

# The Global Exchange

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# **CREATING A BIG BANG: IMPLEMENTING THE PROCUREMENT AMBITION IN STRONG SECURE ENGAGED**

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# Introduction to the NATO and Canada Papers Series

by **COLIN ROBERTSON**



*Image credit: NATO*

The inspiration for this collection of papers originated in a symposium hosted earlier this year by the Canadian Global Affairs Institute and the Royal Norwegian Embassy. “NATO and the North Atlantic” took as a point of departure NATO and the North Atlantic: Revitalizing Collective Defence, by Colonel Dr. John Andreas Olsen, Norway’s defence attaché to the United Kingdom and Ireland. After opening remarks by Ambassador Anne Kari Hansen Ovind and myself, there were presentations by Dr. Olsen, Commodore Brian Santarpia (Royal Canadian Navy RCN), Captain (N) Erik Boe (Royal Norwegian Embassy) and Rear Admiral Gilles Couturier (Deputy Commander RCN). The event concluded with a panel of the quartet, moderated by CGAI’s Defence Analyst Dr. David Perry.

Leona Alleslev, MP and chair of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, and Elizabeth Kingston, Clerk of the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence, suggested that, with the committee looking at Canadian involvement in NATO in the fall session, it would be useful to have some prescriptive policy advice.

We recruited CGAI fellows – scholars, former

diplomats, military officers and senior officials – many of who were at the symposium. These included Andrea Charron, Richard Cohen, Rolf Holmboe, Andrew Rasiulis and myself – as well as more distant fellows – CGAI Director of Programming, David Bercuson, member of the CGAI Advisory Council, Ian Brodie, Yves Brodeur, Julian Lindley-French and Lindsay Rodman. We also included a pertinent essay by graduate scholar Ariel Shapiro. Thus, this volume of essays took shape.

The Olsen book, which brought us together and started this exercise, was an initiative of the Ministry of Defence to strengthen American and British interest in the north, to promote the geostrategic and security policy significance of the Norwegian seas, and to discuss how best to secure open supply lines and sea control within NATO’s area of responsibility. In his concluding remarks, Col. Olsen summed up the book’s six key recommendations:

1. Renew NATO’s maritime strategy.
2. Reintroduce extensive maritime exercises and sustained presence.
3. Reform NATO’s command structure.
4. Invest in maritime capabilities and situational awareness.
5. Enhance maritime partnerships.
6. Prepare for maritime hybrid warfare.

Our participants approached Canadian involvement in NATO from various perspectives and each essay offers both analysis and prescription. Their papers look at the challenges of overall organization, those of budget, the vital importance played by the USA and the need for the rest of the

alliance to burden-share. We address the challenges to NATO's northern, eastern and southern flanks, as well as the continuing challenges in Afghanistan. And we re-examine the utility of NATO.

David Bercuson is optimistic about NATO, but if NATO is a "bridge among continents and nations", then the United States is its "central span". Bercuson observes that because NATO was ratified by the U.S. Senate, it would require Senate approval to pull the U.S. out of it.

Bercuson writes that Donald Trump is wrong in many things, but he is right to argue for more burden sharing by NATO members. He encourages NATO allies to read up on U.S. history to appreciate the strong isolationist strain within the U.S. body politic warning that "another Donald Trump may well lie somewhere else in America's future."

Dr. Julian Lindley-French looks at the Wales Summit (2014) defence investment pledge whereby members all agreed to reach the defence spending target of two per cent of GDP. While the increase in allied spending is encouraging, he notes it has a long way to go and that NATO pledges are thin reeds. They tend to bend with the prevailing winds and fall back on the U.S. But "the Bank of Mom and Dad" (as Lindley-French calls the U.S.) is getting fed up with the perennial backsliding of the "Euro-Juniors", is not as flush as it once was and is now confronting a resurgent China. There is also division within Europe, with some wanting any new money for security spent on domestic counter-terrorism and migrant control rather than on "hard" NATO requirements.

If NATO is to be effective, argues Lindley-French, it "must be able to both deter and defend at the high end of conflict, i.e., prepare to fight and if need be win a war, while playing a full role in protecting its home base from penetration and attack by terrorists and globally capable criminals."

Canada, says Lindley-French "lives in strategically relevant neighbourhoods in which others have a profound interest, and

some of these 'others' are not always friendly." This has particular relevance for the Royal Canadian Navy and the RCAF in their protection of North Atlantic sea lanes, the Arctic and new challenges from the Pacific side. Lindley-French says Canada can do its bit and truly invest in hard defence as well as sustain its soft power skills in stabilization and reconstruction. Or it can follow the usual European approach of pretence and empty rhetoric.

Yves Brodeur reflects on his NATO experience as an official of the NATO Secretariat, as the senior official for Canada's Afghan participation and, most recently, as Canada's ambassador to NATO. For Brodeur "if the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Warsaw Pact threw NATO in soul-searching mode, September 11 catapulted the Alliance in a new dimension, much more complex and challenging than what it was created, prepared and trained for" and now "the aggressive actions of Russia, annexing Crimea, destabilizing Ukraine and threatening the eastern flank of NATO seriously tested the resolve and solidarity of the Alliance."



Image credit: NATO

Today, writes Brodeur, the challenges are compounded: "an aggressive Russia, an assertive China, a chaotic Middle East, a North Africa in disarray, an indecisive and divided EU, intense migratory pressures, expanding terrorism, growing authoritarianism including in some NATO nations, the unforeseen strategic consequences of climate change, and an

isolationist America led by an unpredictable president.”

Brodeur offers a range of prescriptive improvements: streamlining NATO decision-making with improved managerial capability; avoiding narrow politicization; improving strategic oversight versus regionalization and Eurocentrism; clear commitments to Article 5; as well as gender diversity. Brodeur concludes that both Canada and NATO need to “take a hard look at (themselves) through the prism of a changing and more complex security environment than existed in 1947.”

Ian Brodie writes that the end of the Cold War brought many dividends: democracy and free market economics have become the norm in many former Soviet satellites and millions have been lifted out of grinding poverty. But, he writes, “it is now obvious that NATO has a continuing mission ... deterring Russian adventurism today is almost as important as deterring Soviet adventurism was a generation ago.”

The nature of the challenge has changed, says Brodie, and defending western democracies against new modes of aggression requires new strategies and doctrines. The West’s economic model was vastly superior to that of the Soviet bloc but the assumption that the global economy “dissolves authoritarian politics” was overly optimistic.

Illiberal regimes, writes Brodie, use their access to the global economy to subvert the democracies. They exploit weaknesses in international trade agreements to expand their state-connected economic enterprises overseas. He notes that Russian gas exports to Europe are now “part and parcel” of the economic integration shaping NATO countries’ domestic policies. Brodie concludes with a warning: “New global political economy has made it harder to muster the political will to implement and enforce them.”

In my essay, I argue that the most useful role that Canada can play in sustaining the

international order is to keep Donald Trump’s America engaged in NATO. We need to tell Americans that they are our most important ally, and that we do not take them for granted. First, they need to know that we will shoulder our share of the security burden. Second, commitment means taking a greater share of the political burden. Third, commitment means demonstrating a greater interest in U.S. security concerns including those out of theatre. A vital piece is explaining to our public why NATO, collective security and the rule-based international order matter. So does geography.

Looking North, Andrea Charron says that the recent Defence Policy Review is potentially a shift away from Canada’s former position of eschewing NATO exercises in the Arctic. Charron thinks, given tensions, we should be wary about NATO exercises when we can accomplish the same goal – readiness without the NATO mantle. Charron notes that five of the eight Arctic states<sup>1</sup> are NATO members and so exercises in the European Arctic involving NATO states are not new. The eight Arctic states (including Russia) have formed an Arctic Coast Guard Forum and recently completed their first live exercise in Reykjavik, Iceland.

Charron encourages a reinvigoration of the Arctic Chiefs of Defence meetings starting with military support for search-and-rescue. She also argues that all Arctic nations can benefit from better information sharing to have a more complete understanding of the climate, the geography and the vessels of interest in the Arctic Ocean.

Andrew Rasiulis looks at Canada’s contribution to NATO’s eastern flank defences. He points to Canadian leadership of the battalion-sized battle group in Latvia, (Operation REASSURANCE) as part of NATO’s enhanced forward presence to deter Russian use of force against NATO territory (Article 5 commitment). Canada is making available a six-pack of CF-18 fighter jets and its NATO out-of-area training and capacity-building mission in Ukraine. These

initiatives have “placed Canada’s commitment squarely on the politico-military map.”

Rasiulis reviews Canada’s participation in NATO since its origins, noting in particular its push for Article 2 (economic partnership) during the negotiations leading to the Treaty of Washington (1949) and then the development of a Canadian expeditionary capacity for Europe and Korea. He notes that when former prime minister Pierre Trudeau wanted to increase European trade as a counterweight to the U.S. while musing about drawing down Canada’s NATO contribution, then-chancellor Helmut Schmidt observed “no tanks, no trade”. In looking at today’s reinvolvement, Rasiulis argues “efforts in Latvia and Ukraine should be matched by active diplomacy to achieve an eventual understanding with Russia and return to future co-operation, rather than confrontation.”

Richard Cohen points to the alarming increase in Russian military activities on NATO’s northern and eastern flanks, saying the way to demonstrate Canada’s commitment to this collective security challenge is through meeting the two per cent GDP target for defence spending.

Cohen writes that most Western armed forces have remained focused on counter-insurgency and asymmetric warfare of the kind NATO faced in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the Russians have rebuilt their forces for high intensity combat, as they demonstrated in Eastern Ukraine. Canada’s recently announced defence policy, says Cohen, provides for relatively tiny contingency forces modelled on Afghanistan’s operational requirements, but inadequate for a heavy combat scenario in Europe.

Cohen says “we have entered a new kind of Cold War, this time with an array of dangerous adversaries, from an aggressive, resurgent Russia and a rising, assertive China to relatively weak but dangerous rogue states like Iran and North

Korea.” All of this makes the case for a greater Canadian contribution to collective defence.

Rolf Holmboe looks at NATO’s southern flank arguing that NATO must engage to contain Russian and Iranian anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) and to block Russian attempts to establish an “axis of autocracies” in the region. NATO needs to enhance Defence Capacity Building (DCB) and expanded military cooperation, including enhanced air and maritime assets within the Middle East and North Africa.

Migration pressures, says Holmboe, are another pressure point and NATO needs to put more into crisis management readiness - intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) assets to counter human smuggling networks and establish a dialogue with its southern flank neighbours around migration control, maritime security and counter-terrorism.

A “hands-off” approach won’t work, concludes Holmboe. NATO, in tandem with the EU must address the challenges of its southern flank if it is to contain Russia, curb terrorism and address migratory pressures.

Lindsay Rodman looks at Afghanistan and the NATO role there, observing that with Trump’s decision to maintain the U.S. presence in Afghanistan, there is a role for Canada. But Canada needs to ask some tough questions:

- First, seeking clarity and forcing a good articulation of U.S. and NATO objectives in the region.
- Second, both the United States and NATO must think carefully about how to approach Pakistan.
- Third, there can be no success in Afghanistan without a political solution and a sustainable path to Afghan self-sufficiency.
- Fourth, NATO partners may seek some clarity and assurances about the use of private contractors in Afghanistan.
- Fifth, NATO should offer up a deal to rename and rebrand the mission. Even

the name “Operation RESOLUTE SUPPORT” implies lack of ownership and the never-ending commitment that has plagued this conflict from the outset.

Ariel Shapiro has written a longer piece entitled *NATO If Necessary, But Not Necessarily NATO: Critically Evaluating Canada’s Membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*. Shapiro argues that the costs of NATO membership are “higher than often realized” while the benefits “are not as significant as the common wisdom accepts.” He also maintains that NATO membership is “potentially hurting Canada’s Arctic claims and interests, and dragging Canada into a conflict it does not need.”

While not passing judgment on Canada’s NATO membership, Shapiro concludes: “Treating our membership in a military alliance as an end with intrinsic worth, a grand symbol of Canadian identity, as opposed to a means to further Canada’s values and interests, is a mistake ... There is a threshold beyond which NATO is too costly, too risky and not beneficial enough to justify continued Canadian membership. It is incumbent upon us to continuously ask ourselves whether or not we have reached that threshold.” Shapiro’s arguments encourage debate and discussion. They are a reminder of the importance of public argument and the need for public affairs on critical security issues.

Canada played a critical role in NATO’s creation. In his memoirs, Lester B. Pearson entitled the chapter on Canada’s critical role in NATO’s creation “Atlantic Vision”. He and his colleagues – Hume Wrong, Norman Robertson and Escott Reid – put effort into NATO’s creation because it served Canadian interests and values. Article 2, encouraging economic collaboration among its members, was very much a Canadian initiative. With the implementation of the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), we continue to realize the promise of the Atlantic community.

Preserving the peace and deterring aggression during the Cold War, NATO

managed the reunification of Germany and the integration into NATO of the eastern European nations and those of the former Yugoslavia. The original 12 have expanded to 29, with continuing active engagement both within and out of theatre.

The Trudeau government’s recent Defence Policy Review, ‘Strong, Secure, Engaged’, declares that the NATO alliance has been a central pillar of Euro-Atlantic defence and a cornerstone of Canadian defence and security policy ever since. NATO provides significant benefits to Canada’s security and its global interests and NATO membership also carries important obligations.

We hope that these essays will stimulate discussion and provoke debate about Canada’s involvement in NATO and how best we can carry out our obligations within this fundamentally important alliance.

