



**CANADIAN GLOBAL AFFAIRS INSTITUTE**  
**INSTITUT CANADIEN DES AFFAIRES MONDIALES**

# **NATO: Past, Present and Future**

by David J. Bercuson  
September 2019

# POLICY PAPER

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CGAI President's Fellow  
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## ► **Executive Summary**

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*On its seventieth birthday, several questions are being posed about the future of NATO. This alliance was formed in 1949 as a deterrent to the Soviet Union, to link the United States and its nuclear umbrella to the defence of Europe, and to prevent Soviet dominance over European states that lay just to the west of Soviet or satellite border lands. In general, NATO was to “contain” the USSR, in the words of American diplomat George Kennan, until such time as the Soviet system collapsed, as in fact it did.*

*NATO now faces a number of challenges: The presidency of Donald Trump; The re-emergence of nationalism and populism in Europe; the problem of marginal nations in the alliance alongside the 2% guideline for defence spending and further NATO expansion; the complexity of NATO coalition operations; what does NATO need in the future to stay relevant.*

*The paper posits that Trump’s harsh rhetoric regarding NATO has not been followed up by anti-NATO actions in the United States. NATO spending is up in Europe and the United States and NATO continues to operate as it did prior to his presidency. Although the EU is being battered by winds of populism, nationalism and anti-EU feeling in many EU countries, virtually none of that negativism has crossed over to anti-NATO feeling. NATO ought to take a second look at its 2% guideline to include capacities and draw a line on future expansion. NATO ought to solve the problems raised by caveats in its operations. And NATO needs to stay ahead of new technological developments in weaponry, cyber, and hybrid warfare.*

*As long as Russia continues to play the “bad boy” in world trouble spots, NATO will remain relevant. But NATO also needs to consider the challenge of Chinese expansionism in both military and non-military fields.*



**S**eventy years ago, in April 1949, the United States, Canada and a number of western European nations met in Washington and signed the Washington Treaty to bring the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) into existence. The Federal Republic of Germany joined NATO in 1954. NATO was distinguished from its very start by Article 5:

“The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.

“Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.”

The basic purpose of the founding of the Alliance, as one cynic repeated, was “to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down.” However, the need for a German military to enforce the exclusion of the Soviet Union from central Europe led quickly to Germany’s rearmament and its joining of NATO in 1954.

A combination of NATO’s 70<sup>th</sup> birthday and a rebirth of its dual key mission of holding the line against the USSR (now Russia) and providing deterrence against Russian expansion have focused more attention on NATO in the popular press than has been the case for decades. NATO has evolved with changing geopolitical circumstances and now, for example, deploys several trip-wire brigades in eastern and central Europe. It is paying considerable attention to threats posed by cyber-capabilities from Russia and others. But is this enough? Past experience in Afghanistan and other places shows that NATO has been slow to change. If NATO does not stay ahead of the challenges arising today from Russia, China, Korea, Iran and other malevolent actors, it risks increasing obsolescence, leaving individual members more vulnerable to threats than at any time since the founding of the Alliance in 1949.

NATO served two intertwined purposes to its original founders. First, it linked western European security to the American nuclear umbrella. This idea found its expression in the early years of former president Dwight Eisenhower with the policy of massive retaliation – the threat that any Soviet incursion into the NATO area would bring instant nuclear retaliation from the United States.<sup>1</sup> This was deterrence with a capital “D”. Although the world is a far different place today than it was in 1949, U.S. nuclear weapons are still at the core of NATO’s survival past the end of the Cold War. The threat of Finlandization in central Europe is as great today as it was in 1949

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<sup>1</sup> John Newhouse, *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age*, 1989, 95.



and NATO is the only answer to that threat.<sup>2</sup> Thus it has survived, and as long as Russia aspires to first-line military capability, it will continue to survive.

NATO's second purpose was to put into place the containment policy most famously advocated by U.S. diplomat George Kennan in his Moscow "long telegram" of February 1946. In this 8,000-word missive, Kennan advocated a policy of masking off the Soviets, containing them where they stood at the new borders of the Soviet Union (including the liberated, or conquered, nations of eastern and central Europe), and holding the line until the USSR collapsed.<sup>3</sup> It took more than 40 years before that collapse occurred, and there were many ups and downs along the way, from the communist take-over of China, to the Korean and Vietnam wars, to the internal economic collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1980s, but occur it did.

