

# Defence Secretary Ben Wallace addresses the NATO Parliamentary Assembly 2019

Thank you for inviting me here to address you all today. Could I thank our president Madeleine Moon MP and Richard Benyon MP for their leadership in hosting these past few days and David Hobbs for all the work in putting this excellent event together.

Seventy years ago, a group of 12 nations came together to establish our Alliance. They did so to protect their common values and the freedoms so recently won in the Second World War. The then common need of the founding members; as is it is now; is not one of offence but of defence – mutual self-defence. NATO members chose freedom and democracy to be our guiding principles.

The NATO alliance is a unique balance between democracy and military. As parliamentarians you not only clear the way to ensure that new challenges to our security are appropriately met by our governments but you also act as that vital check on power to ensure that the most vital ingredient of democracy – consent – is upheld. The power of the 14 articles and the doctrine of mutual self-defence cannot be maintained without the constant reaffirmation of our consent.

We must, however, be realistic. Upholding the articles of the treaty aren't free. They take investment and innovation. For a long time there has been pressure for us all to increase investment in defence. And the United Kingdom is proud to have heeded that call. Last month our spending review granted my department and extra £2.3bn. This takes us to an overall budget of £41.23bn and the leading spenders in Europe.

The motto of our Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst is "serve to lead" – its meaning is simple – to lead you must give. As a platoon commander it means you give your time, your effort and your loyalty, often long after everyone else has gone to bed. And for a country it is no different. Leadership must not be defined as "working to rule" or doing just enough. It is proven by going that extra kilometre. That's why we believe, in the United Kingdom, that our nuclear deterrent is for all your defence. It is why we believe it is important to contribute over 2% of GDP on defence spending and it is why we intend to continue to seek to support and strengthen this alliance and its membership.

All of us can lead in our own way. Whether by extending the hand to new members or leading development of niche capability our collective forward momentum is the glue that can keep us unified. We can never be static at NATO. And while the methods might have changed the threat and challenge to us all has not.

In 1949 as we were coming together for common good others were learning new ways to challenge us. Our adversaries realised that if you couldn't beat us by playing by the rules they would seek to change them. Just a few years before that founding of NATO, Georgy Isserson was rewriting them in the Soviet Union. With social media and open borders, Hybrid warfare that he projected has come of age.

In 2013 , the Russian Chief of the General Staff , Valery Gerasimov stated "The very "rules of war" have changed. The role of non-military means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown, and, in many cases, they have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness."

He went on to say in the same article "Long-distance, contactless actions against the enemy are becoming the main means of achieving combat and operational goals.". Our friends in Ukraine and the Baltics know that too well.

For the last 3 years before taking up this position I was the United Kingdom's Security Minister – I got to see into the shadows and see the daily attacks on our societies that many do not. Cyber, Disinformation, assassination, corruption. All prosecuted on our open and liberal societies. All engineered to divide us and weaken us. Be under no illusion that it is happening across all of our membership. To date our response has not been good enough. We are neither nimble enough nor deterring enough and that is where we must aim our investments.

The UK will soon solidify plans for a National Cyber Force to ensure a stronger presence in the new contested frontier. And we should not be naive to think that China and Russia are not interested in offensive capabilities in Space. If they go high we must go high, if they go deep we must go deep.

In the 70 years that NATO has been, we have achieved great things together. From 12 to 29 Members. Today we still stand guard on our borders and now we reach deep across continents. Still holding dear the same values but dealing with a wider range of threats and adversaries.

I am proud of what we have all achieved together and I am determined that under the leadership that I give to the Ministry of Defence, we will continue to contribute to NATO's readiness, deployments and thinking. What ever happens over Brexit our moto will be that security is not a competition it is a partnership.

As Harry Truman said at the founding of the Alliance: "Men with courage and vision can still determine their own destiny, they can chose slavery or freedom , war or peace, I have no doubt which they will choose."