House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on National Defence

NDDN • NUMBER 017 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, May 13, 2010

Chair

The Honourable Maxime Bernier

Standing Committee on National Defence

Thursday, May 13, 2010

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC)): Good morning and welcome to the 17th meeting of the Standing Committee on National Defence. Pursuant to standing order 108 (2), we continue our study of the role of Canadian soldiers in international peace operations after 2011.

[*English*]

We have with us Mr. Jack Granatstein.

You have the floor, Mr. Granatstein for five to ten minutes, and after that the members of our committee will be able to engage in discussion with you. Thank you for being with us.

Dr. Jack Granatstein (Senior Research Fellow, Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, gentlemen.

I first wrote on peacekeeping 50 years ago, when I was a fourth-year cadet at the Royal Military College. I did a long undergraduate thesis on the subject. I was then a true believer in the virtues of peacekeeping, but within half a dozen years I had become a skeptic. Fifty years later, I'm afraid I remain a skeptic.

Why is that? The reasons are pretty clear: the political paralysis and continuing administrative inefficiencies of the UN; the overwhelming lack of political will in New York to resolve crises that have led to peacekeeping operations that never end; the Canadian public's belief that peacekeeping is cost-free, when in fact it has resulted in the deaths of more than 120 Canadian servicemen; the Canadian public's belief that all that is required for peacekeeping is a blue beret, a belief that has greatly impacted the Canadian Forces for decades as governments have eagerly seized on this myth to cut the defence budget; and finally, the public attitude that persists that all the Canadian Forces should do is benign blue-beret peacekeeping, rather than robust operations of any kind.

Nonetheless, Canada did do peacekeeping, and the Canadian Forces were very good at it. It was never a major priority of the government and the military, however, no matter what white papers may have said or what Canadians believed. UN and other peace operations never absorbed more than 10% of budgets and personnel.

Moreover, we did peace operations not out of altruism, but because they served western interests, as at Suez in 1956, the Congo in 1960, and Cyprus in 1964. We did them because we had an expeditionary military geared to operating with NATO, a force that had good logistics and communication skills while not many other smaller states did. And we did them because the public liked peacekeeping. It did not divide Canadians the way the world wars or Korea had, for instance.

It's a cliché to say that the world has changed since the end of the Cold War, but like most clichés, it's true. It has changed, and so have peace operations, which are now much more robust and much more difficult. The United Nations record in dealing with peace enforcement is, if anything, worse even than its spotty record in handling the more benign forms of peacekeeping. That is, of course, why the UN has increasingly subcontracted its operations to organizations such as NATO or the Organization for African Unity. Generally, these organizations have fared better. NATO more or less resolved the situation in former Yugoslavia and is trying to do so in Afghanistan. The OAU, its members' militaries much less effective than NATO's, has had no success in Darfur. I see no sign that the UN will be able to mount effective, robust operations at any time. Certainly the operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo offers little reason for optimism.

My pessimism is not meant to suggest that Canada should opt out of all peace operations. There are two things that should determine whether we participate: the country's national interests and the capabilities of the Canadian Forces.

Our national interests are pretty clear. Canada must defend its territory, its people, and its unity. It must work to strengthen the economic welfare of its citizens. And as a liberal democracy, Canada must cooperate with its friends in advancing democracy and freedom. These interests require that we focus first on our own territory, then on North America and the western hemisphere, and then on areas of the world like the Middle East or southwest Asia, where conflicts are likely to expand and threaten us all.

As an aside, the Afghan mission, not a peace operation, is justified, in my view, because the region is so volatile, and there are nuclear weapons in the neighbouring states.

As another example, nearer to us, Haiti cannot be allowed to slip further into chaos. We have national interests at play there. Alongside these national interests, we have humanitarian values that must be considered, as is true in both Afghanistan and Haiti.

But we can do nothing without a capable military. At the beginning of the 1990s, for example, the Canadian Forces was in a state of rust-out, its strength sapped by overuse and a failure to invest in equipment. The budget cuts after 1995 made matters worse, and it has taken Herculean and expensive efforts to rebuild capacity.

We now have a small, very capable army, navy, and air force, but the operative word for all three is small. The CF has been strained to the breaking point by the efforts involved in sustaining a 2,800-person force in Afghanistan. Twenty years ago, Canadians talked optimistically of deploying a brigade overseas. Today we struggle to sustain the commitment of a force half the size.