Colin Robertson  
September 2017

#### End Note

1 Finland, Russia and Sweden are not NATO members.

*A former Canadian diplomat, **COLIN ROBERTSON** is a Senior Advisor to Dentons LLP living in Ottawa, Canada. He is Vice President and Fellow at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute and hosts our regular Global Exchange podcast. He is an Executive Fellow at the University of Calgary’s School of Public Policy and a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University. Robertson sits on the advisory councils of the Johnson-Shoyama School of Public Policy, Conference of Defence Associations Institute, North American Research Partnership, the Sir Winston Churchill Society of Ottawa. He is an Honorary Captain (Royal Canadian Navy) assigned to the Strategic Communications Directorate. He is a member of the Deputy Minister of International Trade’s NAFTA Advisory Council. He writes a regular column on foreign affairs for the Globe and Mail and he is a frequent contributor to other media.*



## Message from the Editor

by **DAVID BERCUSON**

**D**espite the musings of then-candidate and now-president Donald Trump about NATO's Article 5 (the heart of the NATO treaty), the Alliance has many years left and will probably grow stronger over the next decade.

If NATO is a bridge among continents and nations, the United States is its central span and has been from the beginning of the Alliance in 1949. And yet in the 2016 presidential elections – and at various times since – Trump has called into question NATO's validity due, in his words, to the failure of other member nations to share NATO's burden equally.

Trump has proven himself consistently wrong in just about every one of his pronouncements, but he is surely right about the failure of almost all member nations to take up a reasonable share of NATO's costs. Canada is certainly one of the most egregious sinners in this regard, allowing defence spending to sink to less than one per cent of GDP, while claiming that Canada is always “there”, wherever the action is, when it comes to NATO operations. The very fact that the Canadian government's new defence policy would raise the percentage of defence spending on GDP to about 1.4 per cent is sheer proof that what the Liberals once proclaimed was bogus from the start.

But Canada isn't the only laggard when it comes to defence spending. Almost all NATO members have allowed their defence budgets to lag since the end of the Cold War. Nowhere has this been more evident than in most European countries, even those with fat GDPs who have basically leaned

hard on the United States taxpayer for collective security.

So Trump was, and is, right on this one thing. And he has been proven right as NATO nation after NATO nation steps up to pledge increases to their defence budgets – Canada is not alone in this.

But if worse comes to worst and Trump remains dissatisfied with the new NATO efforts at bulking up national defence budgets, what can he really do?

First, the United States remains a member of NATO because it was a signatory to the Washington Treaty of 1949. The Senate validated the treaty, as per the U.S. constitution. Trump has no more power to pull the United States out of NATO than he does ordering the tides to retreat. And it is a sure bet that the current Senate, never mind the one that will be elected in two years, won't agree to take the United States out of NATO. To do so would increase American isolationism manifold, perhaps recreating the conditions that existed prior to the Second World War.

For one thing, NATO is a cornerstone of U.S. defence and foreign policy and will become even more valuable as Russia and other rivals in different parts of the globe increasingly challenge the U.S. in the years ahead. European security is NATO's chief *raison d'être*. Europe may be declining in comparison to the rising power of China, but Europe's 500 million people will remain a major factor in international diplomacy and a major market for American goods. Europe cannot be left to the tender mercies

of Vladimir Putin. It is also true that some European nations – Germany in particular – are anxious to ease off on Russia and continue to pursue trade and investment opportunities there, but they are still reassured in their security by American power and will remain so for some time.

The United States may well be the world's No. 1 military power for a long time to come. However, the U.S. needs allies more than ever in different parts of the world because a variety of pretenders are increasingly challenging American power. For example, when Britain's first of two Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers of 75,000 tonnes becomes operational, it will be a welcome addition to the U.S.'s deployable carrier strike groups. The same applies to British and French submarines, etc.

So NATO will be an important asset to the United States for many decades. But the U.S.'s NATO allies need to ensure that the defence increases they have promised remain in place. They also need to read up on American history and the strong isolationist strain that has existed in American politics since George Washington's time. And even though most of the rest of the Western world may wish to see Trumpism's exit from American politics, all should remember that another Donald Trump may well lie somewhere else in America's future.

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# The Global Exchange

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## Cover

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## **NATO, Canada and the U.S. Bank of Mom and Dad**

by **JULIAN LINDLEY-FRENCH**

“Is your [Canadian] plan as cunning as a fox who’s just been appointed Professor of Cunning at Oxford University?”  
Blackadder, *Blackadder Goes Forth*

**T**he news that by 2024 Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s Canada will increase its defence spending from a self-proclaimed brilliantly spent one per cent of GDP to a no doubt equally brilliantly spent two per cent of GDP, and meet the 2014 Wales Summit defence investment pledge (DIP!) is very good – at least on the face of it. Canada is in many ways the country that makes the Alliance an alliance, rather than America’s somewhat unconvincing European protectorate. But what should Canada spend its new money on?

Earlier in the year, I attended the NATO

Resource Conference 2017 in Reykjavik, Iceland. Three issues were central to the debate. First, the habit NATO Europeans have acquired of relying on the U.S. Bank of Mom and Dad when they cannot be bothered to spend enough on their own security and defence. Second, a profound question was raised as to whether aforesaid NATO Europeans will ever really honour the DIP, the now Holy Grail of contemporary alliance. Finally, upon what should NATO and the Allies spend any additional monies? Canada?

The goodish news first. Apparently, the decline in NATO defence spending stopped in 2015, and even increased a bit (3.8 per cent or some \$10 billion) in 2016. And if NATO Europeans ever do honour the DIP – the biggest “if” since “if” was introduced into the English language by King Ethelred the Literately Uncertain – NATO would suddenly have an additional \$100 billion to spend.

And yet, read between European lines and the message was (as ever) clear as mud: hurry up and wait! Yes, it was repeated *ad nauseam* that all NATO Europeans are “fully” committed to spending two per cent of GDP

on defence. However, the “but” in the room was positively thermonuclear. In fact, most Europeans are still driven by the assumption that sooner or later the U.S. Bank of Mom and Dad will come out late on a dark, stormy night to pick up their wayward relatives, who not only forgot to save the bus fare home, but also got hammered on a toxic brew called “Welfare”, ended up in a heap in the middle of strategic nowhere, and missed the last bus.

The trouble is that Mom and Dad might not always be there. First, there is growing irritation in some parts of the U.S. administration about Euro-Junior’s refusal to get off its fat ass and get a job. Second, Mom and Dad are not as flush as they used to be. Third, Mom and Dad now have to deal with a noisy and bolshie Chinese neighbour at the other end of the street. Fourth, Mom and Dad are simply too tired and too busy.

NATO itself is also deeply divided. One group – for sake of argument, the easterners – wants the additional monies others are going to spend to be spent on high-end, expensive, big-bang stuff that defends them. The hope is that such increased expenditure will render the NATO defence and deterrence posture credible not just in the eyes of the brigade of budgeteers who control everything, but also Russia. Another group – for sake of argument, the southerners – thinks this is nonsense, and wants the bulk of the additional monies others will spend on defending them to be spent on counter-terrorism and counter-criminal activities, most notably human trafficking. Very few want NATO to have the money and most would prefer to spend it on themselves.

Here’s the problem: if NATO is to remain the West’s ultimate security and defence insurance, then henceforth NATO must be able both to deter and defend at the high end of conflict. It must prepare to fight and if needs be win a war, playing a full role in protecting its home base from penetration and attack by terrorists and globally-capable criminals. In other words, all of us are going to have to buy into all of the above if the

Alliance is to be credible in the face of threats.

Which brings me back to the DIP and Canada. Yes, I am the first to say that two per cent of GDP spent on defence is better than one per cent, however brilliantly that one per cent is spent. What concerns me is the growing obsession among all the non-American NATO members with measuring inputs as a way to avoid looking seriously at desired and necessarily expensive outcomes, which at the end of the day is what security and defence must be about. Worse, I am not at all sure any NATO nation knows what it is really spending its defence budget on these days, let alone how it can get from, say, one per cent of GDP to two per cent of GDP. Other, that is, than by fiddling the books. Britain, are you listening?

The two per cent target forces Ottawa to face a profound set of strategic choices it has long been fudging. This is not least over that most fundamental of Canadian defence posers: should Ottawa invest the planned new funds in NATO or the Americans, and what mix of the two? It is a question that can no longer be dodged. For the first time in decades Canada lives in strategically relevant neighbourhoods in which others have a profound interest – and not always friendly “others”.

The Russian Northern Fleet is again contesting the North Atlantic. The Royal Canadian Navy and Royal Canadian Air Force will have critical roles to play therein. However, given the United States Navy’s focus on Asia-Pacific, much of that effort might have to be with the Royal Navy, albeit embedded in the NATO Command Structure. History beckons, eh? The High North and the Arctic Circle are also fast becoming contested. The Arctic is in the Euro-Atlantic area and thus formally a NATO responsibility. However, in addition to the Americans, it is likely that Canada will not only find itself more engaged with NATO ally Norway, and to some extent the U.K., but also non-NATO partners such as Finland and Sweden.

Canada is also a Pacific power. Given the emerging threat posed by the likes of North Korea to continental North America, as well as the coming advent of new war technologies, the defence of Canada and its neighbour is likely to call for a much reinforced, more agile and more advanced NORAD. And, the need for Canadian influence over its American neighbour to the south is, of course, a central plank of Ottawa's grand strategy (do you Canadians do "grand strategy", or is that too American?). One has only to look at the size and location of the Canadian embassy in D.C. to understand that.

So, where should the focus be of Ottawa's balance of defence investments? Given evolving Canadian security and defence interests, it is again vital that Ottawa exerts influence over the Americans and the Alliance. Ottawa needs to understand this truism of Canadian strategy. There is some evidence that Ottawa does indeed get this, which is why Canada sent a battle group to Latvia as part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence to deter an aggressive Russia. Equally, Canada's skills in stabilization and reconstruction are also recognized the world over, as is Canada's mastery of soft power, and all that goes with it. These skills must not be lost.

However, if Canada really wants to influence the Americans – Donald Trump or no – Ottawa must avoid falling into the European trap by claiming to spend two per cent of GDP on defence, when it is not. The use of soft power dressed up as hard power is a trick some Germans and other Europeans are trying to pull at the moment. The aim is to achieve the two per cent DIP target, but only by political sleight-of-hand. Nor should Canada follow the British down the road of creative defence accounting by which everything that might have even the most tenuous link to defence is included in the defence estimate. Britain is fast abandoning sound defence in pursuit of sound money and losing a lot of influence over both – large, empty aircraft carriers or no.

You see, at the end of the day, the two per cent DIP is meant to be spent on hard defence, of which 20 per cent each year must be spent on new hard defence kit, because that is what sound strategy demands right now. And what is really cunning about the increase in defence expenditure implied by the DIP is that it is not only about enhanced or strengthened defence. It is about the use of cutting edge military capabilities to strengthen the role an ally might play in the coalitions that will be the strategic method of the 21st century, in order also to strengthen the strategic and political influence a state has over the structure and conduct of such coalitions. Given Canada's new strategic reality, Ottawa has no choice but to ensure it can indeed exert such influence over the Americans and the Europeans. Well, no, I am wrong. Ottawa could instead choose to retreat into defence pretence, like so many of its allies, and see what happens.

Until political leaders in NATO capitals, including Canada, stop sacrificing sound long-term strategy for the sake of facile short-term politics and continue to hide hard defence truths, then I fear the artifice of input will continue to exercise tyranny over the strategy of outcomes. Cunning, eh?

Canada, you had better spend on a hard two per cent, and mean it!

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Lead image: **Yahoo! Finance**



## NATO: A Personal Perspective

by **YVES BRODEUR**

I left NATO in the summer of 2015 at the end of my mandate as ambassador and permanent representative of Canada to the North Atlantic Council.

Throughout my professional life, I spent 8.5 years dealing directly or indirectly with NATO-related issues; 2.5 years as spokesperson and director of communications at NATO, two years as assistant deputy minister and political director at DFAIT (now Global Affairs Canada) and finally, four years as ambassador and permanent representative.

I had the privilege of being able to observe closely the Alliance's internal travails as it struggled to adapt to post-Cold War and post-September 11 realities. Not an easy task.

In my opinion, if the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Warsaw Pact threw NATO into soul-searching mode, September 11 catapulted the Alliance into a new dimension, a much more complex and challenging one than that for which it was created, prepared and trained.

NATO's involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo sent tremors through the Alliance, foreshadowing the challenges ahead. It marked the end of an era of Manichean simplicity – “us against them” – where the “us” and the “them” were clearly defined.

In many ways, the evolution of the Alliance post-2001 opened up a Pandora's box, bringing to light political tensions within its ranks. The tensions existed before but they were ignored or minimized and remained below the surface of a coasting NATO. Unity against the Soviet threat shielded the Alliance against troubling questions.

The implications were far reaching and underlined a number of challenging issues, many of which have yet to be tackled properly.

More recently, Russia's aggressive actions – annexing Crimea, destabilizing Ukraine and threatening NATO's eastern flank – seriously tested the Alliance's resolve and solidarity. The cracks were real and the debates within Council were long, hard and often inconclusive.

It is not my intention to launch into a deep analysis of the last 15 years but I am concerned by the new dynamic that emerged and its implications for Canada. I would like to offer a few thoughts and questions based on my personal experience representing Canada's interests at the Council table. These are my own views and do not engage my successor nor my illustrious predecessors.

I came back from my four years at NATO convinced that Canada needs the Alliance, particularly at this difficult juncture marked by a worrying political-strategic context. Among them are an aggressive Russia, an assertive China, a chaotic Middle East, a North Africa in disarray, an indecisive and divided EU, intense migratory pressures, expanding terrorism, growing authoritarianism – including in some NATO nations – the unforeseen strategic consequences of climate change and an isolationist America led by an unpredictable president. The list is long and all are factors supporting the need for a political-military Alliance bringing together nations sharing the ultimate goal of fostering and preserving collective security within and beyond.

My frustration level was also quite high. We need an Alliance but we need an Alliance better suited to face the realities of a fast-changing world. This is not only about the International Secretariat nor only about the secretary general. It is not even about money. It is also about Allied nations and their willingness to bring forward the Alliance in the modern world. Allies, and I include Canada among them, must clarify their expectations as well as restate their belief in shared security goals pursued collectively in the interest of all Allies. They must also reflect upon the balance to be

established between national political agendas and collective security.

