

An Ever Relevant Alliance

Opening Statement

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*DIIS Conference on “Transforming NATO: Risks, Challenges and Opportunities”
30-31 October 2006 in Copenhagen*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On a very hot 4th of July in 1919, Jack Dempsey fought Jess Willard for the world heavyweight boxing championship.

The fight is regarded as one of the greatest fights of all time. Dempsey knocked Willard down seven times in the first round. When the fight ended two rounds later, Dempsey was the new champion, and Willard had a broken jaw, two cracked ribs, four missing teeth and a smashed nose.

What made Dempsey’s victory all the more extraordinary was that Dempsey actually was a light-heavy weight at 85 kilos whilst Willard weighed 111 kilos – 26 kilos more than Dempsey. Dempsey was truly “punching above his weight”.

To make Armed Forces punch above their weight, transformation is needed.

It is therefore a great pleasure for me to give the opening statement at today’s conference on NATO’s transformation.

The conference comes at the right time. We are now close to the NATO summit in Riga. This allows us to draw a general outline of the issues that will be discussed at the summit.

Let me therefore start by thanking the director Nanna Hvidt and the Danish Institute for International Studies for organizing this conference. It is a very interesting and comprehensive program that the Danish Institute for International Studies has set up.

For Denmark, NATO has historically been the most important international organization when it comes to questions related to defence and security policy. And it remains so.

Through the Cold War era, NATO ensured Denmark's freedom, independence, and security. This was an important element in the foundation for the development of the Danish well-fare society.

Through NATO we achieved what we would not have been able to achieve on our own. This was also the case for most of the other European members of NATO. For us who grew up during the Cold War, NATO is therefore a well known "brand".

However, the global security situation has radically changed the last 15 years, and the immediate threat to Denmark's security has long ago disappeared. Young people today might therefore not be as familiar with NATO as I was as a young kid.

And I am very pleased that things have turned out this way. At the bottom line it is a very positive sign – that we today do not have to worry about a Warsaw Pact, a life controlled by the secret police, or nuclear war.

Some might even question the relevance of NATO. To them I say, NATO still makes a difference. A difference that is important for not only the security in our own homes but also on a global scale.

NATO as of today is more than collective defence. NATO is still collective defence. But NATO is also many other things. Not least crisis management in its broadest understanding, including in the fight against terrorism. But also political dialogue and co-operation between Allies and partners.

NATO played a crucial role in achieving peace and stability in the Balkans – in Bosnia and Kosovo. The aim of NATO's operations in Bosnia and Kosovo was to ensure - and in Kosovo enforce – peace and stability and to ensure an end to hostilities. Even if the operations were not article 5-operations, they indirectly contributed to ensuring peace and stability in the NATO member states. And they promoted the core values of our Alliance – democracy, human rights and rule of law.

Today NATO's most important challenge is even further away from the euro-atlantic region. NATO's operation in Afghanistan is the biggest challenge the NATO has faced for many years. We are there to help the Afghan people build a free, democratic and peaceful society. This will take years, but we are determined to succeed.

NATO has taken upon itself to conduct the ISAF-operation in Afghanistan on a mandate from the United Nations, and on request from the Afghan government. NATO is resolved to fulfil the task. It is a matter of NATO's credibility.

But we need to be patient and realistic. Patient, because we are nearly starting from scratch with regard to the establishment of democratic institutions in Afghanistan. And realistic, because we need to understand that our end goal can not be to make Afghanistan a mirror image of a Western society.

We must not forget, that we are also in Afghanistan for the purpose of our own security. As we recall, the terrorist attacks in the United States of America on 11 September 2001 were prepared in Afghanistan. Afghanistan should never again turn into lawlessness and become a safe haven for terrorists planning new attacks on free and democratic institutions.

Let me remind you that on the day after the terrorist attacks in the United States of America, NATO – for the first time in its history – activated its article 5-commitment. 12 years after the fall of the Berlin wall, the need for NATO as a collective defence organization manifested itself. And NATO acted swift and with determination.

It is not by chance that NATO has maintained and even further strengthened its role as the most important international security organization. Since the beginning of the 1990'ties NATO has been in a constant process of transformation.

Let me mention a few examples:

In 1997 NATO had 16 members. Today NATO has 26 members. And more states are striving to become members.

In 1990 NATO had no formal partners. Today NATO has 20 partners in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council – from Finland in the North to Turkmenistan in the South. Furthermore NATO has dialogue with countries around the Mediterranean, in the Middle East and even further away.

In 1992 NATO was not engaged in international peace support operations. Today more than 50.000 soldiers are deployed in NATO-led operations and missions in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Iraq, Bosnia, Sudan and the Mediterranean sea.

In the early 1990'ties NATO had twenty military headquarters. Today NATO has streamlined its command structure and has reduced the number of command headquarters to eleven. Hopefully this will continue.