So the question everyone who studies NATO is asking on its 70th anniversary is, how long will NATO serve the fundamental interests of its members? The answer lies in geopolitical considerations and the successful tackling of several contemporary challenges to NATO.

What are the major issues plaguing NATO today?

In no particular order, the following factors have been raised as major challenges or obstacles facing NATO:

- 1) U.S. President Donald Trump;
- 2) The re-emergence of nationalism in Europe and populism in NATO nations;
- 3) The problem of marginal NATO nations, NATO budgets and NATO expansion;
- 4) The complexity of NATO coalition operations; and
- 5) What does NATO need to do in the future?

Trump is unique. But what effect has he actually had on NATO? A recent article in *Foreign Affairs* by Philip H. Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro declares with great certainty that "Trump Killed the Atlantic Alliance" but there is hope that the next president can restore it.<sup>4</sup> Their main argument is that Trumpian rhetoric has greatly undermined European confidence in American intentions, particularly Trump's questioning of the utility of Article 5. They point to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's lambasting of multilateralism in Brussels in December 2018 and ask: "With such a confrontational, unreliable, and unpredictable partner in Washington, the question should not be why Europeans are now turning away from the United States but why it took them so long to do so."<sup>5</sup> In fact, Washington's problems in organizing a joint naval escort mission for tankers in the

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<sup>2</sup> Harald Malmgren, "Crimea, Russia and the Ukraine: The 'Finlandization' Phase of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Security?" *Second Line of Defense*, Nov. 16, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made*, 352ff.

<sup>4</sup> Philip H. Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro, "How Trump Killed the Atlantic Alliance and How the Next President Can Restore It," *Foreign Affairs*, Feb. 26, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



Strait of Hormuz in the summer of 2019 were largely due to European disagreement with the way Trump has been handling Iran.

In March 2019, at a private gathering at Sea Island, Georgia, former vice-president Richard B. Cheney appeared to support the notion that Trump's nasty confrontations with traditional NATO allies were endangering a 70-year-old alliance system. At that meeting, Cheney reportedly took Vice-President Mike Pence to task for Trump's rhetoric and his lack of civilized behaviour toward traditional American allies. He told Pence: "We're getting into a situation when our friends and allies around the world that we depend on are going to lack confidence in us." Pence was apparently taken aback by Cheney's comments.<sup>6</sup>

Coming from Canada, whose prime minister was described as betraying the U.S. during the 2018 G7 meetings in Quebec – a result of the Trump administration throwing its weight around during efforts to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement<sup>7</sup> – it is easy to react to Trump's nastiness. He is nasty and obviously has little concern for what were once thought of as the norms of international diplomacy. But beneath his contemptible language and boorish behaviour, what do we see in regard to NATO? No changes to U.S. commitments to NATO, no changes to NATO's command structure, no alteration of NATO's current efforts in Poland and the Baltic countries to maintain new trip-wire brigades (one of them commanded by Canada) to deter Russian military action, and no change to NATO's air policing mission in the Baltic and Black seas.

In fact, as a second article in *Foreign Affairs* by Charles Kupchan in March 2019 pointed out, a number of issues still generate long-term concerns about NATO. These include fears of Trumpian rhetoric, U.S. concern with Asia Pacific issues, democratic backsliding among some NATO countries and an ongoing debate about NATO enlargement, at a continuing cost of relations with Russia. But at the same time, Kupchan asserts, "NATO is actually in remarkably good shape" on its 70th anniversary.<sup>8</sup> Kupchan points out that Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014 prompted NATO to "take important steps to strengthen deterrence against the Kremlin's adventurism." With trip-wire brigades in the Baltic countries and Poland, NATO has also "retooled to address new hazards such as cyberthreats, terrorism, hybrid warfare, and migration." Kupchan asserts that because "NATO has been so nimble and effective, it enjoys strong political support on both sides of the Atlantic, leaving Trump virtually alone as a vociferous critic."<sup>9</sup> NATO's defenders are emerging, especially in the U.S. Senate. European nations are increasing their defence spending and even the U.S. is devoting more resources to the Alliance.<sup>10</sup> After sending expeditionary forces to the Balkans and Afghanistan, NATO is refocusing on its "traditional mission of territorial defence". Kupchan points out that "At its 2018 summit NATO established two new commands to enhance the security of maritime connections between North America and Europe and improve force mobility within Europe."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *The Washington Post*, March 12, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> CNN, June 10, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Kupchan, "NATO is Thriving in Spite of Trump: Adversity has made the Alliance Stronger," *Foreign Affairs*, March 20, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> International Institute of Strategic Studies, *Military Balance Blog*, Feb. 15, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Kupchan, "NATO is thriving ..."