Here is my list of issues that need to be addressed with resolve in order to enhance the Alliance's efficiency:

- Streamline the decision-making process. It is slow and cumbersome. It is an easily exploitable weakness. Council must delegate tasks to subordinate groupings.
- Growing politicization of strategic debates based on narrow political objectives at the national level should be resisted. It is detrimental to the pursuit of agreed collective strategic objectives.
- The regionalization of issues with complete disregard for collective strategic needs and priorities, especially when resources are scarce, limits NATO's efficiency.
- The emergence of regional political groupings is not helpful as it renders the achievement of consensus very difficult.
- A clear, firm and public declaration of support for all aspects of the Washington Treaty at the political level would dissipate doubts. In particular, NATO cannot and should not remain silent when basic rights it fought to defend are under threat even in member nations. You cannot claim to defend values if you remain silent when they are violated, without eroding your legitimacy (and no, a 13-page communiqué won't do it).
- NATO must increase managerial accountability and transparency, particularly on financial matters. It should align its own practices with nations' best managerial practices. This would greatly speed up the budget approval process and reassure nations that resources are properly managed and accounted for.
- Gender diversity at the senior decision-making level – secretary general, assistant secretaries-general – should be pursued with determination. NATO still projects an all white-male image at a time when even the structure of our national forces is adapting to incorporate all elements of society to reflect growing diversity. The same goes for the military.

- Finally, NATO must be careful in ensuring that the Alliance does not become overly Eurocentric to the point of marginalizing nations outside of the European sphere.

Where does Canada fit in all this? It is not a secret that the Harper government had little time and interest for NATO. The personal relationship between then-prime minister Stephen Harper and then-secretary general Anders Fogh Rasmussen was not a warm one, to say the least.

A number of back-to-back decisions also cast a long shadow on our role and influence at NATO. Withdrawal from the AWACS consortium, non-participation in the BMD initiative, the end of our mission in Afghanistan, our objection to any discussion on Arctic-related issues and a very tough approach to budgetary issues did not help. Unfortunately, the aggregation of these decisions sent a troubling but unsubstantiated message about our commitment.

Canada was becoming a respected but difficult player who could no longer be taken for granted. Paradoxically, it translated into greater attention paid to Canadian views as well as decreasing popularity for me!

We also found ourselves squeezed between a pushy America wanting to decrease its footprint in Europe and therefore pressuring European Allies and Canada to step up, and an increasingly cohesive European bloc more concerned about its own interests – including every facet of its relationship with Russia – than with the collective security of the Alliance.

To this day, I worry about Canada's role and influence within an Alliance becoming more and more Eurocentric, as I see it. I do subscribe to the notion of a strong Europe and I welcome the determination to create a strong European security identity, but for Canada it inevitably raises the issue of the impact on NATO and on our voice within the Alliance. The celebrated transatlantic link was, is and remains about the United States – perhaps even more so since the beginning of the Trump presidency.

The question remains and is perhaps becoming more acute: where does Canada fit within the Alliance? What are our interests besides undeniable military benefits (interoperability training, etc.)?

We need strong voices at the Council table, including at the political level. But more importantly, we must define precisely and realistically what we want and what we can expect from the Alliance. We need a well-articulated NATO policy. During my time at NATO, I had a very clear sense of what Canada did not want but very little about what Canada wanted.

Finally, it is unsatisfactory for Canada not to be represented at the organization's senior decision-making level. It is not reflective of our steady contribution to the Alliance, financially, politically and militarily since its inception. NATO demands and expects much from Canada but at some point, it must carefully consider what it does for Canada.

I do believe that Canada belongs to the Alliance and that our long association with it has been beneficial to us. But I also believe that the Alliance must take a hard look at itself through the prism of a changing security environment that is more complex than it was in 1949. Canada should do the same if it does not want to become a marginal player at the table.

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As a professional diplomat since 1982, Mr. Brodeur had a diverse career cumulating high responsibility mandates at the Privy Council Office, Headquarters as well as various Canadian diplomatic missions abroad. He was also Spokesperson and Head of Communications at NATO from 2001 to 2003. Ambassador Brodeur retired in 2015.

Lead image: **NATO**



# UNPACKING CANADA'S NEW DEFENCE POLICY: THE PATH TO STRONG, SECURE, ENGAGED

OCTOBER 4, 2017 | OTTAWA, ONTARIO

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# NATO's Challenge: The Economic Dimension

by **IAN BRODIE**

**S**ince the end of the Cold War more than 25 years ago, western governments have sometimes wondered if NATO had a continuing purpose. The collapse of the Soviet bloc ended the Warsaw Pact's direct threat to the western liberal democracies. Western leaders hoped that the economic integration of former Soviet bloc and other illiberal countries into a globalized economy would dissolve any remaining authoritarian tendencies in Eurasia and elsewhere. An expansion of free markets and democracy would produce a double hit of stimulus for NATO members – a peace dividend from reduced military spending and the added economic opportunities of a freer global economy.

While many of these hopes have been realized – democracy and free market economics have become the norm in many former Soviet satellites and millions have been lifted out of grinding poverty – it is now obvious that NATO has a continuing mission. Hopes for integrating some illiberal regimes into a globalized, democratic world proved to be overly optimistic. While western leaders hope better regimes emerge in Russia and elsewhere, they also realize that deterring Russian adventurism today is almost as important as deterring Soviet adventurism was a generation ago.

The military side of the challenge has changed. The geography of Russian power has shifted since the end of the Warsaw Pact. Some points of traditional defence have become simpler while others have become much harder. Canada now has a role in one of the more difficult points of defence with its deployment to Latvia. The ideological nature of the challenge has also changed. The divide between communism and capitalism was easier to understand than the contemporary divide between liberal and illiberal regimes. The latter have been aggressive in promoting their political and economic models and have attracted new partners. Making the case

against these new ideologies both in Canada and abroad is trickier. Defending western democracies against new modes of aggression requires new strategies and doctrines. Democratic countries find it difficult to defend against hybrid and information warfare. Fortunately, Russia has a deeper and more vibrant civil society than the Soviet Union did. Our strategies will have to find ways to accommodate these changes.

While NATO members are grappling with the military and ideological aspects of the new challenge, the Alliance is much less advanced in rising to the new economic challenge. Western leaders contained Soviet ambitions by creating a western, international and democratic economy that excluded the Soviet bloc. Reinforced by institutions like the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), our economic bloc did as much as NATO's political and military preparations to bolster the western nations against our rivals. It forced Soviet leaders to create their own, less efficient, less successful economic bloc in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON). Keeping the Soviet bloc out of the western international economy limited Soviet economic influence over the democracies and ensured the western economic sphere ran on liberal economic and political assumptions.

With the end of the Cold War, western democratic political leaders rightly moved quickly to extend the western international economy to the liberalizing and democratizing states of central and eastern Europe, southern and Southeast Asia, Latin America and Africa. The European Union, the World Bank, the IMF, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other institutions of the western global economy were opened up to new members. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development was specifically tasked with bringing central and eastern European countries, including Russia, into the economic order. These institutions and the global economy they sustained were thought to be subtle but effective instruments of western

political interests, able to export democratic politics and free market economics to new climes.

The assumption that the global economy dissolves authoritarian politics in Russia and elsewhere has been proven overly optimistic. Instead of undermining illiberal politics, opening world economic markets has given those regimes new tools, first to preserve themselves in power and, second, to extend their influence. Expanded Russian trade and investment have shifted the balance of political forces in democratic countries. Russian oligarchs use global economic integration to move their cash and their spending to the luxury ends of western capitals. This complicates the calculus when imposing sanctions or other tactics. Illiberal regimes use their access to the global economy to subvert the political will of the democracies and exploit weaknesses in international trade agreements to expand their state-connected economic enterprises overseas. Furthermore, as western firms rush to do business with illiberal regimes, their public officials become enamoured of post-retirement work opportunities in the service of those regimes. Globalization and its international institutions were supposed to dissolve authoritarianism; instead, they have weakened our ability to resist authoritarianism.

In the Soviet era, Russian natural gas exports to western Europe were an exception to the divide between the western economies and COMECON. Now, such exports, and the strategic influence they bring, are part and parcel of an economic integration that shapes the domestic politics of the NATO countries, while reinforcing the strength of the illiberal regimes. The techniques of western economic sanctions have advanced since the end of the Cold War, but this new global political economy has made it harder to muster the political will to implement and enforce them.

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Lead image: **Force Ten Design**



## Keeping the Americans In

by **COLIN ROBERTSON**

**T**he most useful role that Canada can play in sustaining the international order is to keep Donald Trump's America engaged in NATO.

NATO continues to be the insurance policy that has guaranteed peace and security for generations of Canadians. Instrumental in NATO's creation, Canada needs to step up again and do its part.

In the impudent phrase of Hastings "Pug" Ismay, NATO's first secretary general, the organization was designed to "keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the Germans down." Today, NATO needs a fully committed Germany. Keeping the Russians out continues to be a sad reality, but keeping the Americans in is imperative.

Americans are doubting the role that they have played since 1945 in bearing the

burden of global primacy. Successive presidents and secretaries of defence have become increasingly explicit: Having the U.S. shoulder approximately 70 per cent of NATO's defence expenditure is not sustainable. It undermines the core of the transatlantic relationship and makes a mockery of the "collective" in collective security.

Trump's campaign claim that the world order is not in the U.S.'s interest and that the world is taking the American people to the cleaners has found resonance. This attitude goes beyond Trump. It is also shared by growing factions on both sides of the aisle in Congress. A recent Pew Foundation survey shows that Americans are increasingly wary about how much the U.S. should be involved globally.

We need to tell Americans that they are our most important ally, that we do not take them for granted. The recent Norwegian drama, *Okkupert* (Occupied), is a fictional depiction of a decoupling of American and European security interests and a NATO without the U.S. Bringing in climate, energy and cyber concerns, it is grim but gripping.

## What do we need to tell the Americans?

First, they need to know that we will shoulder our share of the security burden.

Defence investment is at the core of the defence dilemma and the U.S. has carried a disproportionate share for too long. After generations of free-riding, we and the rest of the Alliance cannot expect the U.S. – nor is the Trump administration prepared – to invest in collective security when we are not willing to make the necessary investments ourselves.

Keeping to the schedule in the building of our new warships and purchase of our new fighter jets is as important a commitment as our leadership of the new multinational brigade in Latvia. We need to do more – it is time to think about the next generation of submarines, the ultimate stealth weapon which is essential to a maritime nation bordering on three oceans. We should also restore our AWACs capacity as part of our NATO contribution.

Second, commitment means taking a greater share of the political burden.

The pace of deterioration in global security demands an increased presence in the world beyond Europe. This means greater involvement, for example, in hemispheric affairs. Can we be useful in Central America, Cuba or Venezuela? Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promises a renewed Canadian involvement in peacekeeping. What better demonstration that “Canada is back” than helping in humanitarian responses and then in the longer-term relief operation? Why not build a couple of hospital ships, staffed and ready to sail to disasters?

Third, commitment means demonstrating a greater interest in U.S. security concerns.

War today is as much about cyber-hacking, fake news, subversion and espionage as it is about fighter jets and tanks. NATO needs a minimal baseline for members’ readiness to meet the requirements of hybrid defence, including police services,

counterintelligence services, emergency preparedness and public affairs.

Public affairs are mostly neglected, but NATO’s citizens need to understand what NATO does and why it matters to them. Perhaps the Harper government’s smartest strategic public affairs initiative was the creation of the Halifax International Security Forum. Wisely, the Trudeau government has reinvested in this annual gathering of global democratic leaders, with a particular focus on the transatlantic, to discuss current and pressing security threats.

Fourth, commitment means helping with threats beyond NATO’s traditional theatre of operation. Today, it is the interplay of Eurasian and Asian powers that threaten global instability.

Global commerce is made possible by U.S. ships and submarines securing the sea lanes and its air and space command keeping safe our airspace. When there is a natural calamity, the U.S. is the first responder, but it needs help.

As friend, neighbour and ally, we understand Americans better than anyone else. Let us use this understanding to keep the U.S. engaged.

For now, the more America turns inward, the greater the requirement for Canada to broaden its foreign policy options and to deepen its investment in our diplomatic and defence capabilities. These capabilities serve our national needs as well as contribute to NATO’s ability to execute collective defence and out-of-area crisis response operations.

What middle powers like Canada cannot do is sit on the fence or play it safe. Canada, in league with other middle and like-minded powers who value representative government, human rights and freer trade, needs to again step up and reassert our interests in sustaining and preserving the rules-based liberal international system.

NATO, by Canadian design, is a community of democratic values. Canada can be a champion in the articulation of values as long as we avoid smugness or what former U.S. secretary of state Dean Acheson called the Canadian tendency to behave like “the stern voice of the daughter of God”.

In a practical sense, this means:

- Working in tandem with our European and Pacific partners.
- Burden sharing and ensuring readiness, capacity and capability. It is not just arms but a balance of capabilities: diplomatic, policing, development aid, military, trade, intelligence, public affairs, cultural outreach and so on.
- Explaining to our public why NATO, collective security and the rule-based international order matter. This advocacy and explanatory role is one into which elected representatives especially need to lean.

The global order that has defined the world in our age is in various ways challenged, crumbling, bursting at the seams or being transformed into something else. The situation is difficult but not unmanageable. No other organization has NATO’s unique combination of common defence planning, a common command structure and a North Atlantic council making political decisions on a 24/7 basis.

NATO’s fundamental role and purpose continues to be as the democracies’ collective-security insurance policy. Every member needs to shoulder its share. Canada can do more.

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Lead image: [@CanadaNATO/Twitter](#)



## NATO, Canada and the Arctic

by **ANDREA CHARRON**

Canada's latest defence policy, *Strong, Secure Engaged*,<sup>1</sup> contains a small paragraph that may signal a change in long-held Canadian defence practice. In the past, Canada eschewed NATO exercises in its Arctic as too provocative for its Russian neighbour. Rather, individual NATO partners, like Denmark and the U.S., have been invited on a bilateral basis to participate in exercises such as Op Nanook in Canada's Arctic. The paragraph in the new defence policy opens the possibility for a NATO exercise in the future. The question becomes: is such a change advisable when relations between Russia and NATO allies are still tense?