In the mid-90'ties the NATO Response Force was not yet on the drawing board. At the coming Riga summit we will hopefully be able to declare the NRF ready. A force comprising up to 25.000 persons able to deploy within 5 days. All pre-trained and certified. That provides the Alliance with a new powerful and relevant instrument.

All these examples show that NATO has been able to constantly adapt to new security challenges.

In parallel with this, NATO's member states are in the process of transforming their national armed forces towards more deployable and flexible armed forces. NATO's defence planning plays a central role in this respect. Another important driver for transformation is the establishing of usability targets requiring NATO member states to ensure that at least 40 % of their army forces are deployable and at least 8 % are sustainable.

As a consequence of this transformation, NATO today has global reach – both when it comes to diplomacy and political cooperation – and when it comes to military means. But the transformation will and shall continue. NATO must constantly adapt to the changing world.

The NATO summit in Riga is just four weeks away. Let me highlight some issues that I hope will be high on the agenda in Riga.

First, NATO plays a central role in maintaining strong trans-Atlantic relations. Nowhere else but in NATO do the Europeans and the North-Americans meet almost on a daily basis in a format exclusively reserved for them. NATO is thereby providing the best possible framework for maintaining and further strengthening a substantial, open and close trans-Atlantic dialogue.

This trans-atlantic link is important. During the last century the United States have played a crucial role for the security in Europe. Today, the threat of terrorism concerns all of us. We can only counter this threat together. That's why the dialogue in NATO is important.

As pointed out by the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, at the Security Policy Conference in Munich this year, the political dialogue in NATO should be even further strengthened and broadened. NATO is more than a tool box for military operations. It is *the* forum for trans-Atlantic dialogue. And it is the primary framework for our operations. It is our organization of choice.

NATO should be the place to discuss a wide range of political-strategic issues. Also issues where engagement of NATO is not foreseen. It is a matter of giving all allies in the trans-Atlantic relationship a possibility to express their view on issues – including those where we might disagree. In this way we will be able to align our expectations to each other. Hopefully, the Riga Summit will further strengthen NATO's role as *the* central forum for trans-Atlantic dialogue.

Secondly, in Riga NATO's member states should confirm their commitment to NATO's operations – not least the operation in Afghanistan. Success for NATO's operation in Afghanistan is vital not only for the Afghan population and our own security but also for NATO's credibility. To achieve success NATO needs the commitment of all member states. Sharing roles, risks and responsibilities is the trademark of NATO.

But the military campaign is only half the mission. We might be able to win the war by military means, but we can not win the peace by military means alone. Therefore, together with a number of other countries Denmark is working actively to increase the coordination of military and civilian efforts in Afghanistan. This requires closer co-operation between the involved international organizations, including the NGO's.

Every day Danish soldiers and soldiers from Allied and partner countries risk their lives fighting the Taliban. We owe it to the soldiers and their families to ensure that their efforts are not in vain. We must not jeopardize what we have already achieved. Therefore it is vital to ensure that military success is followed by humanitarian aid and reconstruction efforts.

Also on a more general basis, NATO's ability to work together with other actors must be improved. This is needed if we are to avoid reinventing the wheel each time we are confronted with a new operation.

It is important for me to underline that coordination and cooperation with other international organisations and NGOs should take place on a voluntary basis and on an equal footing. The purpose is not to let NATO co-ordinate the efforts of other organisations.

The aim is not for NATO to develop its own civil capabilities. Others already have these capabilities at hand and the aim is not to duplicate these capabilities. That would be a waste of resources.

The aim is to make NATO better to work alongside and together with the rest of the international community both in the planning phase and in the actual operations. And also in NATO's own planning for operations to be better to take into account the activities of other actors.

A third element for the NATO summit in Riga should therefore be a clear message that NATO is not only ready, but committed to working closely together with all relevant actors in the international community. The aim is to achieve success not only in Afghanistan or in the other operations where NATO is engaged, but also for the Afghan people and for all people in mission areas.

Finally, there is also a number of issues related to military transformation that I hope to see high on the agenda in Riga.

The NATO Response Force should be declared ready. As for the operation in Afghanistan, this requires commitment of all member states and willingness to contribute accordingly with forces. NRF is the Alliance's flagship for transformation and it should sail from Riga.

In Riga, I also hope to see decisions with regard to strategic air lift capabilities. Denmark is ready to participate in a multinational acquisition of C-17 strategic airlift aircrafts. This initiative will give the participating countries access to a most useful and needed capability – a capability that is also asked for outside the NATO framework.

I could speak about NATO - if not for hours – so at least for a very long time. But to summarize: NATO was essential in the deterrence of the Soviet threat. Today, NATO is essential in meeting the security challenges of the globalized world, not least the threat of terrorism. NATO has maintained its central role as the most important international security organization because it has transformed – and continues to transform.

Charles Darwin said about transformation: *“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change”*.

With these words I wish all of you a fruitful and successful conference on transformation in NATO.

Thank you.