

**PROLIFERATION, COUNTER-PROLIFERATION,
AND NATO**

Remarks by José María Aznar

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I don't think that anyone in this audience today would deny the importance of systems and weapons of mass destruction, or WMD. To my knowledge, there is no more powerful weapon than a nuclear device. In other words, there is only one blunter instrument at the disposal of a government than the threat of using a nuclear bomb, and that is to actually use it.

Nations, including NATO's member states, realised early on that the spread of WMD, particularly nuclear systems, would pose a severe threat to world stability. That's why the Western community has been promoting multilateral treaties, as well as more informal agreements, in order to consolidate what has been called a non-proliferation regime. I think the Atlantic Alliance can congratulate itself on the work it has been carrying out in this field. It has played a key role in convincing certain countries to abandon their nuclear programmes, and it has also provided

credibility and support for various mechanisms that make up the current non-proliferation regime.

Having said all this, I must also say that we find ourselves, today, at a critical point. The effectiveness of the non-proliferation regime that we have put into practice has been called into question; at the same time, new strategic realities call for an urgent review of its founding principles. Let me explain what I mean, here.

First, the effectiveness of this non-proliferation regime was based on three basic assumptions: 1) the goodwill of the parties involved; 2) their technical intelligence capability, to know about the status of nuclear programmes, whether open or clandestine; and 3) the international community's ability to put into place, and to enforce, sanctions against those who breach non-proliferation commitments.

These original assumptions have proved wrong. Many signatories of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Treaty (NPT) have carried out undercover research programmes that have led to a *de facto* opaque proliferation, placing a few countries just inches away from becoming nuclear powers. We now know about the efforts—and the progress—made by NPT members, including North Korea, Iraq and Iran, not to mention other countries that never even signed the NPT.

We have also discovered that our inspections mechanisms and intelligence services have been incapable of preventing, and thwarting, the trafficking of technological means and know-how, activities that have spread widely in recent years. Furthermore, we have learned that isolated individuals, with a minimal infrastructure at their command, have been able to develop international networks for trafficking in nuclear components, operating at levels that exceed the worst possible forecasts prepared by intelligence analysts.

We also know today how difficult it can be, both politically and diplomatically, to rally the international community in order to denounce specific nuclear proliferators. Iran will probably have to face a Security Council deliberation regarding the country's failure to accept its nuclear obligations, but this took three years of discussions to bring about, and even so it is still unclear whether the UN body will reach a consensus on what to do next.

Moreover, not only diplomatic effectiveness is being called into question. For years, the international community considered non-proliferation as an issue to be dealt with amongst states, since only states had the capacity to finance and sustain sophisticated research programmes and the ability to exploit them, weaponizing the results. This is no longer the case. I've already said that certain well-placed individuals could move proliferation at shocking speeds. But there is more. A new sphere outside or beyond the state boundary has emerged: there are already too many indications of attempts by

terrorist groups to acquire the knowledge and technology required to produce and use weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear and radiological systems. In sum, the deadly proliferation game has been further complicated by new players bursting onto the scene.

Another principle that needs to be revised is the traditional Western vision that nuclear weapons exist to deter, not to be used. Because what has been valid for the Western world for so many years may be not be so valid for other people, particularly terrorists linked to Islamist extremism. If we take seriously the words of Osama bin Laden, there can be no doubt that Al-Qaeda, if it possessed a nuclear device, would have no qualms whatsoever about using it, if this could move them closer to obtaining their goals. Thus, we are no longer talking about a deterrence game. We should prepare ourselves to deal with a *real* nuclear threat, and if all preventive measures fail, with the management of the consequences of a nuclear or radiological terrorist attack on our soil.

Proliferation is the second most important threat to our security, after Islamist terrorism. But the convergence of proliferation and terrorism should alert us to the real dangers posed by the deadly triangle of WMD, rogue states, and terrorism.

In this respect, I'm convinced that the non-proliferation regime in place today has been overtaken by events. Nonetheless, the Atlantic Alliance continues to provide an ideal framework for member states to reflect upon the new challenges to our collective security. In my view, these reflections should lead to new proposals for adapting mechanisms, and for preparing NATO itself, to take the necessary measures to combat all the various stages involved in the proliferation process.