This is not good enough for a nation of Canada's standing, and if we want to be able to play a role in peace operations or in coalition operations of any kind or in the defence of Canada and North America, we are far from finished the rebuilding of the Canadian Forces. The situation is better than it was in 2005, but until numbers are increased, and ships, aircraft, and armoured vehicles are contracted and acquired, the process of rebuilding will not be complete.

What is clear to me is that it is important that we carefully consider national interests and capabilities in every deployment we wish to make. Not every UN operation is good. Not every non-UN operation is bad. Some people have suggested that only the UN is good and that everything touched by the United States must be bad. This is flatly wrong. The proper test to determine Canadian participation is an assessment of national interest and Canadian Forces capability. Will it serve our interests, broadly speaking, to participate? Can we do the job? Those are the key questions to ask.

In the Congo and Darfur I believe that the answer was and is no, notwithstanding the humanitarian needs. White troops that are dependent on a long logistical chain and troops that require special training and equipment are what we have, and they are not necessarily useful there. Better to make a cash contribution or to offer aid than to deploy the CF on the wrong mission.

We should, however, be willing to offer military assistance to peace operations if there is strong political will at the UN or among our allies. We should be willing if the funds are committed. We should be willing if the host nation or nations agree to accept foreign soldiers on their soil and demonstrably want to resolve the crisis. We should be willing if the exit strategy is clear or if a withdrawal date is stated in advance by the UN or by our Parliament. We should be willing if the Canadian Forces can do the job and if the mission serves Canada's interests. And it must be taken as a given that we should be willing if the troops we deploy will have the right equipment and training and the requisite numbers to achieve the operation's purposes.

Only if these principles are in place should the Government of Canada send its men and women abroad. In other words, let us not any longer rely on platitudes and myths. Let us be honest and modest. We are not a moral superpower. We are not divinely gifted peacekeepers. We are not neutral. We ought never to make virtually automatic commitments to the United Nations or other peace operations. Again, from 1956 to 1967, we did. We need, instead, hard-headed, realistic assessments of our situation and interests, and Parliament should be required to approve all deployments. Public support is essential, and the House of Commons must be involved in such decisions.

If Canada wishes to play a role in future peace operations, some of which will certainly involve combat and casualties, then the government must provide the requisite funding to ensure success. So a peace operation, yes, but only if it is something we can do and something that is right for us.

● (1115)

The task of the Canadian government, any Canadian government, is to properly assess the factors involved and to provide what is needed to make successful operations a certainty.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I will give the floor to Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Professor Granatstein, it's very good to see you. You never disappoint, I must say, in terms of your comments. I appreciated very much what you had to say.

We really have a situation where, on the one hand, Canada may be called upon because of NATO, the EU, or just western powers, in general, to respond to certain issues. The other side of the coin is our support for international law, human rights, humanitarianism, and the sorts of traditional Canadian values in terms of our foreign policy. In your comments you mentioned that maybe it's sort of like the Australian model, suggesting that we maybe need to stay closer to home in this hemisphere.

Could you elaborate? I certainly concur with you that we need to have.... We have the armed forces at a high tempo at the present time, and we don't want to lose that. But at the same time, the national interest is dictated by what we believe is in our best interests in the hemisphere.

I was interested in your comments particularly with regard to Haiti. Could you expand on why you think that is important?

What about this issue of NATO versus some of the more traditional things we talk about—international human rights? How is it that we come down on one side or the other on issues such as that?

● (1120)

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Thank you, sir.

First, you talk about tempo. I don't think we can sustain the present tempo. The army cannot, in my view. We need a period of R and R to stop people from doing five deployments in Afghanistan, which will be the case by the time we get out. We can't sustain that. The tempo is something that must be slowed, whatever happens.

I obviously have a preference for a NATO operation over a UN operation, simply because it will be better led. It will be more efficient. It will probably be more politically attuned to us than the United Nations has been. UN operations, by and large, have been a shambles, and there's not much chance of them improving, given the political realities in New York. If there are two operations on the table, I would take the NATO one rather than the UN one for the practical command, control, and political reasons.

My preference is that we think in terms of the hemisphere first. We are part of the western hemisphere. We are part of North America. The government's current defence policy is called the Canada First defence strategy. It does not seem to me that is misnamed. That should be our policy. What affects us? What is directly in our interest?