Under Trump, does Europe still have a reliable and steady ally in the United States? Look at the evidence: The Trump administration's tongue-lashing of European nations for relying too heavily on the U.S. and not "paying their fair share" has actually been a constant tone of American leadership for at least a decade. Trump is rough, bullying and openly threatens some of the building blocks of NATO, unlike his predecessors, but his message is the same even if it is delivered in Trumpian style and not in the diplomatic language of, say, former president Barack Obama. But as Kupchan asserts – and close observation shows – Trump is alone in reverting to the language of the street; in reality, nothing has really changed in NATO's decision-making, command structure, logistics, long-range planning, numbers of troops deployed, training or planning since Trump's accession to power. NATO still holds large military exercises virtually on Russia's borders, maintains its trip-wire brigades along Russia's western frontier and continues to acquire and deploy new weapons systems in the air, at sea, and even in ground forces.

None of this means that Trump will necessarily stick to his verbal anti-NATO course because in Congress, particularly in the Senate, NATO has strong support. And having lost the 2018 mid-terms so decisively and now investing so much political capital on health care, immigration, refugees, and restructuring the Department of Homeland Security, Trump will not risk losing support in the Senate over NATO.

Nobody can be certain if Trump knows or understands anything of geopolitics, or whether his foreign policy advisors – including his recently fired national security advisor, John Bolton – see larger patterns developing in Europe in the post-Georgia invasion and post-Ukraine world, but those patterns are there nonetheless. Take, for example, what we know of Russian foreign and defence policy under President Vladimir Putin. An interesting article in *Foreign Affairs* in the spring of 2016 by Fyodor Lukyanov, chair of the Presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy of Russia, sought to explain Putin's foreign policy: "Russia's subordinate position is the illegitimate result of a never-ending U.S. campaign to keep Russia down and prevent it from regaining its proper status," Lukyanov said. He repeated Putin's 2005 statement that the disappearance of the Soviet Union was "a major geopolitical disaster" and emphasized that the West thought Russia would forever play a fundamentally diminished role in the world. "Putin," Lukyanov declared, "and many other Russians would beg to disagree."<sup>12</sup>

The article's implication is clear: The collapse of the old Soviet Union represented a massive retreat of Russian power, both over the so-called socialist republics that constituted the Soviet Union, but also over the satellite states that Russia held in thrall. And why did the USSR collapse? Not because Soviet-style communism could never work in the long run, or that the monies spent on trying to maintain military parity with the West drained the Soviet economy, but because the U.S. refused to live with a co-equal Russian power, in Lukyanov's (and Putin's) view.

It is still an open debate whether the West won the Cold War and what that means. But there can be no doubt that from 1945 on, the Soviet Union saw its destiny as to dominate non-communist Europe – while preparing for possible conflict with the West – and to project Soviet power across

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<sup>12</sup> Fyodor Lukyanov, "Putin's Foreign Policy: The Quest to Restore Russia's Rightful Place," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2016, 31.