Obviously, the Alliance should not replace the non-proliferation control framework in place. Simply said, this is not its mission. However, NATO must give further shape to a counter-proliferation strategy

which clearly defines the measures to be adopted, and possible joint actions to be taken, in view of the inability of the current system to respond to a crisis situation. For instance, NATO must continue to make progress with regard to the ever-complex matter of intelligence sharing. The fact of the matter is that in the face of a global threat, states must provide information and intelligence enabling the Alliance to effectively evaluate the seriousness of any particular threat, to establish monitoring mechanisms, and to coordinate the various governments involved. The joint handling of these situations facilitates the decision-making process, and strengthens ties amongst NATO members.

Equally, the sheer variety of traffickers and links established between certain governments and terrorist groups compels us to adopt new approaches and create new structures. NATO must consider whether the current structure is the most effective when it comes to sharing the information needed to deal with the present threat.

Up to this point, I have been focusing on what NATO should face and reflect upon, particularly before the upcoming summit at the end of this year. Now, let me tell you what I, personally, believe NATO should *do*.

My ideas can be found, of course, in a little book we published last October at FAES, the Madrid-based foundation I preside, titled *NATO, an Alliance for Freedom*. By the way, this publication can be downloaded, in English and Spanish, from our web site.

First of all, I believe in the Atlantic Alliance, deeply. NATO was created to better safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of Western nations. It was built upon the principles of democracy, individual liberties and the rule of law. And as such, it is equally vital today.

Second, NATO has been a very successful organization. The Alliance was able to protect our freedom and democracies from the Soviet threat; and it has been very relevant in exporting security and stability to troubled areas. Today, it is imperative to defend our values and way of life against a new threat, Islamist extremism and terrorism. Although the main purpose of NATO should still be to collectively preserve our democracies, its mission must be adapted to this new environment, as it has been adapted before, during the Cold War years and after. This new mission should be clear: to combat jihadism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. These are different threats, I know, but they tend to merge in the Greater Middle East. If the allies want to prevail collectively over these gathering perils, NATO must refocus itself on fighting terror, the major threat today. Indeed, it is an existential threat, if we bear in mind what Islamist terrorism has planned for us, the infidels.

Third, in order to effectively fight jihadism, NATO must undertake a whole new set of reforms, some conceptual, others structural. For example, I have proposed the development of a homeland security dimension within the Alliance. Jihadism is not only a matter for the police or the intelligence services; it has become a security and defence issue, as well. If an ICBM, a nuclear-tipped ballistic missile, is launched against our soil from a distant country, the attack will be considered an attack against all of us, according to our famous article 5 from the Washington treaty, and NATO would be involved institutionally without any second thoughts. Why then, if a container carries a nuclear device into one of our civilian harbours, in a terrorist plot, should we consider it a matter for the local police? Why, when jihadist elements, living in our midst, are activated to conduct a devastating strike against us on our own soil, must this be declared an internal or a domestic affair?

I believe that NATO must come to terms with this new strategic reality: that we are at war, because our foes have declared war upon us. They may be hidden in a far-away cave, but their vision is crystal clear: they want to impose a theocratic regime over a vast extension of territory; they want to recreate the caliphate, from Al-Andalus in Spain to the Philippines in East Asia; they want their fundamentalist reading of Islam to be the law of the land.

It is true that Al-Qaeda and others do not have planes or tanks; they don't currently hold any sovereign territory of their own; and they don't present a linear front. Furthermore, the casualties of this war in which we are now immersed are very limited, in historical terms. Nonetheless, Islamist terror is *not* just a criminal activity. It is something much more. And to win over terror, we will need much more than just intelligence plans or police actions. We will need more than defensive measures. And that's where NATO should play a vital role.

If we accept that the frontier between internal and external security has now become blurred, we cannot continue to keep up old administrative and institutional barriers, separating them. NATO must become an integrated defence and security organization. In order to do so, I propose that interior ministers, or those responsible for homeland security, should be invited to NAC meetings, as the EU Foreign Affairs Minister, not too long ago, invited European defence ministers for informal council sessions. Meanwhile, NATO must engage the EU at the homeland security level, given the fact that the EU has developed some cooperation in internal and judicial affairs.