Something close is in our interest, in general, more than something on the other side of the world. I qualified that in my comments by saying that some parts of the world are very dangerous and we have a clear national interest in stopping war from exploding. But in general, in North America, the Caribbean, the hemisphere, that's where our interests should lie.

A place like Haiti, which is in chaos, and was in chaos before the earthquake, is a threat to us because of the flood of illegal immigrants it can produce, because of the chaos it can engender, because of the disease and the generalized mess that can spread everywhere. It is not in our interest to permit that; it's not in our interest to see that continue. If we can help, then clearly we should.

Does that require the military, necessarily? Perhaps not. Perhaps it needs a more focused, better-funded CIDA to go in and do a major job of work in a place like Haiti. Those are questions the government has to decide. But I think that location, that crisis, is something of real concern to us.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: So the need for political economic stability in the region is obviously critical.

We hear this term a lot around here called “whole-of-government approach”. Could you comment on that?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: One wishes it would work. We have serious tensions between the Department of National Defence and the Department of Foreign Affairs. We have tensions between both of those places and the PCO and the PMO. We do not seem particularly able to get our act together, and it would be a good thing if we could, obviously. I'm not quite sure how one achieves this, but we have not exactly distinguished ourselves thus far in achieving a whole-of-government approach to Afghanistan, for example.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: The other term that's used, whether or not we can continue that, is the so-called three-D approach.

● (1125)

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Again, I think that's what we should strive for. We do want to have, as much as we can, all of the arms of government working together and cooperating in a mission. That is what we should be striving for. It's very hard to achieve, because we don't necessarily have the people, the money, the abilities at home and abroad to make this work very effectively.

We're not alone in this. Almost no country seems to be able to do it. It's pretty tough to get all arms of a western government to cooperate with each other. But I think it is a goal we should strive for and should continue to strive for. We should be working to force our arms of government to cooperate together.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Bachand, the floor is yours.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Good morning, Mr. Granatstein. First, I would like to ask you a few questions about Afghanistan.

In your statement, you justified our involvement in Afghanistan on the basis of our national interests, that is to say that it is a volatile region and that its neighbours have nuclear weapons.

It is the first time I hear this. Usually, people would say that we went to Afghanistan with a UN mandate to restore peace there had been compromised by the presence of the Talibans and of al-Qaeda.

Do you believe that the fact this region is volatile and its neighbours have nuclear weapons is the definition of our national interests and justifies our involvement in Afghanistan?

[*English*]

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Yes, I do. I think it serves our national interest to try to pacify...to help to pacify that region.

With Iran with nuclear weapons, with Pakistan with nuclear weapons, with the Taliban crossing the Afghan-Pakistan border as freely as they do, this is a very serious concern to us as a member of the world community—to us, who are worried about a region that is critical, that can explode, that can lead to a global war if we're not careful. That has to be a concern to us.

Sure, we're in Afghanistan for other reasons. We went in first because of al-Qaeda. We do have substantial concerns about the human rights of people in Afghanistan. We dislike chaos and terrorism, and we should, and do, try to combat them. But I think we need to see the big picture as well. The big picture is scary people with nuclear weapons. That has to be a concern to us.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Did I hear you say that Iran already has the nuclear bomb?

[*English*]

Dr. Jack Granatstein: If it doesn't happen right now, it will within the next one to two years.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: If I understand correctly, you say that national interests can change. At the beginning of a conflict—as was the case when we went there in 2002—we may say that we went there to restore peace and to fight al-Qaeda and the Talibans.

How do you take account of the possible evolution of our national interests during the conflict? Is your new approach about weapons and about neighbours having nuclear weapons part of our new national interests?

[*English*]

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Sir, I don't think our national interests change. Almost by definition, national interests stay the same for long periods of time.

Canada's national interests are to defend our territory, our people. That's our first and basic national interest. It's true for any nation, anywhere.

The second national interest is that we want to be as well off economically as we can make ourselves. That continues.

The third national interest is that we are a democratic state. We have historically worked with our friends to protect and advance democracy and freedom. That, it seems to me, is what we are doing today in Afghanistan. The tactics may change. The reasons we're doing certain things may change. But in my view, the basic interest is and must remain the defence of freedom and democracy at home and in the world.