On the one hand, five of the eight Arctic states<sup>2</sup> are NATO members and so exercises in the European Arctic involving them are not new. Indeed, Norway will be hosting Trident Juncture 2018 – NATO's high-visibility exercise in which “tens of thousands of soldiers are expected to

participate ...” beginning in October.<sup>3</sup> The eight Arctic states (which include Russia) have formed an Arctic Coast Guard Forum which has also just had its first live exercise – Arctic Guardian – in Reykjavik, Iceland this September. While NATO has no agreed position when it comes to its Arctic role, the Nordic states have lobbied for NATO to be more present. Certainly, the number of articles warning of the dangers of an undefended GIUK gap (the maritime boundaries between Greenland, Iceland and the U.K., which Russia's Northern Fleet must transit to reach the North Atlantic) is on the rise. The concern is that NATO-allied anti-submarine warfare has atrophied, calling into question the transatlantic resolve.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, Canada has tried to discourage overt, visible NATO participation in the North American Arctic. At the 2009 NATO Strasbourg/Kehl Summit, member states were poised to release a statement on NATO's role in the Arctic as part of the final declaration. Canada demurred and because of NATO's consensus-based decision-making, a muted paragraph was released reading: “Developments in the High North have generated increased international attention. We

welcome the initiative of Iceland in hosting a NATO Seminar and raising the interest of Allies in safety and security-related developments in the High North, including climate change.”<sup>5</sup>

Point 110 in Canada’s new defence policy, suggesting Canada will “[c]onduct joint exercises with Arctic allies and partners and support the strengthening of situational awareness and information sharing in the Arctic, including with NATO”, is curious. If it is simply information sharing among NATO allies, this is the status quo. The NORAD maritime common operating picture (COP), which includes a snapshot of the North American Arctic, is a combination of a Canadian COP, the U.S. COP and allied information. All states can benefit from better and all-domain awareness, and sharing of such information is always advisable to have a more complete understanding of the vessels of interest in the Arctic Ocean. Ideally, information directly from Russia, including its underwater movements, should be included for a truly complete Arctic maritime common operating picture. For now, this is not possible for a number of geopolitical reasons.

If, however, rather than bilateral or trilateral exercises with allies (who just happen to be NATO members), exercises in Canada’s Arctic become NATO exercises, this is a change that Russia would likely interpret – whether for its domestic audience only or its wider defence policy – as provocation given the proximity of Russia’s and North America’s Arctic territories. And given that the Arctic is a region where progress has been made in many different issue areas thanks to the Arctic Council, hosting NATO exercises in order to host NATO exercises in the Canadian Arctic could upset this progress. As Russia is the largest and most important Arctic actor, is there benefit to be gained from such a change in policy? Perhaps more helpful would be a reinvigoration of the Arctic Chiefs of Defence meetings involving the eight Arctic states, which could start with issues concerning military support to search-and-rescue. Arctic discussions are also possible within the context of the NATO-Russia Council. This is not coddling Russia nor does it excuse Russian actions in Ukraine and Syria. Rather, it recognizes that Russia has the most to lose should the Arctic become conflict-ridden, that

Russia is key to ensuring that international law in this region prevails and that Russia is crucial to solving many other issues of concern for NATO including North Korea.

Clearly, NATO members are interested in understanding some of the challenges of the North American Arctic – especially the effect of climate change on infrastructure. A group of nearly 30 NATO parliamentarians (a subcommittee on transatlantic economic relations and a science and technology committee) from Bulgaria, Italy, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, France, Estonia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey (six of which represent Arctic Council observer states) are just now starting a tour of Canada’s Arctic. They are being briefed by key Canadian government officials and taking a tour of Yellowknife and Resolute. Sharing information about Canada’s Arctic, especially reminding others that it is first and foremost a homeland, is always a propitious opportunity which Canada should seize. NATO exercises in Canada’s Arctic, however, may not be prudent for now.

#### End Notes

- 1 Government of Canada, *Strong, Secure Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy* (June 2017) Found at <http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/canada-defence-policy/docs/canada-defence-policy-report.pdf>
- 2 Finland, Russia and Sweden are not NATO members.
- 3 See <https://forsvaret.no/en/exercise-and-operations/exercises/nato-exercise-2018>
- 4 Google “NATO and the GIUK gap” and you will be presented with 46,000+ results.
- 5 NATO, Strasburg/Kehl Summit Declaration (2009). See para 60. Found at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_52837.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_52837.htm?mode=pressrelease)

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Lead image: **U.S. Navy**



# Canada's Military Operations on NATO's Eastern Flank: Why They Matter

by **ANDREW RASIULIS**

**T**he Canadian Armed Forces today are actively engaged with two operations supporting NATO missions along its eastern flank. First, Canada has taken a lead role in the establishment of a battalion-sized battle group in Latvia (Operation REASSURANCE), as part of NATO's enhanced forward presence to deter Russian use of force against NATO territory (Article 5 commitment). Operation REASSURANCE also includes an air force commitment of six fighter jets ("Six Pack") to provide air protection along NATO's eastern and southern flanks, as well as a naval frigate committed to tasks in the Mediterranean and Black seas. Canada is one of four NATO

allies to take such a prominent role. The other three battalion groups in this deterrence initiative are led by the U.K. in Estonia, Germany in Lithuania, and the U.S. in Poland. This has placed Canada's commitment squarely on the politico-military map.

Canada's second operation is a NATO out-of-area training and capacity-building mission in Ukraine. While not a member of NATO and therefore not subject to Article 5 provisions of deterrence and defence, Ukraine is a long-standing NATO partner under the auspices of the Partnership for Peace (PfP). Within the mandate of Operation UNIFIER, the Canadian Armed Forces' mission is to assist in modernizing and reforming the Ukrainian military. This operation is keyed to the larger NATO and EU aim of assisting Ukraine with its declared policy of reform and battle against the Russian-supported rebel uprising in the eastern Donbass.

With such a substantive military commitment on Canada's part to NATO, it is appropriate to reflect on why NATO is important to Canadian foreign and defence interests, i.e., why NATO and why it matters.

## **Origins of NATO and Canada's Commitment**

According to NATO's first secretary general, Lord Ismay, NATO was formed in 1949 to "keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down". Remarkably, by the end of the Cold War in 1991, the Soviet Union version of the "Russians" ceased to be a threat, the Americans had fully stayed the course of defence engagement of the North Atlantic area, and Germany reunified as a leading and fully integrated member of NATO and the EU. This successful outcome did not, however, obviate the requirement for the alliance, nor of Canada's commitment. Rather, a transitional period followed the Cold War which involved the expansion of the alliance through co-operation with former members of the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union. At the same time, Russia as the successor state to the Soviet Union felt that its interests in the post-Cold War period had been betrayed and resumed a more aggressive use of military force to reinforce its foreign and domestic interests.

Canadian diplomats were keenly active in the formation of NATO in 1949. A key tenet of Canadian defence policy since Confederation had been that Canadian interests were best served as part of a coalition. Originally as part of the British Empire, Canadian expeditionary forces served in the Nile Expedition, the Boer War and the First World War. In the Second World War, they were part of the British Commonwealth. With the emergence of the Cold War, Canadian interests were served by promoting a North Atlantic coalition which, importantly, mitigated the historical American predilection for isolationism.

Canadian interests, however, went further than provisions for military defence within a North Atlantic coalition. Rather, Canadian diplomats pushed aggressively for Article Two of the Washington Treaty that established NATO. Known as the "Canadian Article", its purpose was to define NATO as more than a defence alliance by including a reference to economic co-operation. While Article Two did not lead to much in and of itself, Canadian interests of economic

association and integration within the North Atlantic area were echoed in then-prime minister Pierre Trudeau's Third Option in the 1970s, and finally, the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) in 2016 under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

### **Canadian expeditionary commitment: Variation on a theme**

Canadian military forces initially deployed to Europe as part of Canada's NATO commitment at the outbreak of the Korean War. Simultaneously, Canadian forces fought with the UN coalition in Korea and deployed to Europe as part of NATO'S deterrent. The European commitment remained generally steadfast throughout the Cold War. Adjustments and reductions were made under Pierre Trudeau, who was skeptical of the need to sustain a Canadian military presence in West Germany. Chancellor Helmut Schmidt leveraged an appeal to Trudeau to keep the Canadian presence, playing on Trudeau's economic Third Option. With the famous quip "no tanks, no trade", Canadian troops remained.

As the Cold War ended, Canadian military deployments became focused on coalition peacekeeping and then peace support missions. Other than a small logistical component remaining in Germany, the Canadian Forces consolidated around their permanent bases in Canada.

Canadian policy interests dictated that the Canadian Armed Forces remain engaged in the reform and transformation of post-Cold War Eastern and Southeastern Europe. NATO established the Partnership for Peace (PfP) in 1994 with the former members of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union. Canada's contribution to this mission was made under the auspices of DND's Military Training Assistance Program (MTAP), subsequently renamed the Military Training Co-operation Program (MTCP).

Under the auspices of the MTCP, the Canadian Armed Forces worked alongside NATO allies to promote defence reform and governance with the partner countries.

Canadian values were built into these training co-operation and capacity-building efforts. The partner countries differed on the speed and intensity of their transformation and reform. Some chose the path of integration with NATO, while others remained as partners. For example, the Baltic States, including Latvia, eventually became NATO members, whereas others such as Ukraine remained active partners of the alliance.

### **Back to the future?**

The dramatic events of 2014 in Ukraine over the issue of greater integration with the EU and NATO led to active military confrontation with eastern Ukrainian rebels, supported by Russia, as well as the Russian seizure and annexation of Crimea. NATO's military response was twofold: strengthen and reaffirm its Article 5 commitment to defend NATO allies through a posture of enhanced deterrence, while keeping open the option of dialogue with Russia; and second, to significantly increase NATO training, reform and capacity-building efforts with the Ukrainian armed forces.

The Canadian response was in keeping with its traditional foreign and defence interests and effective participation as a firm NATO ally. Both the Harper and Justin Trudeau governments built on the precedence of previous commitments. The Canadian Armed Forces have therefore returned to Europe under Operation REASSURANCE and deployed to Latvia with 450 personnel where they are the lead nation for the battle group forming a key part of NATO's enhanced deterrence effort. In Ukraine, the MTCP's capacity-building efforts have been dramatically increased with the deployment of 200 personnel under Operation UNIFIER. The Canadian Armed Forces' active participation and leading role on NATO's eastern flank continue to serve and promote Canada's interests in achieving greater security in Europe. The efforts in Latvia and Ukraine should be matched by active diplomacy to achieve an eventual understanding with Russia and return to future co-operation, rather than confrontation.

**ANDREW P. RASIULIS** completed his undergraduate study in Political Science/History at the University of Toronto in 1978 and received his Master of Arts from the Norman Patterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, in Strategic Studies in 1979. In 1979 Mr. Rasiulis was appointed a commissioned officer in the Canadian Forces Primary Reserve (Governor General's Foot Guards).

He joined the Department of National Defence in 1979 as an analyst with the Directorate of Strategic Analysis, specializing in strategic politico-military issues pertaining to conventional forces. These issues included emerging concepts of conventional defence strategies for Western Europe, as well as the Canadian Government's efforts in the area of conventional arms control. In 1987, Mr. Rasiulis was promoted to Section Head, within the Directorate of Nuclear and Arms Control Policy, responsible for conventional arms control policy. He was also the Department of National Defence representative on NATO's High Level Task Force for conventional arms control from its inception in 1986 to 1989.

In June 1989 Mr. Rasiulis was posted as a Defence Advisor to the Canadian Delegation for Conventional Arms Control Talks in Vienna. Upon completion of his tour Mr. Rasiulis returned to National Defence Headquarters in April 1992 as Section Head responsible for policy on Central and Eastern Europe, including the Department's Military Training and Assistance Program (MTAP) with Central and Eastern Europe. In May 1996, Mr. Rasiulis was also assigned the responsibility of Programme Manager for the entire MTAP. He was subsequently designated as Director, Military Training Assistance Programme (and Eastern European Policy) in 1998.

Reflecting the growth of responsibility within the area of defence diplomacy, Mr. Rasiulis was re-designated Director Military Training and Cooperation in 2009. His responsibilities included the development of the policy for defence training cooperation with developing countries world wide, as well as overseeing its operational implementation.

Mr. Rasiulis' MA thesis, *On the Utility of War in the Nuclear Age*, developed a theory on limited conventional war. It was subsequently published as a Wellesley Paper in 1981 by the Canadian Institute for International Affairs and the Canadian Institute for Strategic Studies. He has also published numerous articles on conventional strategy, arms control and international military training cooperation.

Mr Rasiulis is retired from the Public Service and is now a freelance consultant with Andrew Rasiulis Associates Inc.

Lead image: **DND**

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# Closed for Repairs? Rebuilding the Transatlantic Bridge

by **RICHARD COHEN**

**J**ane's Defence Weekly reported recently that in the seven days ending on June 20, NATO jets scrambled 32 times in Estonia and Lithuania to identify and escort incoming Russian warplanes over the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Finland. This kind of activity, not seen since the Cold War, is becoming almost routine, not only on NATO's northeastern flank but at sea and in the air over the Black Sea, the North Atlantic, the North Pacific and even the Canadian Arctic. It fits a pattern of the mixture of military, cyber- and informational warfare Russia has waged, mostly

unilaterally, since the 2014 invasion of Crimea and eastern Ukraine, and before.

The clear military and political success of Russia's surprise military intervention in Syria, against a background of U.S. and western lethargy, has reinforced the notion in the Kremlin, but also further afield, that the U.S. and its allies don't have the backbone to stand up to Russian interventions in areas where President Vladimir Putin and his entourage see a clear strategic interest.