the globe in any situation that presented an opportunity to the USSR. NATO's establishment in 1949 was a defensive and deterrent reaction to four years of Soviet belligerence in Berlin, Czechoslovakia and other places in western Europe. The Soviet Union after 1945 was not an innocent party, a bystander to the communist takeover of eastern and central Europe, as Anne Applebaum has recently demonstrated.<sup>13</sup> It was the engineer, the driving force, in an enlargement project that began in the 16th century with the expansion of Muscovy after it broke away from being a vassal state of the Golden Horde. For 400 years, Russians drove east to the Pacific, south toward the boundary of the Ottoman Empire and west to annex the Baltic states in 1940. For the Russians, this outward march to dominate a substantial part of the globe was defensive – a search for security – but the result was that Russia proved itself through armed force to be one of the great empires of history. After the Second World War, the Red Army found itself in control of Hitler's former vassal states, or states like Poland that had been crushed by the Nazis. That control, as Applebaum shows, turned within the next 11 years to full political, economic and social control of the political lives of what we then saw emerge – the Warsaw Pact. Thus from Muscovy to the Cold War – to 1989 – Russia grew to become the other great power in a bifurcated world. Today, the Soviet Union is dead, most former Soviet satellite states are members of NATO and Russian expansion appears to have come to an end.

But has it? Military incursions into Georgia and Ukraine, annexation of the Crimea, and the use of the world's new great superweapon – cyber – allows Russia to intervene in other countries and the Russian military to rattle swords in Syria, Venezuela, etc. For Russia, as for other states, including Germany, Canada, the U.S. and Israel, cyber-capabilities are the dream weapon of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – war without destruction and killing and with no punishing effects on a nation's own people, industry or infrastructure.

If Russia's geopolitical imperative is to maintain respect as a great power, to expand to its natural boundaries to be a major player in international affairs, and to assert itself against the West however it can, NATO has a future. It is playing the same role today – and will in the next decades that it did during the Cold War – containment. Containment does not mean the same thing today that it did during the Cold War because none of the nuclear powers can see any gains to itself by military action. In the case of China, the U.S., Europe and Russia, militaries are expensive chess pieces and certainly not to be destroyed in a nuclear holocaust nor ground down in endless wars of attrition. If history offers any guide to present or future actions – and it has often not done so – there will likely be no more Afghanistans or Iraqs. What we once called brushfire wars will be fought with special forces or proxies and cyber- and precision munitions.

To sum up, Trump is certainly not isolated as president. However, as the Mueller report pointed out, his efforts to kill the special investigation into his own attempts to obstruct justice went no further than his inner circle, which refused to carry out his orders to short-circuit the investigation. Similarly, any serious effort on his part to short-circuit NATO will produce a similar response, particularly among Senate Republicans.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe, 1945-1956* (2012).

<sup>14</sup> *The Hill* (Washington), July 28, 2018.





How has the re-emergence of nationalism in so much of Europe, from the Baltic to central Europe to Germany, Italy and Turkey impacted NATO?<sup>15</sup> With the exception of Marine Le Pen in France, very little. In fact, NATO may be contributing to the forces that are keeping the EU together. The overall defence umbrella, against the background of increased defence spending and improved cyber-capability, increases the ability of the Alliance as a whole to deter Russian aggression. NATO headquarters, planning groups, joint headquarters in Rome, Norfolk and other places, joint NATO exercises and NATO air policing give individual NATO members much greater defensive capabilities than any single nation could muster on its own. They also extend NATO's American nuclear umbrella to all, just as during the Cold War. Recent elections in Italy, Hungary and other EU countries have put more pressure on EU unity than at any time since the virtual collapse of the world economic order in 2008/2009, but no NATO member has made any moves to leave the Alliance and, in fact, several countries are still lined up for NATO membership. Some observers have suggested that centripetal forces within the EU could transfer to NATO but there are few signs of that at all. In fact, recent elections in Greece show a decided return to moderation in that country.<sup>16</sup>

One of the current – and ongoing – disagreements within NATO pertains to individual countries' defence spending and, in particular, to the two-per-cent of GDP target set by NATO in 2014. According to an article on the website Defence One, published in July 2018, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute calculates that the 29 NATO members spent a cumulative \$900 billion on defence in 2017 while Russia spent \$66 billion. The top four European defence spenders – France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Italy – together spend more than 2.5 times what Russia does. But as Defence One also points out, the real security challenge to NATO comes from developments in the sphere of cyber-war and so-called hybrid war.<sup>17</sup> Unable to keep up with military spending on hardware, Russia focuses on non-kinetic warfare and the development of breakthrough technologies such as hypersonic cruise missiles. As the explosion of a nuclear-powered cruise missile in northern Russia in mid-August shows, the Russians are far from perfecting these new weapons.