● (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Do you believe that Canadian soldiers should stay in Afghanistan after 2011? If not, do you agree with Parliament's decision to end the role of the combat group in 2011?

[*English*]

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I didn't think that Parliament decided we should stop the combat group in 2011; it said we should take it out of Kandahar.

I began my answer to Mr. Wilfert by saying that I thought our troops had been over-extended, in effect, that we had put too much of a strain on the army in sustaining the battle group in Afghanistan. I do believe that. I think a very good case could be made for bringing the battle group home, but I do not think we should get out of Afghanistan completely. It would make very good sense for us to maintain the provincial reconstruction team with a military component. It would make very good sense for us to keep our operational mentors and liaison team in Afghanistan. It would be very good if we provided more trainers for Afghanistan, and I would like to see us keep our helicopters there, which are of great use to our friends and allies. In other words, I think we have spent enough money and enough blood that we deserve to stay in Afghanistan to help finish the job.

We may not be able to do it with an infantry battle group, but I think we should stay in other areas.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Earlier, you talked about subcontracting tasks to NATO and to the African Union. I would like to know what you think of the European Union having taken over from NATO in Bosnia. There are tensions at this time between NATO and the European Union because the EU is developing up its own ESDP—its own European Security and Defence Policy.

How do you view the cohabitation of NATO and the European Union?

[*English*]

Dr. Jack Granatstein: It's an uneasy cohabitation. The EU did not have great success in trying to deal with the former Yugoslavia's crisis. NATO had to go in and do the job.

The idea of trying to duplicate NATO's functions in Europe strikes me as a needless and wasteful effort on the part of the Europeans. It probably can be made to work, but to my mind it's not worth the effort. NATO functions, and it functions well. It is a good thing. It needs fixing in some areas, particularly in the areas that concern us, frankly. I was involved in a study that came out a month ago on what needs to be done to fix NATO. I think there are things that can be done to make it work better, but the idea of duplicating it by creating a European Union security force strikes me as a waste of time and effort.

The Chair: Thank you. Merci.

Mr. Atamanenko, you have the floor.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Thank you very much for taking the time to share your knowledge with us, sir.

With regard to Afghanistan, I'll just ask a couple of questions. In your opinion, what can we learn from our mission there? You've touched upon this already. You mentioned it was in our national interest to pacify Afghanistan. Is that, in your opinion, synonymous with a military victory? If not, then how do we do that?

With regard to NATO being a subcontractor of sorts for the UN, this is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Now it's in Afghanistan, and theoretically it could be in other parts of the world. Do you see that as a role for an organization that was developed to counter the Soviet threat?

In regard to NATO's participation in Afghanistan, one of my criticisms has always been that it's not fair to have a number of countries and only a handful of them doing the brunt of the work and suffering heavy casualties, while the others have other missions. I am wondering what your thoughts are on that. Once we belong to an alliance, should we not all take part and share in all of the work that has to be done?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Let me deal with the NATO question first, if I may.

I don't disagree with anything you've said. I mean, the implicit point you're making is that everybody should contribute, and contribute equally. I agree entirely. If NATO makes a decision to go out of area or to have an operation in the North Atlantic treaty area itself, then it seems to me that when that decision is taken it must be made clear that all the members participate equally. If you can't contribute troops to fight, then you pay more money, then you make a serious contribution in other ways. But there is no shirking. It's either an alliance or it's not. That was one of the absolute main points in that study that I referred to, that the Conference of Defence Associations and the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute released last month. I think it's critical that NATO operations be borne equally by NATO.

● (1135)

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: So in the future, if we undertake a similar operation, would it be then your advice that we lay conditions down and say either we all go into combat or we don't?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Yes, that would be my advice. But I think we have to be clear that it'll bounce back on us because there will be an operation that we may not want to fight in, but we will then be in the position of being dragged along by the rest of NATO. So it cuts two ways.

Yes, our friends and allies have let us down in NATO, but let's be clear: we have not always been the best of NATO allies in the past ourselves.

