

Testimony to the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence

Canada's Involvement in NATO

Mark Sedra, PhD
President, Canadian International Council (CIC)

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Let me start by thanking the committee for inviting me to speak to you today. It is an honor to do so.

There is no doubt that NATO is an indispensable pillar of the liberal global order that has been in place since the end of the Second World War, an order that has helped furnish Canada and the West with an unparalleled era of peace and prosperity.

But is it still relevant today? This is a question that has come up time and again since the fall of the Soviet Union. After all the alliance was formed to act as a bulwark against Soviet expansionism and aggression in Europe during the Cold War. NATO's *raison d'être* was gone.

I believe NATO can be as relevant today as it ever was, but with a big caveat. It must remain vigilant in responding and adapting to the rapidly shifting global security environment.

Before I explain in more detail how NATO can position itself as an adaptive organization that will be indispensable for global security for the foreseeable future, let me say a few words about how the alliance has evolved since the end of the Cold War.

The wars in the Balkans in the 1990s presented NATO with its first major post-Cold War era challenge and dispelled any notion of its irrelevance. NATO-led interventions on the doorstep of Western Europe helped to halt civil conflict and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia. These missions would pave the way for NATO's first out of area operations, in Afghanistan from 2003 to the present day and in Libya in 2011.

While the current situations in Afghanistan and Libya are far from stable and the broader international interventions in both countries could scarcely be described as

successful, this should not cloud the important and impactful role that NATO has played in both countries.

When NATO assumed control of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan in August of 2003, the Taliban was just beginning its comeback. The situation in the country has gradually deteriorated ever since, but this is attributable more to the broader failings of the US and Western strategy in the country and the dysfunction of the Afghan government than it is to the actions of NATO. One of the peculiar facets of insurgency warfare on full display in Afghanistan, is that you can win almost every battle against an enemy, and NATO did just that against the Taliban, and still lose the war.

The current chaos in Libya, marked by the emergence of competing national governments and the division of the country into militia-controlled fiefdoms, often colors people's opinions of the NATO air campaign there in 2011. We must not forget, however, that NATO intervened in Libya to halt an impending atrocity as Kaddafi's forces rushed to the city of Benghazi to crush a rebellion and create, as Kaddafi publicly proclaimed, "rivers of blood." Make no mistake, the NATO mission, led by a Canadian general, prevented an impending war crime.

Despite these interventions, the utility of NATO continues to be challenged. President Donald Trump has called it "obsolete", although he would walk back the claim after his first NATO summit. Despite such rhetoric, NATO remains a critical component of the global collective security architecture and vital to Canadian interests. Let me list some reasons why I believe this to be the case:

First, NATO's value extends well beyond the security sphere. It continues to maintain a sense of political unity and common purpose among its diverse 29 members states, many of which have been adversaries in the recent past.

Second, it is one of the cornerstones of the global multi-lateral system that Canada helped to build after WW2, and which amplifies our voice and influence on the world stage.

Third, it can play an important role in bolstering perennially under resourced UN peacekeeping missions, providing the kinetic capacity that today's more dangerous missions increasingly lack.

Fourth, it can serve as a vital tool to facilitate cooperation in the Arctic, an area of critical interest to Canada and other NATO member states.

And finally, it can act as a counterweight and deterrent to a militarily resurgent Russia, particularly after the 2014 intervention in Ukraine.

While NATO continues to be a major strategic asset for Canada and a key to Western collective security, its continued relevance depends on its ability to adapt to

changing geopolitical and security conditions. NATO's recently released *Strategic Foresight Analysis Report for 2017*, rightly emphasizes the fluid and complex security environment that demands, "the transformation of NATO's military capacity, to ensure the Alliance remains relevant and credible, now and in the foreseeable future." An old saying in military circles warns that militaries should be wary of "always preparing to fight the last war." NATO must heed this warning and modernize, innovate and diversify to prepare itself for the coming challenges. Here are four areas where NATO could take action in this regard:

First, NATO must avoid the temptation to be overly Russo-centric in its posture, despite the recent rise in tensions. Rather it must be prepared to confront an array of 21st century security challenges, from cyber war and terrorism, to pandemic disease and climate change. NATO must continue to consolidate its transformation from a cold war military alliance to a multi-dimensional security body. Previous NATO missions to counter piracy in the Horn of Africa, secure the Mediterranean, and support disaster relief in Pakistan and the US in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina show the alliance's capacity to respond to a multiplicity of challenges. It must continue to develop this broad spectrum of capabilities.

Second, NATO should become a global hub and center of excellence for security sector reform, the process to build the capacity of military and public security institutions in fragile, failed and conflict-affected states. NATO has supported military training activities on an ad hoc basis in an array of complex settings from Afghanistan and Iraq to the Balkans and Africa. It should develop more institutionalized and rapidly-deployable security sector reform capacity, which is desperately needed in many unstable countries and regions making difficult transitions.

Third, NATO could assist regional organizations, such as the African Union and the Organization of American States, to develop their capacity for collective security and peace support operations. The alliance has already embarked on this road with the African Union, providing airlift support to its peace support mission in Somalia and expert training to its fledgling African Standby Force. The alliance could expand these capacity development efforts to build a robust and integrated network of regional security organizations, thereby strengthening the global collective security system.

Lastly, in light of the nuclear crisis in North Korea, NATO, over the long-term, should work to reduce nuclear stockpiles and contribute to international nuclear control regimes, working alongside the UN, IAEA and global civil society actors.

Ensuring that a massive alliance like NATO is constantly adapting to changing geopolitical and security conditions requires political will and resources. The resource issue remains the elephant in the room. A consistent and not wholly unwarranted criticism of NATO is that it has become a two-tier alliance, comprising a small number of states contributing their fair share and a larger number of free

riders that are not. Only five of the 29 NATO member states have met the 2% of GDP target for defence expenditures set by the alliance in 2006. Canada is one of the countries well below the 2% threshold. I think there is validity in the Canadian government's argument that despite its failure to meet the spending target, it has consistently punched above its weight in other areas, most notably troop deployments, as the current mission in Latvia (Operation Reassurance) shows. In fact, a case can be made that NATO should develop a new metric that takes into account contributions to ongoing alliance activities.

Nonetheless, for the alliance to survive and thrive in the future, it must be appropriately resourced by all member states. The government's plans to increase defence spending, encapsulated in the Defence Policy Review, is a good sign that Canada could lead other NATO members in making new investments. Indeed, I think Canada is well positioned to drive innovation and modernization across the Alliance.

In this period of geopolitical volatility such leadership is invaluable and may need to come from countries like Canada, with the US and other alliance members increasingly preoccupied with domestic challenges and isolationist pressures.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to your questions.