For almost 70 years, Article 5 of the NATO Treaty has been the bedrock of transatlantic security. But in the event of an attack, Article 5 does not commit members to automatically support each other with military action. Article 5 states that a member state "...will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by ... such action as it deems necessary, including [but not necessarily!] the use of armed force..." The United States inserted this caveat into the treaty in 1949. So, military action by the U.S., or any other NATO member, to protect its allies in the event of an attack is not

unconditional. It is left to each member's discretion.

During the Cold War, it was taken for granted that Soviet armed aggression would be met by the combined armed force of all the allies, including the U.S. The certainty of a U.S. military reaction was guaranteed by 300,000 American troops permanently stationed in Europe who stood in the way of any Soviet attack. Today, that number is down to about 35,000.

To add to today's imbalance, most western armed forces have remained focused on counter-insurgency and asymmetric warfare of the kind NATO faced in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the Russians have been rapidly building up their forces for high intensity combat of the kind we witnessed in eastern Ukraine. The Russian buildup goes on, with an emphasis on surprise, electronic warfare, cyber-operations, speed of action and overwhelming firepower backed by the threat of nuclear escalation. Most NATO countries, including Canada, have been tepid in their reaction. Canada's recently announced defence policy, though a small step forward, provides for relatively tiny contingency forces modelled on the operational requirements of Afghanistan and certainly not on facing a heavy combat scenario in Europe.

U.S. President Donald Trump recently announced a \$54 billion increase in defence spending, about three times the entire Canadian defence budget, and almost double the amount Canada says it will spend annually in 10 years' time. With Canada and many European NATO allies showing almost no inclination to reach even the modest NATO defence spending target of two per cent of GDP, it's not surprising that voices inside and outside the U.S. administration are calling into question the European commitment to NATO solidarity. The ruckus around Trump's failure to publicly commit to Article 5, even with its caveat, sounds disingenuous, especially from those countries, including Canada, who show no willingness themselves to face up to the growing threat.

Of course, the new U.S. president's unpredictable behaviour, and strong disagreements on climate change and trade, have also soured the atmosphere. German Chancellor Angela Merkel's remarks, in the midst of an election campaign, on the U.S.'s growing unreliability and the need for Europe to stand on its own have deepened the divide. Quite how Europe would be able to defend itself without U.S. military power remains a moot question.

It's worth remembering that Trump is not the first U.S. president to complain about a lack of commitment to burden sharing within NATO. In his address to Canada's Parliament just last year, then-president Barack Obama made the same complaint, albeit in more diplomatic language. In fact, burden sharing has been a constant irritant in transatlantic relations almost since the birth of the Alliance.

What is different today? Not much and a lot. We have entered a new kind of Cold War, this time with an array of dangerous adversaries, from an aggressive, resurgent Russia and a rising, assertive China to relatively weak but dangerous rogue states like Iran and North Korea. A stubborn reluctance of America's NATO allies, including Canada, to step up their commitment to our common defence and security coupled with a growing isolationist tendency among many Americans, including at the highest levels, could put the once robust Atlantic bridge in some peril. Symbolic deployments of small numbers of troops send a political signal to Moscow but they do little to strengthen real NATO military capability on the ground. And they will not appease the growing ranks of America-Firsters in Washington.

The only way to rebuild trust and to renew transatlantic relations is for Canada and its European partners to demonstrate that we are ready to seriously contribute to our common defence. For Canada, a strong bipartisan agreement to commit to an early achievement of the NATO two per cent goal would be a good first step. If our European partners follow our lead, it would send a

strong signal of reassurance to our American friends that, if necessary, we are ready to fight alongside them to preserve our freedom and our way of life. This kind of action would go a long way toward revamping the battered transatlantic partnership.

**RICHARD COHEN** is president of RSC Strategic Connections and served in the Canadian and British Armies. He was Professor of European Security Studies at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies and from 2007-2011, Senior Defence Advisor to the Minister of National Defence.

Lead image: **Sputnik/Igor Zarembo**

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# NATO's Soft Southern Flank

by **ROLF HOLMBOE**

## Summary

NATO should engage in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to contain Russian and Iranian anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) and to block Russian attempts to establish an axis of autocracies in the region. NATO should also support a coalition of nations to counter Russian and Iranian power projection, but in a way that helps resolve differences among the regional powers. By expanding military co-operation with key MENA partners, NATO can engage in defence capacity building (DCB). NATO also needs to enhance maritime and air assets in and around the region with a stronger focus on A2/AD and within the context of a new C4ISR<sup>1</sup> structure.

To assist in managing the challenges of destabilization and massive forced migration, NATO should expand its crisis management readiness. Key areas for development include stronger intelligence,

surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) assets to counter human smuggling networks and to deepen the strategic dialogue with MENA partners on security stabilization, migration control, maritime security and counterterrorism.

NATO should also significantly scale up counterterrorism in DCB with partner countries and expand the scope of engagements to the “by, with and through” concept, ensuring NATO operational counterterrorism support on the ground with forces and strategic assets when needed.

NATO’s approach to security co-operation must be one that stabilizes, rather than the opposite. For this reason, NATO should co-ordinate closely with the EU to ensure that engagements take place in a broader context of economic development and gradual reform in the region.

\* \* \*

Not since the end of the Cold War has NATO been faced with such an array of complex security challenges as it is now. The most visible challenge has emerged from a re-

assertive Russia that has become the major source of regional instability on NATO's eastern flank. Russia is blurring the lines between war and peace with hybrid warfare, including support for subversive groups, cyber-warfare and aggressive messaging. Russia is keeping things just below the red line that would warrant a stronger Western response.

With eyes turned eastward, we have somewhat neglected coming up with timely and comprehensive responses to the challenges emanating from NATO's southern flank. The ability of regimes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to stay in power after the Arab Spring with limited reforms, cosmetic government changes and shallow social payoffs is keeping the region gridlocked in a vicious circle of instability, slow economic growth, social stagnation and ensuing political radicalization.

In 2015, more than a million asylum seekers crossed into Europe from countries either affected by war or unable to provide livelihoods for their citizens. The Libya, Syria and Iraq wars have created an ungoverned space for the unprecedented rise in extremist groups such as the so-called Islamic State (ISIS). This has in turn led to a significant rise in terrorism in the West. The mostly unrelated phenomena of migration and terrorism have significantly contributed to an atmosphere of xenophobia and to the rise of populism in the West. With no stabilization in sight in the regions of origin, the rise of inward-looking populist politics could enhance internal divisions and cripple resolve within the alliance.

Furthermore, Russian and Iranian power projection has offset a regional conflict that threatens to divide the MENA region and destabilize it even further. Bashar Assad's unchecked Syria onslaught has allowed Iran to expand its military control all the way to the Mediterranean Sea, benefiting not least from the vacuum created by the implosion of ISIS. To Israel, the perspective of Iranian military control in Syria and advanced missiles in the Golan is tantamount to a Cuban missile crisis.

Since 2015, Russia has re-engaged militarily in the region as the main sponsor of Assad and Iran, providing key military force-enhancing assets to Iran and Hezbollah, and a veto in the UN Security Council. Russia's long-term deployment to Syria and the Mediterranean of advanced and multilayered surface-to-air missile systems (SAM), advanced fixed-wing aircraft on new Russian airbases in Syria, and naval platforms with advanced SAM and anti-ship cruise missile assets, constitute a significant anti-access and area-denial (A2/AD) capability against NATO. It has already significantly constrained anti-ISIS operations in Syria, allowing Russia and Iran to be the main beneficiaries from the impending fall of ISIS in Syria.

Russia is also seeking to sponsor energy supplies from Iran and Iranian proxies in Iraq and Syria, looking at re-establishing pipelines in Iraq and Syria to the Mediterranean Sea. This could significantly strengthen Russia's grip on energy supplies to Europe, not least if the Gulf at some point becomes destabilized.

Russia is currently reaching out to regimes across the region in a divisive bid to sponsor autocratic rulers against Western calls for democracy, human rights and inclusive economic growth. For instance, Russia has sought to strengthen partnerships with rulers in Libya and Egypt and has reached out to Turkey and Jordan as well. This could potentially allow Russian A2/AD force projection deeper into the region, destabilizing and polarizing MENA even further.

NATO's southern flank has thus turned from challenge to potential threat in the span of just two years, linking the region to the multifaceted challenges stemming from Russia on NATO's eastern flank.

Since 2010, crisis management and co-operative security have been NATO core tasks together with collective defence, and NATO has responded to challenges from the south. In 2011, NATO's Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR successfully stopped Libya's

Moammar Gadhafi from slaughtering his own population in response to uprisings. NATO conducted anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden from 2008 to 2016 that significantly contributed to eliminating the threat of piracy. NATO carried out training missions in Iraq from 2004 to 2011 that helped roll back the Islamic State in Iraq, the predecessor of ISIS.

But so far, NATO is not dealing in a comprehensive way with the region's main challenges: (1) Iran's and Russia's A2/AD power projection destabilizing the region, (2) the threat of new state failures and waves of forced migration in the wake of such destabilization, and (3) the continued spread of extremism and terrorism from the region.

### **What should we do?**

The big question is how to respond to the expanding complex and multi-faceted challenges coming from the south and what role NATO should play in this, if any.

President Donald Trump responded to the new situation during his visit to Saudi Arabia in May 2017, where he met with a group of key MENA leaders. He called for a coalition of nations to roll back terrorism and extremism and to contain Iranian power projection in the region, potentially growing into an "Arab NATO" down the line. He also more than hinted that his agenda would be driven by interests rather than by values, tantamount to stating that he would not be as critical of autocratic rulers as his predecessors had been.

Canada should first and foremost develop an opinion on the comprehensive policy responses that NATO needs to address the challenges. In an era of growing complexity, single and simple solutions are not likely to suffice.

Canada also needs to take a hard look at what the wider consequences of such choices could be. In a very fragile region, the overall aim should be stability.

### **Iran's and Russia's power projection**

NATO should move to contain the Russian/

Iranian A2/AD power projection into the MENA region, first of all because it appears as part of a Russian scheme to envelop NATO and Western liberal democracies with an "axis of autocracies". Such an axis would be a significant force enhancer for Russia, linking it to a powerful Iranian military and Iranian ballistic missiles, as well as to proxy Hezbollah, Iraqi and other Shi'a militias. It also potentially links Russia to hybrid opportunities, such as enhanced energy supply control and potential lever control of diffuse threats such as the massive migration and spread of extremism currently arising from Syria.

Second, containment is also needed to avoid the negative consequences of a continued regional conflict pitting Iran and Sunni powers against each other. Europe will suffer far more from continued destabilization in MENA than Russia, and that makes destabilization a potential Russian strategic aim. In fact, destabilization in the Gulf is the single factor that would enhance Russian and Iranian power the most. On the other hand, a new negotiated regional balance of power between Iran and Sunni states would immediately reduce Russian influence in the region.

Therefore, a coalition of MENA nations to roll back Russia and contain Iran is an option, but it would have to be as part of a carrot-and-stick approach. If it only contributes to continued regional conflict, it risks further strengthening Russia and Iran. But if it succeeds in significantly challenging Iranian militaristic policies in the region and is complemented by diplomatic initiatives, it could open the door to negotiate a new balance of power between Sunni states and Iran and to reach a new agreement between the West and Iran. A real deal with the West could strengthen moderate circles inside Iran and decrease the allure of an Iranian alliance with Russia.

NATO should support a carrot-and-stick approach to containment as part of a new comprehensive strategy. NATO can contribute to denying Russia access and influence by expanding long-term defence

capacity building (DCB) in MENA partner countries, by conducting joint exercises and establishing symbolic military presences (small mission elements).

NATO should enhance and ready its capabilities (NATO response force and specialized capabilities) to conduct or support interventions as needed in the MENA area as a deterrent to further Russian power projection. NATO should also strengthen Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2) in the eastern Mediterranean within a new maritime strategy where A2/AD plays a more significant role. NATO ought also to enhance air force and anti-missile capabilities in the area within the context of a new and broader C4ISR structure (a shortfall identified during NATO's Libya campaign).

### **The threat of new state failures and waves of forced migration**

NATO does not have all the answers to the challenges of stabilization and the management of reform and change in the region, but it is part of a solution. NATO needs to work in an even more integrated way with the EU, combining security, diplomatic and development instruments in a comprehensive and flexible approach to meet the region's many challenges. For NATO, the new approach should combine crisis management, pre-emption and prevention.

NATO should further expand the scope of operations in Operation SEA GUARDIAN in the Mediterranean Sea, which since 2016 has been helping to secure NATO's maritime south with a much broader mandate than its predecessor mission, ACTIVE ENDEAVOUR, since 2001. NATO should in particular strengthen its intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capability to identify and target human smuggling networks, drawing upon the many lessons learned during anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. NATO should also deepen the engagement within the co-operation structures with the region – NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Co-operation Initiative. These should be the frameworks for strategic dialogue and co-

operation on security stabilization, migration control, maritime security and counterterrorism.

### **The continued spread of extremism and terrorism from the region**

NATO's priority should be to include counterterrorism capacity building and operational support to counterterrorism operations as a key element in DCB with regional partners. NATO can do this by building on its experiences in capacity building in Iraq from 2004 to 2011 as well as the lessons learned during Operation INHERENT RESOLVE. This would involve expanding the capacity building to a "by, with and through" concept, which would entail a limited force engagement in operations on the ground as well as advanced weapons support for local counterterrorism operations.

### **Constraints**

One constraint is that for NATO to play a stabilizing role, engagements must contribute to reform and development in the region, even if this is gradual and long term. Engagements that are perceived as supportive of entrenched autocracies or even used to continue repressing a population will ultimately backfire. Security support cannot be carried out in a bubble irrespective of other developments in the countries in question without risking further destabilization.