Should NATO go out of area? Ideally not, but who else can? That's the question. It seems to me that in some cases—Afghanistan is a perfect example—NATO was really the only thing that was willing to do it. Why? Because it served the national interests of the member nations of NATO, including Canada, because that area was too volatile to be allowed to slide further into chaos. So it seems to me that it's a good thing that there is some organization that is willing to do those kinds of dirty jobs. The United Nations couldn't.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Can we pacify Afghanistan without a military victory?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Realistically, probably not. Can we achieve a military victory? Realistically, probably not a complete victory. Can we achieve enough of a victory to force a political settlement? That seems to me to be a possibility, and that seems to me to be what we should be pushing for.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: You mentioned the UN, and you said that it's in a shambles, and really there's no political will to back up missions. Even though this may not be the case, we are still perceived as this peacekeeper by our citizens and others.

Should we not be trying to work harder to make the UN more effective? In your opinion, would it be possible to do? Would this mean a realignment of our equipment requisition if we were to take a different route? Specifically, to have a measure of success, what could we do to advance this at the UN level?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: This country has tried repeatedly for generations now to try to make the UN more effective. We have consistently been good United Nations citizens. We have called for standing UN forces. We have called for rapid reaction forces. We had standby battalions for years that were at the beck and call of the UN, and we actually deployed them on occasion. Cyprus in 1964: we sent our standby battalion when that crisis blew up. But all the efforts that have been made to try to fix the UN have amounted to tinkering at the edges. And the idea that we should restructure our military in the hope and expectation that the UN will become more efficient somewhere down the road frankly doesn't make any sense to me. If the UN becomes more efficient, if world government becomes a reality, then we can restructure our forces. But it really isn't a chicken-and-egg thing. That chicken has to hatch before we do anything to do it.

We need a military force that is able to do UN work, blue-beret work, blue-helmet work, but we also need a military force that is able to do more robust operations, sometimes outside the UN. It seems to me that given the small size of our forces, that means we need a calibre of training and a quality of equipment that we can move from one type of role to another without great difficulty. It's a cliché, but it's one of those true clichés that a force that is only trained for UN duties can't do anything else, and we may want to do other things at other times.

● (1140)

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: You're saying our priority should obviously be the defence of our country.

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Yes.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: If that's the priority, as we look at new procurement options, should we be procuring more naval equipment, for example, and upgrading the surveying of our coastlines and ensuring that we have an effective navy to protect our coastal waters, as opposed to getting more tanks?

The Chair: Go ahead briefly.

Dr. Jack Granatstein: It's not tanks versus ships. It's how best we can defend our own territory. Most of the equipment we need to defend Canada against all contingencies can be used in any number of areas. The kinds of ships that we need to best defend the north are probably ships that can play a role in littoral regions of the world. They should be designed to do that. A small country can't afford to specialize too closely. It really must have flexibility.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now I will give the floor to Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Professor Granatstein, for being here.

I have a number of questions, maybe a little bit all over some topics here. You listed a whole bunch of things we should be willing to get in order to go someplace. Are any of those optional, or are they all mandatory before we go?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Ideally they are all mandatory before we go. Realistically, in some cases the urgency may be such that you cannot have everything in hand before you commit, but I think some things are absolutely critical.

There needs to be the political will of the United Nations. Without that, we are crazy to commit troops to any UN operation.

There needs to be money. We could probably swing that ourselves in a pinch. It's better if money has been committed first.

It's critical, unless we want to invade hostile territory, that we have a host government that is willing to receive us. There has been a lot of talk in the last month about going to the Congo. The President of the Congo is calling for UN troops to leave the Congo. Should we have ever wanted to get into a situation like that? It strikes me as madness, frankly, to even consider that.

We need to have an exit strategy. I don't think we should ever commit to an operation like Cyprus again, where we go in in 1964 and we leave in 1993. The Cyprus operation continues today. There's no political will to fix it, or there hasn't been. I know Joe Clark tried to become Lord Clark of Nicosia, but it didn't work. No fixes have been found for that kind of situation. It seems to me that it doesn't do the United Nations, or the Cypriots, frankly, any good to have an operation that goes on forever and allows them to pretend they're trying to achieve a settlement when they're not.

The key, however, is whether our military has the capabilities to do the job. If it doesn't have the capabilities—and there are some things we may not have the capabilities for—then we should absolutely not commit.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Thank you.

You talked about national interests, and I think you quite rightly said that national interests really don't change, but as we get into a mission that we have been in for seven, eight, nine, or ten years, obviously the mission will change, because frankly the enemy has a vote in that. I would like your view—and you may have stated it already—on the importance of our maintaining flexibility not in terms of national interests, but in how we react to what the enemy is doing as the situation evolves.