Hyper-war is a new term encompassing activities that are at least as old as the Bible itself. According to the Bible, in 1400 BC, Joshua prepared for the conquest of Jericho by sending spies into the city. He later destroyed the city's walls by surrounding Jericho with trumpets which brought the walls down with one large mass of sound. Archaeologists doubt this ever happened, but whoever wrote that portion of the Bible, whenever, recognized that brute military power alone could be supplanted or supplemented by other means of confronting an enemy. All major wars in the modern era have involved attacks on an enemy's morale, efforts to disrupt an enemy's communications systems, disruptions of an enemy's command-and-control system, espionage and sabotage. Just because we give a new name to an old practice does not mean that we are confronting a new phenomenon in war. What Russia is clearly trying to do with hyper-war is to

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<sup>15</sup> This issue is discussed by Phillip Gary Schrank in "The Rise of Populism and the Future of NATO," *Global Politics Review*, October 2017.

<sup>16</sup> *The Guardian*, July 7, 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Defence One, July 17, 2018.



disrupt the political processes in democratic countries which allow effective command and control of deterrence by undermining the credibility of basic governmental decision-making.

And what of the impact of the migration crisis on NATO? For the past half-decade or so, NATO members in Europe have taken measures to protect themselves from mass migration from the Middle East and North Africa – an EU problem, but not a challenge to the military structures or organizations within NATO itself. There is an underlying challenge to NATO here in that anti-democratic forces have been rising in NATO nations. Thus, citizens of NATO countries who see democracy as a basic element of NATO, in that it is an alliance of democratic countries, are witnessing that goal being undermined. How will Canadians feel, sometime in the future, about coming to the aid of a military dictatorship under the provisions of Article Five?

The Cold War can be taken as ending with the London Declaration of 1990 when NATO told the world that it did not consider the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact adversaries and invited them to establish diplomatic relations with NATO. Not long after, NATO and its former communist adversaries signed the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe and issued a joint declaration of non-aggression.<sup>18</sup> In 1994, NATO created the Partnership for Peace and within three years, invited the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary to join the Alliance with promises to the new Russian Federation that NATO troops would not be permanently stationed in former Warsaw Pact nations. These first three accessions were the beginning of several years of NATO enlargement that has now slowed considerably, but has not ended. One of the main arguments for expansion was that during the Cold War, the Alliance had brought together the military assets of several nations in western Europe, increasing security and decreasing rivalries and now could do the same for central and eastern Europe, ensuring that each member's "defence policies and military capabilities would not be instruments for threatening one another".<sup>19</sup>

NATO had difficulties keeping the Alliance tight during the Cold War. The Suez War of 1956 was a good example of this – with the momentary split between the U.S. on the one hand and Britain and France on the other – and the withdrawal of France, under Charles de Gaulle, from the NATO Military Commission. But for the most part, the Alliance remained tight until strong disagreements arose over American policy towards Saddam Hussein in the decade after the end of the First Gulf War of 1990 to 1991.

In the years following that war, the U.S. and Britain feared that Saddam was continuing to pursue weapons of mass destruction and joined with other nations in imposing a strict embargo regime on Iraq. They also used air power to declare and enforce no-fly zones, including Operation Desert Fox in December 1998.<sup>20</sup> France – a key NATO member – was particularly opposed to these initiatives, probably due to French interests in Iraqi oil capabilities. The following year, when NATO launched an air attack against Serbia in response to Serb predations against the Muslim majority in Kosovo, various NATO nations proved either reluctant to participate or were openly

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<sup>18</sup> Celeste A. Wallander, "Institutional Assets and Adaptability: NATO After the Cold War," *International Organization*, 54, vol. 4, 705-735.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Mark J. Conversino, "Operation DESERT FOX: Effectiveness with Unintended Effects," *Air and Space Power Journal*.



hostile to the campaign.<sup>21</sup> One of the most vexing problems facing then-NATO commander Gen. Wesley K. Clark was the discordance among NATO members as to how to fight the war or even whether to fight the war at all. The title of his book – *Waging Modern War* – says it all; his diplomatic talents were more vital in this short air campaign than his military knowledge as commander of an alliance that was supposed to be united in its overall aims.

