraced with much warmth by some of our Allies. Indeed, in some quarters, it is an exercise which is conducted through gritted teeth.

We can't afford to be equivocal about transformation. Resources need to be switched away from non-deployable capabilities. The United Kingdom and other Allies such as France have sought to find innovative ways of developing such capabilities through initiatives to make more helicopters and strategic lift aircraft available for operations. But there's no getting away from the fact that these capabilities require investment, and that means proper investment in defence and proper prioritisation on the things that we, the Alliance, need most.

We need to help the Alliance understand better its real priorities, and then encourage it to focus and organise itself to deliver them most effectively.

We also need to be sure that resources – money, of course, but even more importantly, people and their ability to think and act – are being used efficiently against the priorities: operations, capabilities and partnerships.

And I'm not sure that today I could claim the Alliance is either clearly focused on the things that we need, or on delivering them as efficiently and as effectively as possible.

I could point of course to a non-deployable command structure that is scarcely optimised for the type of operations we now conduct; or to a rigid committee structure and culture which inhibits cross-cutting thinking and advice and is disinclined to emphasise delivery. It is hard to prioritise investment decisions, which still tend to be driven too much by potential equipment solutions than by an analysis of capability requirements. The budgetary consequences of our decisions are not as clear as they should be at the moment of decision, and often not faced up to thereafter.

We need to help NATO take a fresh look at how it is organised to deliver. Driving change in consensus-based organisations is notoriously hard and vulnerable, of course, to special interest lobbies. NATO Defence Ministers have a particular responsibility to give political leadership in this task – and I use the word leadership again – putting the interests of the organisation as a whole above the parochial.

A modernised NATO emphatically is not about doing less with less or somehow cutting down what we desire to do. It's about doing properly what already we have said we need to do, by making better use of the resources which Allies are ready to commit. And a well-managed and well-focused Alliance is far more likely to attract investment for the long term.

Modernisation is also about letting NATO show us how it can add more value to the sum of the 26 Allies. NATO's great reservoir of knowledge and expertise about national capabilities, for example, should serve as the basis for new ideas for fostering initiatives between Allies, to deliver the capabilities we need. We should be much more open to working with partners to deliver these capabilities. I'm delighted with the work we are already doing with Ukraine, for example, on helicopters. And the NATO-EU Capability Group shows how we can work more

closely with others in many other field

The third pillar of NATO's transformation, that of partnerships is a very important one. Globalisation brings new threats and new challenges. But it also brings new partners who share our values and interests in tackling them. NATO has had huge success in building bridges and relationships with like-minded partners. And Afghanistan, again, is testament to that - with 14 ISAF partners working with us. Our relationships with our ISAF partners; with the Government of Afghanistan; with key neighbours like Pakistan; and through the NATO-Russia Council are vitally important.

But we have been far too slow to adapt our own working practices to make it easy for our partners to work with us. Australia is a key ISAF partner which - sadly demonstrated by the Bali bombings - has common purpose with us in tackling extremism in Afghanistan. Australia has committed significant numbers of troops who put their lives on the line with us, and yet it has been hard work for them to get a say in our collective approach and planning in NATO. It is wrong that our partners have to struggle so much to work in proper partnership with us – a classic case of process defying common sense – but not the only one, alas.

The need for NATO to work alongside other organisations – especially the United Nations and the European Union – is equally strong. The fact that they cannot is a victory for dogma over pressing operational need. It is incomprehensible to me, as the Defence Secretary of a country in all three organisations, that we should have such difficulty in working together. I do not belittle national concerns which conspire to make co-operation so hard, but I do not accept that our armed forces should be expected to pay the price for this on operations. The prize of the UN, NATO and the EU working properly together – alongside other international and regional organisations – is simple. It is more effective operations.

Mr Chairman, I have said what I think it is we need in a transformed NATO – well-managed operations with the capabilities and the partnerships to deliver them and the level of ambition we have set ourselves in NATO. And I've also mentioned some of the challenges, such as structural inefficiencies, and opportunities to make progress – notably in learning from our collective experience in Afghanistan.

But there is a further, underlying issue which frustrates our ability to meet these three objectives. We must, in NATO, address the issues of political will and public perception.

The public and politicians of many European NATO Allies do not yet see expeditionary operations and capabilities as directly linked to their defence and their security. Trust me, they are. NATO is in Afghanistan taking on extremism and the roots of that extremism because it is a grave and proven threat to our public and to the security of every citizen in every NATO country – from Istanbul to New York. The tentacles of this extremism have spread far and wide, but its roots have been in the Taleban-protected training camps and safe havens of Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, NATO is acting for our collective defence in the truest and noblest sense.

The inclination to re-focus on patrolling the home turf is deeply ingrained, but – with respect – deeply flawed. And the accompanying notion, that providing much needed security outside

NATO's core area somehow competes with or detracts from our collective defence, is to ignore the reality that they are just the same thing, requiring the same kind of forces.

NATO and its Allies need to focus harder on making the case for change: we have one set of forces which can be used for crisis response or for collective defence under Article 5; our defence will often need to happen far from home; increasingly we shall need to work more closely with others – international organisations and partner nations – in delivering a broader vision of security. We, as the political leaders, must be the agents for that change.

I do not see the challenge as fundamentally different from explaining why we need to act on climate change, or take action to avoid shortages in key natural resources. Globalisation means we need to lift public attention beyond the 'here and now', beyond our respective back yards. Climate change doesn't just affect the Arctic; security isn't just about guarding the garden gate. Our publics need to know that defence and security are enhanced by flexible and expeditionary forces that we can rely on to deliver wherever and whenever a threat might dictate. It is our duty to tell them that.

So public perceptions of how NATO provides for our collective defence and responds to crises now have to change further. And it is the responsibility of elected politicians to get this message across - not to fuel – with money, men and machines we can ill-afford to mis-allocate – perceptions of threats which collectively we have agreed are no longer there.

Defence Ministers can contribute hugely to make internal change in NATO happen. That is why I have proposed to the Secretary-General that, in September, in London, we hold a special meeting purely devoted to NATO's transformation and how we can help it move forward. There are some practical issues and some very political issues that we need to consider. And I'm clear that we won't transform NATO overnight. But I'm equally clear that it's time to switch off autopilot and to engage with the real issues, because they are out there.

I'm a strong believer in the long-term business case for this Alliance. NATO has strategic patience and institutional depth in managing operations that we should never underestimate. As a focus for bringing our armed forces together and promoting their interoperability, NATO has no peer. And in developing a more comprehensive approach with partners, NATO has a huge role and opportunity to harness defence into a broader international approach to security.

We now need to endorse the modern vision of NATO as an expeditionary Alliance, capable of acting to provide security at home, on our periphery or further afield. An Alliance in which we are ready to invest. And we need a NATO that will put that investment to most productive use.

We all need to take on the mantle of leadership. We need to remind ourselves, my fellow politicians, and our people that this is not purely a theoretical exercise. This is about being more effective on the ground, whether in the fields of Kosovo or in the dust of Afghanistan, so that our collective security, and the stability of the world, can be more firmly guaranteed in these uncertain times.