Dr. Jack Granatstein: It's absolutely critical, of course.

We went into Afghanistan at the beginning of 2002. We're still there in 2010. We'll be there for another year at a minimum. That mission has changed in many ways. The nature of the enemy's operations has changed. The nature of our equipment, our tactics, and our strategy has changed. The nature of the force that we are part of has changed. Anything that lasts ten years is bound to have that process of change.

But why are we there? I would argue it's still because our national interests are involved. They don't change. The tactics or perhaps the strategy may change, but the national interest I think stays the same. If our national interest is not served by participating in Afghanistan tomorrow, then in my view we should get out.

● (1145)

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Thank you.

You talked about Parliament approving all deployments. There's a role and responsibility for the executive of government. There's a role for Parliament, clearly, in debating, discussing, and being aware and having input, but the actual decision to deploy, I would suggest, is a role of the executive.

Dr. Jack Granatstein: The decision is the role of the executive. But a wise executive will go to Parliament and seek a vote in support of a deployment. I'm not talking about three officers to an observer force. I'm talking about a substantial deployment of a battalion or a battle group to some serious operation.

If you run into difficulties, as we have done in Afghanistan, it certainly helps enormously to be able to say to the Canadian public that Parliament has supported this mission. If you deploy troops and don't seek that kind of approval from the elected representatives of Canadians, then you are open to people asking, “Why are we there? Why are we sustaining these casualties?” It's much better to have support.

I also think we should have fixed withdrawal dates for operations, on the clear understanding.... The reality is that Parliament is supreme. It can change the withdrawal date if it chooses, as of course we did on the Afghan mission. I think that's entirely appropriate.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: You talked about all members of NATO getting into all aspects of operation sharing. Ideally that would be true, but I think the reality is we all have different capabilities, we all have different abilities to project force. We're different from Croatia, obviously different from the U.S. I'd like your comments on the realities of the concept of equal sharing.

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Sure. There's no doubt that's true. Not everyone can provide high-tech communications and not everyone can provide this or that. But all members of NATO can provide infantry. All members of NATO can provide a cash contribution if they cannot contribute. All members of NATO have to buy into the operations if the organization is going to go. It's an organization that works essentially on unanimity. If that is to mean anything, it must mean that you commit to an operation in real terms. If you're going to say you have these six caveats, then you say them at the time the decision is made to deploy. If there are 14 nations that have serious caveats, then it seems to me the organizations should say this is not for us.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: We had quite a large human intelligence capability during the Cold War. After the Cold War that has decreased. What is your view on the importance of that human intelligence capability, and where should we be going from here?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I'm no expert on intelligence, sir. I can't really speak with even the barest kind of authority on that subject.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you very much, Mr. Granatstein.

Now I will give the floor to Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): *Merci beaucoup, monsieur le président.*

Dr. Granatstein, thank you for being here today.

We know that peacekeeping is war by another name, and we should have the ability for our troops to have constabulary work all the way to full combat operations and be equipped to do so.

If the conflicts of the 21st century are primarily internecine and intrastate, and we saw what happened in Rwanda and we said never again, what do we do in places like, to use your example, the Congo, where five million people perished over six years and today 1,100 people are dying every day?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I don't know what we do. It's extremely difficult to handle those situations, and to pretend otherwise is foolish.

The United Nations tries to fix the Congo. It produces forces that seem to be part of the problem as much as they are part of the solution there. They are hardly loved by the host nation, which wants to get rid of them. There have been far too many cases of corruption, rape, abuse of various kinds in the Congo by the UN forces that it does make one despair. These are clearly going to be the most difficult kinds of operations taking place in areas without the proper infrastructure, for the most part, in areas where our troops would stand out because our troops are primarily white, as opposed to the population in which they're operating. It's just exceedingly difficult for a country like ours to operate in those areas.

● (1150)

Hon. Keith Martin: Let me posit something to you and you can give us your expertise on it.