A related constraint is therefore that NATO's engagements must be co-ordinated with a broader framework of support for economic development and gradual reform in the region. NATO should in particular co-ordinate with the EU as the region's main development partner and with NATO allies' bilateral development assistance. A benefit of broader co-operation is that the EU can complement NATO in areas where the latter does not have comparative advantages, such as countering terror financing, countering extremism and financial stabilization of governments.

Another constraint is that NATO will have to establish a completely new political

consensus among allies to significantly strengthen its engagements on the southern flank. The need for additional force elements and financial resources will compete with other engagements, and may not come easily.

The West and NATO can no longer afford a hands-off approach to MENA's chaotic developments. NATO must engage in a comprehensive way and with multifaceted and flexible responses to the heterogeneous challenges it faces in the region and this must be done in co-operation with other partners, not least the EU.

**End Note**

1 C4ISR: Command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (also known as C4ISTAR).

**ROLF HOLMBOE** is a research fellow at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, a former Danish ambassador to Lebanon, Syria and Jordan and a former Danish representative to the Palestinian Authority. He has taught conflict studies as an external lecturer at Copenhagen University and holds a commission in the Danish Army Reserve.

Lead image: **Cpl. Tyler Main**



# Canada and NATO can Nudge Afghanistan Back onto the Right Track

by **LINDSAY RODMAN**

**O**n Aug. 21, President Donald Trump announced an American recommitment to the conflict in Afghanistan. He promised additional troops, no timelines and a strategy that would ultimately lead to clearly defined “victory.” As of the writing of this paper, Secretary of Defense James Mattis has signed additional deployment orders for up to 3,500 U.S. troops, but little else has been disclosed about how the American approach to the 16-year-old conflict, and specifically the NATO-led Operation RESOLUTE SUPPORT, will change.

In his announcement, Trump asked “our NATO allies and global partners to support

our new strategy, with additional troop and funding increases in line with our own.” NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg responded by stating that “NATO remains fully committed to Afghanistan,” highlighting the 12,000 NATO troops currently serving, and the plan for additional commitments from 15 countries. This non-statement from NATO likely appeased the Trump administration for the time being, but it did not signal NATO’s appetite for a reinvigorated effort in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, these announcements provide a much-needed reason to be hopeful about a conflict that is withering from North American consciousness while it seems to be floundering.

Operation RESOLUTE SUPPORT is NATO’s mission. Trump’s announcement about high-level American commitment should be welcomed, though it raises some important follow-up questions. No mission is worth its blood and treasure if its members are not committed to a successful outcome.

Commentators on all sides have noted, rightfully, that there was no substance behind Trump’s announcement, nor was

there any substance behind Stoltenberg's statement. There are many unanswered questions about what this new strategy for Afghanistan might look like. Trump's announcement appeared to be more of a tasking to his leadership rather than a statement of a *fait accompli*, thus opening up an opportunity for NATO to influence the strategy while it is still in its formulation. This is an opportunity that should not be squandered. Canada in particular, as a NATO member state with one of the strongest and most trusted relationships with the United States, is well-poised to lead this effort.

Trump has mentioned many times that he believes questions of national security strategy should be discussed behind closed doors. The administration's silence regarding the details of his new strategy likely derives from both this principle of secrecy and the fact that they do not have much to announce quite yet. Therefore, a country such as Canada – one engaged at all levels with the administration and with the special access afforded members of the Five Eyes community, is best positioned to be in the room, on behalf of NATO, as the strategy solidifies in the next couple of months. Notably, Mattis has embraced a more transparent approach to troop numbers in Afghanistan. That may signal a willingness to share information, publicly or privately.

A number of important issues will arise as the U.S. develops its strategy for Afghanistan. A Canada-led NATO effort in strategy development should pose the following questions to the United States, and require satisfactory answers before full-throated support can take place:

- First, Trump emphasized the importance of defining "victory" in Afghanistan. In essence, he is asking for a well-articulated mission statement. Seeking clarity and forcing a good articulation of U.S. and NATO objectives in the region will be important. Trump will only be able to claim political points and declare victory once these objectives are achieved, which is to everyone's benefit.

- Second, both the United States and NATO must think carefully about how to approach Pakistan. Trump put Pakistan on notice in his speech and signalled that he will be looking instead to India, thus potentially jeopardizing a relationship that is an absolute requirement for success in the region. The United States and NATO must carefully think through what they will ask of Pakistan, and which political levers can be pulled to achieve a good outcome.
- Third, there can be no success in Afghanistan without a political solution, and a sustainable path to Afghan self-sufficiency. Although Trump signalled that he would be "integrat(ing) all instruments of American power – diplomatic, economic and military," public discussion has primarily focused on the military. In mid-September, the U.S. Senate is finally considering a nominee for ambassador to Afghanistan, but other relevant leadership positions in the U.S. government remain unfilled. Any proposed military solution must be coupled with a robust political and economic plan, supported by a sufficiently skilled, resourced and manned bureaucracy in Washington.
- Fourth, NATO partners may seek some clarity and assurances about the use of private contractors in Afghanistan. Erik Prince, the infamous former Blackwater CEO, maintains connections to the White House. His plan to privatize the war was among the final few options that Trump considered for Afghanistan. Many Americans breathed a sigh of relief after Trump's Afghanistan speech, as it did not explicitly include a role for contractors. Nevertheless, the administration maintains ties with many contractors, and NATO would do well to clarify what should and should not be on the table moving forward.

Finally, NATO should offer up a 'deal' to rename and rebrand the mission. Even the name "Operation RESOLUTE SUPPORT" implies lack of ownership and the never-ending commitment that has plagued this

conflict from the outset. Renaming the effort will signal to Trump that NATO believes in the fruits of the strategy development process. It will also give him a political win, which can be exchanged for even more support and buy-in from the United States with respect to Afghanistan and better public management of the relationship with NATO more generally.

As of now, it seems there is little political appetite in Canada for large-scale recommitment to Afghanistan, especially not without a well-articulated way forward. Canada cannot achieve that way forward without taking the first step of asking the tough questions that need answers. Whether the Trudeau administration has enough popular support and political capital to significantly increase the Canadian commitment will be a question for tomorrow. Trump has already stated that the United States will expand its commitment, and through diplomacy alone Canada and NATO have the opportunity today to shape the mission for the better.

The new Trump administration strategy has been maligned as “more of the same” for Afghanistan, and lacking in a real vision of what “winning” could possibly mean in Afghanistan. Those critiques would be fair, if the strategy development process were complete. Now is the time to ensure that the strategy is successful. Many people around the world, including in Canada, are reticent to give Trump a political victory. But this is not about him. It is about NATO’s mission in Afghanistan, and the future of that country and that region. We all owe it to NATO and to Afghanistan to take advantage of the window of opportunity that opened when Trump made his speech on Aug. 21.

**LINDSAY L. RODMAN** is the Council on Foreign Relations International Affairs Fellow (Canada), placed at the University of Ottawa's Centre for International Policy Studies (CIPS). She is a U.S. attorney and an expert in U.S. defence and foreign policy, and recently joined CFR (a U.S.-based think tank) and CIPS after leaving the Obama Administration, where she served in the Pentagon as Senior Advisor for International Humanitarian Policy. Prior to her political appointment, she was an active duty judge advocate in the U.S. Marine Corps, serving in various roles, including as

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# **NATO If Necessary, But Not Necessarily NATO: Critically Evaluating Canada's Membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization**

by **ARIEL SHAPIRO**

**A** perennial debate in Canadian defence since the Cold War has been whether or not Canada is living up to its commitments to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). However, a quarter-century since the end of the Cold

War, NATO's purpose is far from clear. Despite this, many of those involved in Canadian foreign and defence policy – including governments, opposition parties, academics, think tanks, commentators and the public – frequently question the means of Canadian involvement in NATO, but not the ends. Much of the literature, and certainly most of the media coverage, focuses on Canada's failure to meet its two per cent of GDP defence spending target. Indeed, questions of burden sharing within NATO have taken on a new urgency since Donald Trump's election as president. However, rarely does anyone ask if NATO is good for Canada.

The government's recently published 2017 Defence Policy Review, entitled *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, mentions the term "NATO" over 60 times.<sup>1</sup> The document explains that leading or contributing to NATO efforts is a "core mission" of the Canadian Armed Forces.<sup>2</sup> It also claims that "NATO provides significant benefits to Canada's security and its global interests,"<sup>3</sup> especially because of the deterrence it provides (implying against Russia). However, this statement is never proven; it is simply assumed that

membership in NATO is beneficial and important for Canada, and therefore, that Canada should expend significant resources to ensure that it lives up to its NATO commitments. With the exception of J. L. Granatstein's 2013 policy paper,<sup>4</sup> there have been surprisingly few critical appraisals of Canada's role in NATO from a Canadian perspective.

This paper examines these assumptions critically. Without attempting to diminish the importance of Canada's commitment to NATO during the Cold War, this paper will argue that NATO membership has been costlier for Canada than is often realized, both in terms of opportunity cost and real cost; that the benefits of Canadian membership in NATO are overstated; and that continued membership in the alliance poses significant risks for Canada. This essay does not go as far as to advocate withdrawal from the alliance. However, if the trends described below continue, it could be time for Canada to consider stopping "pledging fealty to the increasingly hollow shell of NATO forever."<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, this essay does not attempt to question or criticize NATO's essential historic role during the Cold War, nor does it advocate a grand change in Canada's foreign policy towards the United States, Europe or Russia. Simply, it approaches NATO from the perspective of *realpolitik* with the belief that a military alliance is a foreign policy tool whose purpose is to further Canada's interests – and perhaps it no longer does this.

### **Background: Canada and NATO**

Canada was one of the 11 founding NATO members in 1949. Since then, the alliance has expanded to include 29 member states, all of which are in Europe, except for Canada and the United States (and half of Turkey). The most important element of the North Atlantic Treaty, NATO's constituting document, is Article 5, which states that an attack against one NATO state should be considered an attack against all, and encourages (but does not obligate) other member states to come to its aid, including by use of force. The existence of Article 5 is (in theory) a powerful form of deterrence,

dissuading powerful countries from the temptation of attacking smaller NATO members. Shortly after the formation of NATO, the communist countries of Eastern Europe formed their own collective defence organization, the Warsaw Pact. During the Cold War, NATO benefited the smaller European countries by making it extremely costly for the Soviet Union to invade them, and it benefited the United States by limiting the expansive capacity of its rival, the Soviet Union. After the end of the Cold War and despite the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, NATO's purpose and structure remain mostly the same, albeit with many new members, mostly in Eastern and Southern Europe. The first and only invocation of Article 5 by NATO members happened after the 9/11 attacks on the United States. There is no official "cost" to membership in the NATO alliance per se. However, in 2014, the leaders of the NATO member states (including then-prime minister Stephen Harper) agreed at the Wales Summit that each NATO member should target two per cent of GDP for defence spending, roughly double Canada's current level.<sup>6</sup> Recently, United States Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis urged NATO members to meet their two per cent commitments, or else the United States would be forced to "moderate its commitment" to the alliance.<sup>7</sup>

### **Ending the "Free-Rider" Myth**

Any attempt to argue that Canada should examine its NATO involvement critically must first dispel the myth that Canada has been a NATO free-rider, which implies that NATO has been a great deal for Canada. The pernicious free-rider accusation even found its way into the report of the Senate Standing Committee on National Defence, which employed the term "freeloader" and repeated the claim that Canada ranks 23rd out of 28 NATO member countries in terms of defence spending as a percentage of GDP.<sup>18</sup>

The theoretical underpinning of the accusation that Canada is a NATO free-rider is inspired by the work of the renowned economist Mancur Olson, who developed the "exploitation hypothesis"<sup>9</sup> in the 1960s.

Originally intended as a study of the provision of public goods within democratic societies (classic examples include lighthouses and toll-free bridges, which would be under-produced in the absence of government), exploitation theory was adapted to the study of alliances by Olson and Zeckhauser in 1966, who found that in NATO, there is a positive correlation between a country's overall GDP and the percentage of its GDP it spends on defence.<sup>10</sup> This is due to the powerful incentive for smaller states to free-ride and the negligible reduction in overall defence that occurs when a small state spends a little bit less.

It is commonly assumed that Canada is a free-rider when it comes to defence spending and the NATO alliance. This is the same view adopted by President Donald Trump, who often exhorted NATO allies to pay their fair share while on the campaign trail. The implication of this dominant wisdom for Canada is that NATO has been a good bargain: for the low price of \$19 billion on national defence and the occasional deployment, Canada benefits from the protection of 28 allies and is covered by the American nuclear umbrella. The costs seem to be worth the benefits, and if anything, we are not paying enough.

However, there is another way to study the costs of belonging to the NATO alliance. More recent defence economics suggests that relative to the benefits it receives, Canada has not been a free-rider in the NATO alliance. As Binyam Solomon found in his study of Canadian defence spending in the 1953-2001 period, "the spill-in from NATO is positive and significant, implying Canada is a follower as opposed to a free-rider, a finding consistent with previous results."<sup>11</sup> Leuprecht and Sokolsky conclude similarly that Canada has been an "easy-rider," as opposed to a free-rider.<sup>12</sup> This means that generally, as other NATO allies spend more on defence, Canada spends more too, as

opposed to reducing its expenditure and free-riding.