In part, Clark's difficulties arose because of the way NATO had evolved since the end of the Cold War. Adding a dozen new members chiselled away at NATO unity, as did the different levels of military preparedness, internal governmental structures and ideological aims of the new countries. A good example was the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), originally formed under British command to patrol Kabul after the Taliban abandoned it. In 2003, ISAF expanded when Canada opted to replace the British and Germans and failed to find another partner with whom to share duties. Canada and the U.S. decided to bring NATO in as Canada's partner. In 2006, ISAF was given responsibility for assuming control of a large part of Afghanistan, to establish provincial reconstruction teams (PRT), and to help locals rebuild both infrastructure and police and judicial institutions. Also, of course, ISAF was there to provide security against an already resurgent Taliban insurgency. Individual nations selected provinces for which they would be responsible, but in the security responsibilities, many nations imposed caveats on their troops, limiting their ability to operate freely. The U.S., Britain, Canada and Denmark did not, although other nations restricted the use of their troops in various ways. Thus the 45,000 or so NATO troops who were there at the height of the buildup were not a single, cohesive force.

The most significant structural problem facing NATO today is which nations will contribute how much to the common defence. At the NATO summit in Wales in 2014, it was decided that NATO members should contribute a minimum of two per cent of their GDP on defence spending. As of 2017, only the U.S., Britain, Poland, Greece and Estonia were meeting the target. Germany announced major new defence spending in May 2019<sup>22</sup> while Canada was contributing 1.3 per cent and Germany 1.2 per cent.<sup>23</sup> In Canada's case, the number has fallen in the last budget. The current government points to several large impending purchases of surface combatants, supply ships and 88 modern fighter aircraft, as well as a large number of armoured fighting vehicles, as evidence that it will aim for two per cent, but will probably top out at 1.4 to 1.5 per cent of GDP.

Is it realistic to expect all NATO members to achieve the two-per-cent target? It all depends on what to include. The Canadian Coast Guard is a civil institution, not a military one. It is not included. The U.S. Coast Guard is a branch of the U.S. military and it is included. Greece includes pensions to veterans in its numbers. But two per cent across the board measures very little in its effective military power.

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<sup>21</sup> Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 2001.

<sup>22</sup> *The Telegraph*, May 17, 2019.

<sup>23</sup> Niall McCarthy, "Defense Expenditures of NATO Members Visualized," *Forbes*, July 10, 2017; "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2011-2018)," *NATO Public Diplomacy* Press Release, July 10, 2018.



Missions and capabilities are just as important as a straight two-per-cent target. Canada has five C-17 heavy airlifters, giving it a strategic heavy lift capacity; Norway and Poland have none. Canada commands a NATO brigade in Latvia, established after Russia invaded Ukraine. It is a trip-wire mission to be sure, but other NATO nations do not have the capacity to lead NATO missions. In fact, the latest Canadian defence white paper, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, aspires to have Canada be the lead nation in at least one key mission somewhere. With Canadian airlift and communications capabilities, it is a realistic ambition, but it's not one to which Estonia can aspire.

On NATO's 70th anniversary, what may we expect over the next decade or two? Change! To accord with the changing world environment. And what should NATO do? First, NATO expansion should stop. Every time NATO adds another nation to its roster, especially a small nation with little self-defence capacity, it takes on additional administrative and military burdens and costs and, more importantly, obligations it may not be capable of fulfilling. In addition, the decision-making, which is already slow and bureaucratic, will become even slower as more nations are added to the decision-making cycle. This has happened already, but once in, NATO cannot withdraw from a member state, (unless the nation wants it). Turkey's current challenge to NATO, posed by its purchase of the Russian S-400 anti-aircraft system, is a case in point. By purchasing that system, Turkey is challenging NATO to expel it from the Alliance. But if NATO expels Turkey, major political and defence issues will certainly ensue.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, we will defend the Baltic nations to the best of our ability (and even Turkey, so long as it remains in NATO) even though the late *Washington Post* columnist Charles Krauthammer asked, in a June 1, 2017 column, do we want to die for Estonia?<sup>25</sup> What may well happen in the wake of an increasingly assertive and aggressive China is that Australia and Japan could be added as associate NATO members, integrating their military capabilities with those of NATO.