But high-level politics must be accompanied by operational measures, as well. Thus, I am in favour of creating a functional command devoted to counter-terrorism. This command should promote—as the transformation command does in its field—a new NATO approach, where the organization takes stock of all available assets, including interior forces

of a military nature, such as the Spanish Guardia Civil, the French Gendarmerie, or the Italian Carabinieri. It should also promote structures, procedures, special units, training and deployment of the armed forces so they can be used, when needed, against terrorism. By changing the way our armed forces—and we ourselves—conceive the terrorist phenomenon, it should help to transform them, so that they can better understand what jihadism means, and the best way to fight it.

Finally, we must accept that jihadism is a global movement, in its geographical scope as well as the different levels of its expression, from car bombs to rabble-rousing sermons in radical mosques, or posted on Internet sites, or broadcast on TV stations. It's a phenomenon that spans the globe, and because of this, NATO must adapt itself to a new reality. We have been enlarging as a way to cope with the old division from the Cold War, and in order to promote stability on NATO's traditional periphery. However, it is my view that we must change the way

we conceive the Alliance geographically. If defending our own values against those of radical Islamists is the future of NATO, we must open the doors to those nations that share our values, that defend them on the ground, and that are willing and able to join the fight against jihadism. Therefore, I propose that NATO invite Japan, Australia and Israel to join as full members.

I know that Israel will present some political difficulties—or at least, more difficulties than the other two I have proposed as potential candidates. But let me be clear: I believe that treating Israel as if it were not an integral part of the Western world is a huge mistake that will, in the long run, affect our ability to prevail against jihadism. It is in our mutual interest to have Israel as a formal ally.

I don't want to take up much more time of your time, here, but allow me to present two different scenarios that, in fact, are complementary when talking about Israel in NATO. The first one is Iran. I

think that nobody can have any remaining doubts about Teheran's real intentions concerning its nuclear programme. The ayatollahs want the bomb, and unless we do something to thwart their efforts, they're going to get it. We have spent three years now trying to persuade the Iranians, diplomatically, to come clean about their research, to no avail. And now we are caught in a diabolical dilemma: whether to keep playing the diplomatic game, or to take action. And if so, what kind of action? Strike against Iran? Promote regime change? While we decide amongst ourselves, we should prepare for the worst, and the worst here is to face a nuclear Iran at some point.

I think we must do whatever is within our power to prevent Iran from becoming nuclear, but we should also prepare ourselves to force a nuclear Iran to behave wisely. If Iran sees and feels that Israel is an integral part of our side, I think our deterrence posture will be strengthened; a NATO umbrella in the Middle East will have, in my view, a beneficial

impact. It won't weaken stability; on the contrary. Alternatively, having an Israel that is isolated from us will increase the chances that a miscalculation of some sort may eventually happen, engulfing everyone, including NATO members, in a conflagration of incalculable consequences.

Secondly, we are witnessing, day by day, the transformation of Palestinian nationalism into Islamist extremism. The victory of Hamas is not only bringing to the Palestinian territories a renewal of heated rhetoric against Israel, but also a social order based on theocracy and religious intolerance, among other things. Just count the growing number of veiled Palestinian women in the Gaza Strip, something not seen before. So, Israel is exposed to a new threat, the one emerging from Islamist extremism and terrorism. And as such, it has become another piece in the global puzzle that the jihadists are trying to put together.

Let me conclude my remarks by saying it once again: I believe in the Atlantic Alliance. But NATO must rise up to the current challenges, and adapt to a new strategic environment that does not only involve peace support operations. NATO has been through a severe crisis in the last few years, and not just because of Iraq. The divisions over Iraq were simply the expression of a deeper malaise. It is time to face reality. We need to redress the capability gap between Americans and Europeans; NATO must engage in a constructive relationship with the EU; and it must keep the enlargement process open. But even if we tackle these issues successfully, NATO will not be at the centre stage as a collective security organization unless it adapts successfully to today's world. NATO was created nearly six decades ago, to defend and preserve our freedom against the threats of the post-war era. Today's threats are different, but they are no less real. We have no choice but to accept this. If we prefer the other path, denying that we have a declared enemy, a powerful one, and keeping up with business as usual, the future of

NATO is condemned to failure. Even worse, we, as free societies, will be condemned to defeat.

Thank you very much.