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SPEECH BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL AT THE OPENING CEREMONY  
OF THE MEETING OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL IN  
MINISTERIAL SESSION IN ANKARA ON 25TH JUNE 1980

Before all else, I want to express our sincere thanks to the Turkish Authorities for the warm hospitality extended to us in their capital city, which so strongly bears the stamp of the political genius who founded modern Turkey. The fact that Ankara, on the continent of Asia, today welcomes its fellow members in the Western Alliance attests eloquently to the process of europeanisation sought by the Ghazi. But the presence of the North Atlantic Council in Turkey has, I believe, a special significance in other respects as well.

First of all, it gives practical expression to the firm resolve of member countries to help their ally overcome a particularly difficult situation so that this country can restore conditions conducive to economic prosperity and re-establish a defence capability enabling it to carry out its full responsibilities within the system of collective deterrence.

Furthermore, our presence here today enables us to perceive even more forcefully the strategic importance of the Mediterranean Sea as a crossroads and essential link in political, military and economic exchanges vital to the Western world. Against the background of the dangerous uncertainty arising from recent events in Afghanistan and Iran, we also appreciate more clearly the increased importance of the Alliance's south-eastern flank for the defence of the Mediterranean Basin. Awareness of these external dangers beyond the perimeters of the Alliance reinforces not only the urgent need to strengthen the economic and military capabilities of the southern flank countries, but also the hope that the overriding needs of collective defence will take precedence over other, more strictly national considerations, so as to ensure that the harmony so necessary to the Atlantic community as a whole can be restored to this region.

We are passing from a period of relative stability into an uncertain and disquieting age which has been aptly described as a window of peril. And for those of my generation this conjures up another image, an inherent part of a dark past, that of the gathering storm. I have always questioned the assertion that history does not repeat itself; human nature is such - and diplomacy, being man-made, is no exception - that similar situations are likely to produce similar results.

The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan has radically altered the politico-strategic environment in which the Allied countries have conducted their diplomacy vis-à-vis the East over the last few years. The Soviet aggression has dispelled doubts and placed in the proper perspective the various theories advanced to explain Moscow's conduct on the international scene. The mutual trust so essential to the harmonious development of East-West relations has now been shaken; positive moves by the Soviet side will be needed to restore it.

Our assessments were correct. We rightly foresaw, already in the Ottawa Declaration, that events beyond the confines of the Alliance would increasingly affect our destinies. We rightly perceived that the new and primordial phenomenon of this day and age lies in the multipolarization of the world, giving rise to uncertainty about the future and compounded still further by the emergence of the Soviet Union as a world power.

Now, I think, the eyes of the world have been opened. The invasion of Afghanistan represents in a sense the realization of a dreaded scenario. The situation to which it has given rise reflects accurately the analyses frequently undertaken in the past regarding the interaction between political intentions and military capabilities. Our questions about future Soviet intentions have now become even more urgent, more acute.

If our past predictions and also, alas, some of our fears, have been borne out to a considerable extent by events, we now have to recognise clearly that the time has come to act. The wheel of fortune does not stand still. We cannot spend too much time on evaluation and conjecture, lest this would be at the expense of actions and the firm resolve which will determine our future.

I realise, of course, the difficulty of trying to define short and long term policies which take account of the serious, strategic implications of the events in Afghanistan, while at the same time preserving possibilities for diplomatic solutions. As I see it, any actions we take should be centred on three vital objectives: to strengthen our defence capability at a faster pace; to keep open the channels for a realistic dialogue with the USSR; and, most importantly, to make every effort to achieve greater cohesion and solidarity.

Militarily, it is now clear that more than ever international stability rests on the maintenance of an equilibrium of forces. In this connection, we welcome the progress that has been achieved in implementing the Long-Term Defence Programme, as well as other recent specific measures; nonetheless, there remains a lot to do in order to turn our ideas into reality.

On the diplomatic level, an effective strategy must also be developed. In the present period characterised by renewed tension, it is essential to maintain East-West contacts in order to avoid possible misunderstandings and miscalculations. At the

same time, such contacts make it possible to exploit opportunities for constructive co-operation. In this context, we must try to preserve the achievements of détente, it being understood that its substance must be consonant with Western aspirations.

Turning now to my third and most important point, I cannot over-emphasise the imperative requirement for unfailing Alliance solidarity, which is the keystone of our political deterrent.

A fundamental problem of the 1980s lies in the danger of local crises occurring outside the Treaty area, the repercussions of which could then quickly spread to the Atlantic area as well, particularly in view of our vulnerability regarding oil and other raw materials.

The Western world must, therefore, have a strategic perception that is not confined narrowly to the region of the North Atlantic Treaty. In that context, both Afghanistan and Iran, even though outside the geographical boundaries of NATO, are still nonetheless very much Alliance business. In the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, for example, we see a clear symptom of a continuing expansionist mentality. It is our task in NATO to counter such expansionism, militarily within the confines of the Treaty area, but politically wherever necessary. To neglect to do so would invite the same expansionist mentality to develop in areas closer to home.

In that regard, we must not forget that the continuing demonstration of our solidarity is as much an element of deterrence as our military capabilities, testifying as it does to our collective determination to resist aggression. Our political solidarity, or our seeming lack of it, will affect the Soviet Union's perception of its own power and of the balance of forces. Nothing could be more dangerous than the appearance of weakness or indecision on the Western side, which might prompt the Kremlin to take rash and ill-advised actions.

The most concrete expression of our solidarity is, of course, the Alliance consultation process. That process has been acutely tested in the past months and its results have not always been as incisive and clear as I would have liked. There is no question that NATO can serve the West as the most effective forum for consultation on all issues touching upon the political and military security of the member states, but to do so we must work better and more closely together, particularly in weighing our national concerns and pre-occupations against the common good, which represents the vital, long-term interests of all members. That means that consultation must be full, frank and timely and not simply a bureaucratic after-thought.

Although it is clear that everything is not exactly as it should be, I am glad to see that there is now extensive agreement regarding the analysis of recent events and the general nature of Western reactions. While it is true that we in the West wish to resume a balanced dialogue with the East, there must be a

clear understanding, both by the other side and by the public in our own countries, that our readiness to negotiate can in no way be interpreted as a desire for appeasement. There can be no doubt that the shape of the future will depend on the resolve and firmness with which we react to Soviet expansionism. Even though we must do our best to persuade them, I am not optimistic that the Kremlin leaders will respond positively to the pressures of world condemnation provoked by their violation of the most basic tenets of international morality. I am convinced, however, that the Alliance is now called upon to take the political and military measures required to maintain a global deterrence. I anticipate that the discussions at this Ministerial meeting will be directed to that end.