Second, NATO must continue to deter possible Russian aggression by fielding robust military forces. However, Russia today is not the old Soviet Union and its military capabilities, though strong, are not those of the USSR. Today, Russia is taking a different approach to security and defence. It has significant cyber-capabilities and scientific advancements through, for example, hyper-weapons and hyper-war, which are just other words for war across different spectrums, some of which are kinetic and others not. NATO is developing advanced cyber-capabilities but there is no clear line between cyber-war and not cyber-war. Therefore, deterrence is a problem. How does NATO build up deterrent capabilities and, more importantly, know when to use them? How much deterrence is enough? Are treaties to avoid cyber-conflicts even possible? And if they are, will the Russians agree? And what about the Chinese, the Iranians and the North Koreans? China's global ambitions, posed through economic, trade, investment and loan schemes pose challenges to Europe that the Europeans themselves seem slow to respond to. As we saw with Stuxnet, and the Israeli/American scheme to disrupt the Iranian nuclear program, the very use of a cyber-weapon invites retaliation, perhaps with a more advanced attack than was launched in the first place.

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<sup>24</sup> *The Economist*, Feb. 1, 2018

<sup>25</sup> *The Washington Post*, June 1, 2017.



Third, although it is entirely possible that Putin will remain czar of Russia for at least another decade, what are the possibilities of trying to re-engage with Russia? If Russian expansionism, in traditional military forms or via cyber- or hyper-war, is set in stone, NATO needs to recognize that reality and act accordingly. But surely, Putin can understand that the status quo is not benefiting Russia in any way and is making Russian economic recovery even more difficult than it might otherwise be. If so, some approach at a broad treaty may be possible. NATO would have to recognize the reality that Russia, as a great power, has certain permanent interests outside its borders and go from there. NATO should not ostracize Germany for its participation in the Nordstream 2 pipeline. In fact, any economic integration with Russia contains the seeds of a possible start to a bridge with Russia. But Russia would have to accede to the reality that its former satellites will not again put themselves under Russian domination. Here, national pride will be more of an obstacle than national interests in attempting to resolve Russian/NATO differences.

Fourth, NATO needs to find a more realistic formula than two per cent of GDP to measure its member countries' contributions to the Alliance. The new formula needs to take capabilities into consideration as well as geography. This is not a special plea for Canada, which is a perpetual free rider on the U.S., but different NATO countries have different capabilities that are valuable and worth more than two per cent of GDP when pensions and benefits are taken into consideration.

Finally, NATO needs to solve the caveat problem for any significant future engagements. As Patricia Weitsman wrote in *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, "Fighting the war in Afghanistan principally via NATO has culminated in high friendly-fire casualty rates and constant negotiating with allies regarding burden sharing ... Some 50-80 known caveats limit NATO commanders in their operations in Afghanistan ... some countries' troops occupy space on the ground and provide international legitimacy but make little difference operationally."<sup>26</sup> We saw that with Operation Medusa and the Battle of Panjwaii.

NATO proved essential in defending its member states in the Cold War and providing the defence and deterrent capabilities that kept the Cold War from going hot. There is simply no denying that truism. NATO can provide stability now, in an era of increasingly unstable multilateral relations, but it must change to provide the flexibility to meet today's and tomorrow's challenges. There is no point in waiting for the U.S. to divest itself of Trumpism. His election was a historical anomaly and at some point, he will be gone. In the meantime, the real challenges for NATO are there to be tackled.

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<sup>26</sup> Patricia A. Weitsman, "Wartime Alliances versus Coalition Warfare: How Institutional Structure Matters in the Multilateral Prosecution of Wars," *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Summer 2010, 131.

## ▶ **About the Author**

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The Institute was created to bridge the gap between what Canadians need to know about Canadian international activities and what they do know. Historically Canadians have tended to look abroad out of a search for markets because Canada depends heavily on foreign trade. In the modern post-Cold War world, however, global security and stability have become the bedrocks of global commerce and the free movement of people, goods and ideas across international boundaries. Canada has striven to open the world since the 1930s and was a driving factor behind the adoption of the main structures which underpin globalization such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and emerging free trade networks connecting dozens of international economies. The Canadian Global Affairs Institute recognizes Canada's contribution to a globalized world and aims to inform Canadians about Canada's role in that process and the connection between globalization and security.

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