The continued focus on this two per cent of GDP target frames much of the debate about Canada and NATO, about why Canada has not met this target, and how it can. This debate is based on the assumption that the two per cent metric is a valid one, and that Canada is thus a NATO free-rider. However, measuring burden sharing in the NATO alliance using share of GDP spent on defence is a deeply flawed heuristic; upon closer examination, we see that Canada, despite not meeting this target, is not a NATO free-rider. If the priority is maintaining two per cent of GDP towards defence spending, a country that suffers a recession (i.e., a reduction in GDP) while maintaining constant defence spending will suddenly increase the percentage of GDP it spends on defence, without any change in overall defence levels.<sup>13</sup> In fact, after the United States, the NATO country with the highest defence spending in percentage of GDP is Greece. Canada ranks 15th in this measurement, with the latest NATO figures indicating that Canada spends 1.31 per cent of GDP on defence.<sup>14</sup> Thus, looking at share of GDP alone, Canada would be considered a free-rider and Greece would not; this, despite the fact that Canada spends five times what Greece does on defence annually. Furthermore, focusing only on share of GDP provides no indication on how the money is spent; countries that pay above-average military salaries or pensions but underspend on new equipment, for example, might spend more on the military without gaining any extra defence capacity. The original assumption of Olson's exploitation hypothesis, which predicted that countries like Canada would free-ride, was that defence goods are perfectly substitutable across an alliance (i.e., that an additional dollar of defence spending by Norway protects Canada just as much as an additional dollar of defence spending by Canada). This is no longer true, if it ever was. The manner in which a country spends on defence, i.e., whether it produces goods that benefit the entire alliance or just itself, matters just as much as the amount spent.

The more recent joint product model posits that within an alliance, a member state can allocate its defence expenditure into two different types of goods: defence goods that contribute to the protection of the entire alliance, and defence goods that only benefit that particular member state.<sup>15</sup> Presumably, if each state only produced private defence goods (a common example is search-and-rescue materiel, which does not contribute to the alliance's capacity to deter or defeat an enemy), there would no longer truly be a defensive alliance. Benjamin Zyla offers a compelling list of arguments about why the percentage of GDP metric is flawed and, if numbers such as troop contributions are studied, Canada has not been a NATO free-rider.<sup>16</sup> As Lagassé and Robinson argue, "In short, if one is following a logical defence planning model, determining expenditure in terms of GDP is an exercise in randomness and possible waste."<sup>17</sup> The point is that despite the arbitrariness of the two-per-cent-of-GDP measure, its popularity allows the United States and other countries to consider Canada a free-rider in the alliance, with continued pressure to spend more.

### **NATO and Opportunity Costs**

Even though Canada does not meet its two per cent target, belonging to NATO imposes significant opportunity costs on the country. This means that being a NATO member forces Canada to spend more on defence, and spend differently, than it otherwise would if defence planning were based solely on Canadian priorities.

NATO is not a protection racket; while all members of the alliance are encouraged to increase defence spending, there is no mechanism in the short or medium run for punishing a member that does not spend the agreed-upon amount in the form of reducing the provision of defence to that member. The idea of NATO allowing Luxembourg to be conquered by Russia because of its paltry 0.44 per cent defence-to-GDP ratio is absurd and impossible, because avoiding a Russian military presence in the heart of Western Europe is in all of NATO's interest, not just Luxembourg's. This is why the deterrence NATO provides to its members (excluding

the United States) can be considered a public good: it is non-excludable, in that the alliance cannot exclude a member from the deterrence it provides by charging a price. Also, it is non-rival, in that deterring Russian aggression or nuclear strikes on one does not reduce the deterrence provided to another. Thus, according to economic theory, each smaller NATO country has an incentive to provide the smallest contribution possible, and deterrence will be under-produced.

The implication of the joint product model discussed above on Canada is that membership in NATO places continued pressure on Canada to allocate its defence spending towards defence goods that benefit the alliance at the expense of defence goods that Canada actually needs. One example of this could be the procurement process around the Canadian Leopard I tank replacement. Michael Byers and Stewart Webb explain how after the end of the Cold War, the Chrétien and Martin governments originally intended to phase out the Canadian Leopard I tank and acquire armoured personnel carriers such as the Stryker, which were both cheaper to maintain and more suitable to post-Cold War operations.<sup>18</sup> However, the decision to deploy Canadian soldiers to Kandahar led the Harper government to scrap the Stryker acquisition and opt instead to purchase the far costlier Leopard II tank. This is one example of how participating in the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan led Canada to make a defence acquisition that it likely would not otherwise have made were it not an active NATO member. As the only non-American and non-European NATO member, Canada faces unique defence issues (such as the Arctic) and a lower threat level, and thus suffers the most from this divergence between alliance defence goods and private defence goods. Compared to Norway, Poland or Latvia, for whom defending their borders against the threat of Russian invasion serves their self-defence and alliance interests simultaneously, Canada must procure force-projection capabilities

and deploy troops far from home in order to contribute to the alliance's deterrence capacity.

Essentially, while there may not be an official cost per se in continued Canadian participation in NATO, there is indeed a tremendous opportunity cost. This comes in the form of continued pressure to increase defence budgets beyond the levels that are necessary for the defence of Canada, and within present defence spending, pressure to purchase goods that contribute to the deterrence the alliance provides and the defence of Europe, as opposed to goods that only benefit Canada (but that Canada might actually need), such as icebreakers. Furthermore, if Trump credibly threatens to withdraw the United States from the alliance (not an unthinkable eventuality) unless member states meet the two per cent target, these costs to Canada (both real and opportunity) will increase tremendously. In 2013, the Department of National Defence estimated that 77 per cent of all operational and management costs of the CAF were devoted to "international peace, stability and security" (including NATO), leaving only 23 per cent for the defence of Canada and the defence of North America combined.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, it must be concluded that belonging to NATO leads Canada to spend more on defence and spend differently than it otherwise would.

### **Benefits of Membership**

What benefits does Canada derive from membership in NATO, to justify the costs and opportunity costs explained above? The office of the assistant deputy minister (policy) at the Department of National Defence (DND) argued in 2004 that there are four main reasons for continued Canadian involvement in NATO after the end of the Cold War.<sup>20</sup> The first is the "seat at the table" argument, according to which Canada's membership in NATO grants it "diplomatic access, political influence, and intelligence at a reduced cost compared to that which it would otherwise have to bear." The second is the "United States" argument, which states that maintaining a positive defence relationship with the United States is an

essential priority for Canada, and NATO is a means to do this. The third is the "European argument," which states that as the only non-European and non-American member of NATO, Canada plays a special balancing role in the alliance and contributes to the defence of Europe. Fourth, there is the "collective defence" argument, according to which Canada's presence in NATO makes NATO stronger, which makes the world safer by discouraging numerous other potentially destabilizing regional alliances and deterring conflict. This section will evaluate whether these purported benefits truly make Canada safer and more prosperous.

### *Seat at the Table*

Absent any major threat to Canada's security or vital interests, increasing Canadian international influence has become a foreign policy end in and of itself for both Liberal and Conservative governments. Even during the Cold War in 1989, when the threat to Canada was far greater, Sokolsky still argued that the main benefit from Canada's alliances was "having a seat at the table."<sup>21</sup> There are, however, two ways to criticize this trend. The first is to ask why international influence – a seat at the table – should be considered an end, when in reality, it should be a means of Canadian foreign policy; and second, to ask whether continued membership in NATO produces this international influence for Canada.

Influence over foreign partners, especially NATO allies, ought to be considered a means to an end, not an end in and of itself. An even more extreme version of this "seat at the table" argument is the idea that "national pride and honour" constitute a Canadian interest, necessitating increased military spending and NATO involvement. It was this desire to increase Canada's profile which contributed to the deployment to the deadly Kandahar province in Afghanistan, as opposed to the less dangerous region of Chagcharan.<sup>22</sup> James Eayrs noted in 1965 that "the main and overriding motive for the maintenance of Canadian military establishment since the Second World War has had little to do with our national security as such [ ... ] it has had everything to do with



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underpinning our diplomatic and negotiating position vis-à-vis various international organizations and other countries.”<sup>23</sup> Leuprecht and Sokolsky similarly question this motivation, arguing,

Yet, recognition, influence, and acceptance are means to assuring security and prosperity, not ends in and of themselves. They are inherently chimerical, transitory, difficult to pin down, and turn into real assets. In a world dominated by super and great powers, where small powers can stir up trouble regardless of whether Canada is at the table or not, how does Ottawa know when its expeditionary expenditures of treasure—and sometimes blood—are worth the price?<sup>24</sup>

Faced with limited resources, Canada must consider whether influence is worth the price of admission that NATO entails.

A second critique of this “seat at the table” argument is empirical: over its 68-year membership in NATO, how has Canada truly benefited from this seat? The results are mixed. For example, Lagassé and Robinson note that “the deployment of the Canadian Forces to Kandahar has not prevented controls on the Canada-United States border from being tightened.”<sup>25</sup> Leuprecht and Sokolsky add, “It is virtually impossible to establish an actual causal link between any metrics of meaningful global influence and Canadian military contributions to operations overseas. The best that can be said is that Canadian expeditionary deployments have contributed to the peace and security of that of the West, and, therefore, have benefited Canadians.”<sup>26</sup> It would be difficult to argue that, compared to non-NATO countries such as Australia, New Zealand or Sweden (who have also experienced a postwar era of peace and prosperity), Canada has benefited tremendously from this membership. There is little reason to believe, for example, that being a NATO member gives Canada a unique ability to talk, ally-to-ally, with the president of Turkey and convince him to embrace liberal democracy. The point is that even if a seat at the table is

considered a Canadian interest, there are other ways to obtain this that do not involve NATO. Canada could still participate in peacekeeping missions and join coalitions of the willing, as many non-NATO countries did in Afghanistan and Iraq. Essentially, NATO has not necessarily given Canada this “seat at the table” advantage. Perhaps updating his 1989 “seat at the table” argument, Sokolsky wrote (with Jockel) in 2009: “Even if Canadian influence really could be measured, though, it would be hard to argue that things would have gone differently in the alliance over the past 60 years had Canada not had its seat at the table, seeing that it supported every major allied decision from reliance on nuclear weapons to fighting in Afghanistan.”<sup>27</sup>

An interesting contrast to Canada’s membership in NATO is its involvement in the United Nations and occasional quest for a seat on the Security Council. For example, in her recent major address to the House of Commons outlining Canada’s foreign policy orientation, Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland explained that one of the reasons Canada is seeking a seat on the UN Security Council is to promote the rights of women and girls around the world.<sup>28</sup> This is a clear example of the linking of foreign policy ends with means. However, in the same address, Freeland also proclaimed that “NATO and Article 5 are at the heart of Canada’s national security policy,” but without any similar explanation linking this organization to broader foreign policy goals.

#### *United States*

Another, perhaps more convincing, argument for continued Canadian membership in NATO is to maintain strong relations with the United States. It cannot be denied that a strong relationship with our southern neighbour, including a defence relationship, is a vital Canadian interest. Recalling the devastating effect on the Canadian economy of the border closure after Sept. 11, 2001, Canada must continuously convince the United States that it is a secure and willing partner. However, Trump’s election makes it clear that NATO membership is perhaps neither a necessary

nor sufficient condition for maintaining this bilateral relationship.

For instance, in his analysis of Canada-U.S. relations in the 2003 Iraq War period, Brian Bow finds that the Bush (43) administration was reluctant to use “hard linkages” between coalition participation and border issues.<sup>29</sup> This means that there is little evidence that Canada suffered on border or tariff issues due to its decision not to participate in Operation Iraqi Freedom; the discovery of mad cow disease in Canadian livestock hurt Canada’s economy much more than the Iraq decision. Bow notes the importance of domestic actors within the United States who benefit tremendously from trade with Canada, and who resist linking military issues to border/trade issues. And surely, any residual ill will towards Canada for the Iraq decision became negligible in 2009 when Barack Obama, who himself had opposed the war, was inaugurated as president. Although the Iraq War was not a NATO mission per se, this example demonstrates that a new approach to Canadian membership in NATO is not certain to have negative consequences on Canada-U.S. trade or the defence relationship.

As well, it is important to remember that Canada and the United States have an established defence relationship that is both older and wider than NATO. The Ogdensburg Agreement of 1940, establishing a defence relationship between Canada and the U.S., predates NATO by nine years. Today, the Permanent Joint Board of Defense and the NORAD relationship between Canadian and American air forces ensures the common defence of the North American continent and maritime warning. It is interesting to note the differences between NATO and NORAD. Whereas NATO requires consensus among all members before initiating a common defence action, NORAD establishes a deep co-ordination and integration of air defences between the two member states.<sup>30</sup>

The United States has a wide hub-and-spoke system of defence agreements with

numerous countries that are not in NATO, such as Japan and South Korea; this arrangement could include Canada. After the Cold War, unlike the defence of Norway or Portugal, the defence of Canada against foreign invasion can be considered a core American interest and has been since the Monroe Doctrine and the decline of the British Empire. Canada and the U.S. are also members of the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing arrangement along with the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, which has little to do with NATO and would outlast it. The Canada-U.S. defence relationship is more than NATO, and would continue if either Canada or the United States ended its membership in the multilateral alliance. It is even possible that the Canada-U.S. defence relationship could be strengthened if both countries were able to devote more capabilities towards the defence of North America as opposed to foreign deployments.

On this subject, it is essential to read the writing on the wall: America’s commitment to NATO is no longer certain. While this is underscored by Trump’s election, the causes of this impending change in American defence priorities have deeper roots. Simply looking at the U.S. federal budget, the growth of entitlement spending and the unlikelihood of tax increases indicate that something has to change, and the massive permanent deployment of American personnel to Germany is a likely target. Opposition to military alliances such as NATO is traditionally associated with the far left of American politics, represented by writers such as Noam Chomsky<sup>31</sup> and Howard Zinn.<sup>32</sup> While it is true that a majority of Americans support continued American membership in NATO, it is interesting to note the partisan divide: according to a recent Gallup poll, Republicans, whose opinions are far likelier to shape policy under the current administration and Congress, were 28 per cent less likely to support American membership in NATO than Democrats.<sup>33</sup>

Trump’s rhetoric emphasizing “America First,” his calls for NATO allies to pay their fair share, and continued questions concerning ties between Trump associates

and the Putin regime, demonstrate a presidential world view that is fundamentally different from the one that led successive U.S. administrations to treat the defence of Europe as an American interest. The era of “pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty”<sup>34</sup> is over. While Trump may claim that NATO is “no longer obsolete,”<sup>35</sup> there is no question that America’s commitment to the alliance is not as certain as it was in 2016. Questioning sacred cows such as NATO is what helped win Trump the White House. However, Jeet Heer reminds us that there has been a consistent and powerful anti-NATO trend within the Republican Party since the end of the Second World War, in the tradition of the isolationist Truman opponent Senator Robert Taft.<sup>36</sup> Andrew Bacevich argued in 2013 that the U.S. should leave the defence of Europe to the Europeans and focus on other priorities.<sup>37</sup> Trump has succeeded in shifting the goalposts, forcing future Democratic challengers either to fight an uphill battle to convince Americans of the benefits of globalism, or accept America First as a *fait accompli*. The implication of this change for Canada is that should Canada amend its NATO policy while maintaining and enhancing its pre-existing and essential North American defence links, Trump might be impressed and inspired – not angry – with this return to defence realism.

