

NATO's Strategic Concept and Canada's International Defence Cooperation  
Presentation by Paul Meyer to the House Committee on National Defence  
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the invitation to appear before you and speak to the subject of your study. As someone who served on our delegation to NATO during the end of the Cold War, I have a deep appreciation for the capacity of the Alliance to change in the light of new circumstances while maintaining a traditional solidarity amongst its members.

At the same time, it is incumbent on alliance members, including Canada, to regularly review NATO activity and determine if it still offers the best value for money. The *Strategic Concept* set out some broad directions in specifying collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security as the main tasks. While I agree with these, I would like to see greater emphasis placed on the Alliance's consultative role and its potential for conflict prevention.

Collective defence remains the foundation of NATO, but in recent years this no longer entails defending allied territory from attack as it does collaboration in defending alliance interests wherever they are threatened. NATO's unique strength is its integrated civilian-military structures and associated ability to conduct major joint operations. This unrivaled capacity to project and sustain forces and to manage effectively a multi-national mission is what has made NATO the "go to" organization for conducting combat operations on behalf of the UN and other groups. This has been the case in situations from the Balkans to Afghanistan and most recently Libya and the Alliance should expect similar requirements in future.

Canada should do its part in maintaining this collective capability and ensuring that member states contribute appropriately as well. A 'smart defence' approach should entail some pooling of resources and the development of niche capabilities rather than each member trying to have a full-spectrum capacity. That is why Canada's decision to withdraw from the AWACS program sends an unfortunate signal as this was an example of a common NATO program providing a specialized capability that would be prohibitive for most members to acquire on a national basis. The ongoing presence of Canadian Air Force personnel on European soil as part of the integrated air crew for this operation also served a symbolic and political purpose as a visible manifestation of the trans-atlantic security link. Building expeditionary capabilities for the Canadian Forces is one way to contribute to NATO's ability to project force, but so is supporting common programs or assisting with specialized capabilities that may be beyond the reach of other allies.

I mentioned earlier that I believe NATO should spend as much time on conflict prevention as it does in crisis management. This relates to the consultative role of the Alliance, a function that was at the core of Canada's championing of Article II of

the Washington Treaty and the importance of maintaining NATO as a focus for political-military consultations on the security challenges of the day. Canada, alongside other allies like Norway and Turkey have to be especially assertive to sustain this crucial role for the Alliance, when the tendency is for the EU and the US to go off in their separate ways and engage in their own internal consultations. If Canada's wish to see NATO as a political alliance as much as a military one is to be more than just a rhetorical goal, it will require re-energizing the Alliance's consultative mechanisms and devoting HQ and delegation efforts to this end.

When I was serving at NATO the alliance's Political Committee had regular consultations on arms control and disarmament issues and regional security concerns. My impression is that there has been a steady decline in this type of collective assessment and strategizing, which is vital if the Alliance is to stay ahead of the curve and engage in conflict prevention programs and not only in crisis management sessions.

These political consultations are also essential if the Alliance is to be an active contributor to international security through diplomacy and disarmament and not just via the use of force. Despite the *Strategic Concept* and the *Deterrence and Defence* study it mandated, the Alliance still clings to a retrograde and obsolete policy on nuclear weapons. There is an absurd element in its conclusion that as long as nuclear weapons exist NATO will remain a nuclear alliance, as clearly as long as NATO retains such weapons they will continue to exist. While the Alliance claims in the same breath that it is committed to creating the conditions for a nuclear weapons free world, it has done apparently little to identify and realise these conditions. Canada should be making common cause with Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and other like-minded allies to ensure that the Alliance actually has a nuclear policy that is credible and compatible with the NPT obligations of its members. A revitalization of NATO consultations would also address conventional arms control and the need to salvage the currently threatened achievements of the past such as the CFE Treaty and to reinforce others such as the Vienna Document on CSBMs and the Open Skies treaty.

The last mission expressed in the *Strategic Concept* is cooperative security and this task also demands sustained consultation amongst allies and between NATO members and their partners. The dedicated councils with Russia and the Ukraine certainly require attention and a renewed effort to overcome the adversarial attitude that still characterizes their sessions. As part of a forward-looking conflict prevention strategy we should also encourage a creative approach to devising norms for responsible state behavior in cyber security and seek ways to forestall turning cyber space into a new East-West battleground.

Canada has to be prepared to invest in the Alliance if it still wants to benefit from its substantial security dividends. At a time when both DND and DFAIT are experiencing budgetary contractions, it will require creative and well coordinated political-military actions to ensure that we are a NATO policy shaper and not just a policy taker.