#### *Europe and Collective Security*

Two final reasons for continued Canadian membership in NATO are the importance of contributing to the defence of Europe, and to collective security generally. As the ADM policy at DND argued in 2004, “Enhancing the effectiveness of NATO will also support Canadian interests by discouraging the formation of smaller security pacts among NATO members.”<sup>38</sup> This commitment to Europe and to collective security predates NATO itself – over 100,000 Canadian soldiers perished in the defence of Europe in two devastating world wars. Recalling that sacrifice, does Canada not have a duty to contribute to

the long-term peace and stability of the old continent – and is NATO not the best way to achieve this?

There are a number of ways to approach this argument critically. First, we can recognize that Canada’s ability to actually contribute to Europe’s defence is quite limited, and changing this would require a massive investment in defence capabilities unthinkable in peacetime. Lagassé and Robinson agree that “it is important to recognize the very circumscribed role that the Canadian military can play in preserving international stability and protecting the global trade flows.”<sup>39</sup> The reality is that NATO’s capacity to deter an aggressor from attacking Europe still depends on the United States. As Elinor Sloan wrote in her analysis of Canada and NATO in Afghanistan, “NATO’s ability to deliver collective security is anchored in American involvement. [...] For Lieutenant-Colonel Hope, who experienced first-hand working within the Alliance at the tactical level, Canada should only take part in NATO out of area combat operations if they are supported by US assets.”<sup>40</sup> The threat of terrorist attacks is more real and deadly to the citizens of Western Europe than a putative Russian invasion; Canada’s deployment to Latvia does not help them.

Second, “Europe” is a vague concept that is by no means synonymous with “democracy.” Both NATO and Europe have changed since the end of the Cold War. During the Cold War, NATO was more than an alliance of convenience. It survived as long as it did because, unlike Richelieu’s 17th century unholy and temporary alliances with Protestant powers, it was anchored in common values as well as common interests. NATO and Western Europe meant democracy and freedom. Milan Kundera wrote in 1983 about the way citizens in central Europe, behind the Iron Curtain, viewed Western Europe: “For them, the word ‘Europe’ does not represent a phenomenon of geography but a spiritual notion synonymous with the word ‘West’.”<sup>41</sup> During the Cold War, the border between East and West, that line “from “Stettin in the Baltic to

Trieste in the Adriatic,<sup>42</sup> was both the part of the world where global hostilities were likely to begin, and a symbol of the side that Canada had picked.

However, this is no longer the case. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO no longer faces an enemy; as Bacevich writes, NATO has succeeded.<sup>43</sup> It is difficult to make a case that Canada's 28 NATO allies are today more worthy of Canadian defence commitments than other countries. Equating NATO with Europe is a faulty heuristic – Sweden, Switzerland, Ireland and Austria are not NATO members, but are certainly European and democratic. East Asia is a likelier powder keg for global conflict than Eastern Europe; if Canada truly wanted to promote collective security in the spirit of NATO, it would form alliances with democratic Japan and South Korea. As well, it can no longer be claimed that NATO stands for democracy. Why must Canada be bound to defend increasingly authoritarian Turkey? Today, the greater threats to democracy in NATO allies such as Poland and Hungary come not from Russian tanks, but from domestic authoritarianism within those countries themselves. NATO binds Canada to undemocratic allies and saps resources that could be used to help defend partners with whom Canada does share values, or to engage in peacekeeping. Canada can continue to be a force for good, defend small nations against aggressors and stand with select allies around the world. The point is that NATO is not the only way to achieve these goals.

### **Risks of Membership**

In addition to the higher costs and lower benefits of NATO to Canada, as discussed above, there is a third category that merits study: the risks. Essentially, continued membership in NATO risks drawing Canada into conflict, and risks threatening core Canadian interests such as Arctic sovereignty.

#### *NATO and the Arctic*

It is well known that global climate change will over time make Arctic waters navigable and Arctic natural resources more

accessible. This will continue to have major consequences for Canada and the world. Canadian governments of all parties over the past half-century have stressed the Arctic's importance to Canada; as prime minister, Harper was particularly inclined to promote Arctic sovereignty. Lagassé and Robinson explain Canada's priorities in the Arctic: "Canada's interest here lies in defending its legitimate claims to the islands of the Arctic archipelago and the surrounding waters, including the North West Passage."<sup>44</sup> However, Canada's Arctic priorities reveal a very awkward situation: the greatest challenge to Canada's Arctic comes not from Russia, but from Canada's NATO allies themselves (i.e., the United States, Norway and Denmark). Furthermore, NATO has contributed to securitizing the Arctic and perpetuating a Cold War narrative that turns an economic and environmental situation, for which legal dispute resolution mechanisms exist, into a potential military conflict. During the Cold War, when the threat of Soviet bombers and missiles flying over the Arctic was real and the Northwest Passage was mostly frozen, the trade-off was less salient: it was certainly within Canada's security interest to allow American submarines free passage in northern waters. Nonetheless, even during this period, significant controversy arose over the passage of American ships into what were claimed to be Canadian waters.<sup>45</sup> As for today, however, German political scientist Haftendorn quotes a former Norwegian general as using the phrase "a renewed attempt at flogging a dead Soviet horse to get a bigger budget"<sup>46</sup> to describe NATO's Arctic mindset.

Membership in NATO makes it extremely difficult for Canada to disaggregate its relationship with Russia. This means that there is pressure from the alliance to prioritize halting Russian expansion into Europe, and thus limiting the possibility of cordial relations between Canada and Russia over Arctic issues which are arguably more important to Canada. In their discussion of the Arctic, Lagassé and Robinson remind us that "Russia has never made any claim to the islands of the

Canadian Arctic, nor has there been any suggestion by the current Russian administration, or even any opposition political party in Russia, that Moscow might wish to do so. Realistic threat assessments should identify some semblance of intent when claiming that a competitor has malicious intent.”<sup>47</sup>

Joël Plouffe and Heather Exner-Pirot are two Canadian analysts who have been very critical of the trend towards the militarization of Arctic issues. They write: “Re-engaging with Russia on Arctic affairs not only makes practical sense, it would strengthen and support Russian moderates working towards greater internationalism. Whatever threat Russia poses to Canada’s Arctic security — and many experts think it’s minimal — engagement is the best option for mitigating it.”<sup>48</sup> Haftendorn has studied the corrosive effect NATO has had on Arctic co-operation. She notes: “It is remarkable that many Nordic countries continue to see their former conflict with Russia as a main motive for NATO membership, and Russia’s military posture as providing a rational [sic] for their defenses.”<sup>49</sup> Canada has clashed diplomatically with its NATO allies when the latter attempted to advocate for the defence of free passage in Arctic waters. International law is based strongly on established state practice, and the awkward “agree to disagree” position that Canada has taken with NATO allies on whether or not the Northwest Passage is Canadian could end up hurting Canadian claims. Essentially, NATO pushes Canada into a conflict mindset with Russia, thus making co-operation on the Arctic (a core Canadian interest) more difficult; and it makes Canada complicit in the passage of American vessels into Canadian waters, often done for security reasons, which weakens Canada’s Arctic claims.

#### *The NATO Ball and Chain*

A final risk of continued NATO membership that Canada must consider is the possibility of being dragged into conflict. While the ADM (Policy) at DND claims that NATO increases global stability by preventing the formation of smaller alliance blocs, this

logic must be re-evaluated in the post-Cold War era. We can turn to the international relations theory of alliances in multipolarity, as explained by Kenneth Waltz (and later, Jack Snyder and Thomas Christensen). One of the biggest dangers of a military alliance is “chain-ganging”<sup>50</sup>: that one ally will recklessly drag the others into war, as was the case between Austria-Hungary and Germany in 1914. It is true that the NATO alliance has a mechanism to stop this: Article 5 can only be invoked by consensus, which prevents the shooting down of a Turkish jet by Russia from immediately turning into global war. However, alliance theory argues that it isn’t about automatic triggers, but survival interests. As Waltz explained, in 1914, “If France marched, Russia had to follow; a German victory over France would be a defeat for Russia.”<sup>51</sup> Similarly, if Russia today conventionally invaded a Baltic state and NATO ally, it is difficult to imagine that the alliance would not respond: not for the first time in its history, Canada would be dragged into a faraway, conventional European war. However, Canada can support countries around the world and advocate for their continued survival and independence without being bound to defend them. Canada’s relationship with Israel is a good example. Canada has supported this precariously situated democratic country since its creation in 1948, has engaged in numerous high-level visits and economic agreements with this state, and has frequently (especially since 2006) taken a stand against condemnation of Israel at the United Nations at significant cost to its own reputation. However, there is no defence agreement: should war erupt again between Israel and its neighbours, Canada would not come to Israel’s aid by sending soldiers. A different example is Canada’s relationship with Kuwait. While there is no long-standing mutual relationship of defence and support between the two, it was in the interest of global security to stop Saddam Hussein’s invasion of that country in 1990/1991. Canada answered the call then, but was not bound to support a future mission against Iraq in 2003.



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Furthermore, John Mearsheimer argues that NATO expansion has actually exacerbated tensions with Russia, and could lead to the conflict it was designed to prevent.<sup>52</sup> Drawing on history, he concludes that the possibility of NATO expansion into Ukraine was what led to the Russian annexation of Crimea: “No Russian leader would tolerate a military alliance that was Moscow’s mortal enemy until recently moving into Ukraine.”<sup>53</sup> By this telling, NATO expansion – and perhaps even its continued existence – amounted to kicking Russia while it was down, perpetuating the Cold War. Andrew Wolff further explains this view: “Throughout the post-Cold War period, notwithstanding the variable intensity of Russia’s criticism of NATO’s enlargement policy, its central argument has remained fairly consistent: that NATO represents an outdated military bloc and its encroachment in the Russian borderlands is a threat to Russian security.”<sup>54</sup> One of the many things that distinguishes Vladimir Putin’s Russia from yesterday’s Soviet Union is the lack of any ideology that lends itself to global domination. If Russian tanks crossed into Latvia tomorrow, this would not mean that Berlin, Paris or Nunavut were next. The only reason a regional skirmish, such as Russia’s incursion into Georgia in 2008, would threaten Canada is if NATO responded massively; it would then be expected and even rational for Russia to strike Canada to prevent its contribution to the war effort.

In 1939, it was undoubtedly in Canada’s vital interest to fight for Europe’s freedom: Nazi Germany had the capacity and the desire to fundamentally remake the world in a way that would have been devastating for Canada’s values, prosperity and survival. During the Cold War, when Soviet tanks violently suppressed popular movements in Budapest and Prague, with missiles in Cuba, with West Berlin under threat and nuclear submarines patrolling the Arctic, the same could have been said about the Soviet Union: it possessed the will and the capability to challenge the world order on which Canada’s survival depended. This is no longer the case in 2017. Russia is a declining regional power with the capacity to

cause trouble, but not to truly threaten world stability (the nuclear weapons do mitigate this, but Canada cannot do anything about them anyway). By maintaining a permanent military alliance, ostensibly against Russia, NATO has expanded Canada’s interests and risks drawing Canada into a conflict. Re-evaluating Canadian membership in NATO does not mean that Canada would need to switch sides and embrace the Putin regime: absolutely not. Canada could still use all of the tools of statecraft at its disposal to oppose the actions of countries such as Russia that would disturb the peace in Europe, whether or not it was a member of NATO. A permanent military alliance in Europe may not necessarily be the best way to achieve Canada’s foreign policy goals, and risks drawing Canada into conflict.

### **Conclusion**

This essay critically examined Canada’s current role in the NATO alliance. Without questioning the essential role NATO played in the Cold War and the importance of Canada’s contribution to the alliance at that time, more than a quarter-century later it is essential to re-evaluate this alliance and Canada’s membership therein in the face of a changing world. This essay began by analyzing the costs of Canada’s continued membership in NATO, to argue that they are higher than often realized. It then studied the benefits of Canadian NATO membership, to argue that they are not as significant as the common wisdom accepts. Finally, this essay noted some risks that NATO brings to Canada, in the form of potentially hurting Canada’s Arctic claims and interests, and dragging Canada into a conflict it does not need.

This article certainly does not advocate Canadian withdrawal from world affairs, nor does it necessarily advocate withdrawal from NATO. The goal of this article is to encourage further discussion among academics and policy-makers as to how best to link ends and means in Canadian foreign and defence policy. Treating our membership in a military alliance as an end with intrinsic worth, a grand symbol of Canadian identity, as opposed to a means to

further Canada's values and interests, is a mistake. If Canada did decide to withdraw from NATO, it could still be an active participant in peacekeeping missions, come to the defence of embattled democracies, and stand stalwart with the United States against the aggression of another major power. However, these would be decisions made from choice, not out of obligation. If academics and policy-makers agree after careful consideration that NATO membership still makes sense for Canada, then so be it – but the question should still be asked, and asked again.

During the Second World War, then-prime minister Mackenzie King famously said, "conscription if necessary, but not necessarily conscription."<sup>55</sup> This sentiment could be applied to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization: NATO if necessary, but not necessarily NATO. There is a threshold beyond which NATO is too costly, too risky and not beneficial enough to justify continued Canadian membership. It is incumbent upon us to continuously ask ourselves whether or not we have reached that threshold.

#### End Notes

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