In regard to the standby high readiness brigade, coming out of the Brahimi report, if there was to be a SHIRBRIG that took place with the appropriate troops that were culturally congruent with the place they were being sent to, is that something you would agree to with the Security Council modernization process?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: That would be a very useful step. The difficulty is that we have not really managed to create a SHIRBRIG that is effective. To try to create one that was culturally sensitive for different areas of the world would be even harder. There's no guarantee, of course, that at any point the Security Council would be able to muster support for deployment of such a brigade.

It's hard to make this work. It's hard to have the United Nations work as an effective organization in these areas. Every time, we find ourselves cobbling together a force to meet specific needs, and we go to those countries that are willing—to be blunt—to sell their troops to the United Nations for the fee that the UN pays countries for their troops. Countries such as Bangladesh and others basically earn a large part of their foreign funds by deploying troops. This is not necessarily a recipe for effectiveness.

Hon. Keith Martin: Let me ask another scenario, where we describe some of the challenges that oppose, but where we have a domestic self-interest. In Somalia, where al-Shabaab is arguably protecting al-Qaeda, what could our role be? Would we work with the AU? Are you looking for a more robust NATO to partner with the AU? What would be a solution to deal with this festering situation within Somalia?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I don't know. I think our most effective contribution would not be troops; it would likely be training, it would likely be cash, it would likely be aid.

It is entirely possible that if piracy continues the way it is going from Somalia-based organizations—or "disorganizations", as we might call them—there will be some demand for an end to this. It could conceivably turn into a NATO operation, in which case we might very well be part of that.

Given our past experience in Somalia, given the past UN and U.S. experiences in Somalia, that's something we should be very careful in dealing with. It's complicated by the fact that there is now a very large Somalian diaspora in Canada, which seems to me to be divided in many ways. So anything we do is going to run into support and opposition from Somali Canadians. So it's a complicated issue.

The test for us has to be what serves our national interest best, and can our forces play a useful role? I don't think we want to be a situation where idealism, altruism, is necessarily the driving force for us. It must be a question of whether it serves our interests. Is it something our forces can do?

Let's be a little hard-headed as we approach these problems.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now I will give the floor to Mr. Braid.

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Thank you, Professor Granatstein, for being with us today. It's very helpful testimony and presentation.

Professor Granatstein, in response to a question from Mr. Wilfert you indicated that post-Afghanistan it would be important for the Canadian Forces to have some R and R, as it were. We had a previous witness speak about the importance of a respite. Do you have any thoughts on what an appropriate period of time should be for that respite?

● (1155)

Dr. Jack Granatstein: It should be one or two years, minimum, before any other large deployment. We can handle small deployments, we can handle short deployments, but in terms of any major one-year-plus deployment abroad of more than 1,000 troops, infantry in particular, we should have a two-year gap.

Mr. Peter Braid: Very good.

There have been some references to the importance of having fixed withdrawal dates as well. Could you underscore some of the advantages of having a fixed withdrawal date?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: You know when you're coming home—that's the basic advantage, and that seems pretty clear to me. We can always extend, but having a date at which you're getting out.... I'm not talking about a major war, where of course there is no date. I'm talking about deployments where Canada is a member of a UN operation or a coalition doing a specific job that is not a threat to the overall survival of this nation. Obviously in a major war there is no end date; there is no exit date. But in the kinds of operations we have done and are likely to be doing in the next generation or so, an end date reassures the public and the government that there is a way out of the situation. I think that's important.

Mr. Peter Braid: You've clearly highlighted for us some of your concerns—some of the pitfalls and drawbacks of UN peacekeeping operations. Could you speak to some of the systemic issues at the United Nations that adversely affect the opportunity for the success of a mission? Has there been any improvement over time, through UN reform and review of the UN department of peacekeeping, in some of those systemic issues?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I think the peacekeeping department is better now than it was. General Lewis MacKenzie used to talk about how if you phoned up New York on the weekend, there was nobody there. If you called after six o'clock New York time, nobody answered the phone. That doesn't happen now. Things are better in that respect. There are more people, more organization, and more efficiency at that end of the operation. It's now perhaps at the scale of a third-world military, as opposed to a fifth-world military, as it was 20 years ago. That's an improvement, but it needs a lot more.

The basic problem at the UN is political: the veto; a Security Council that, post-cold war or not, is still divided. The national interests of the Security Council members continue to exist. They're not going to go away.

We can see this, for example, on a question like sanctions against Iran, which may result in an operation being required somewhere down the road. Is there agreement on moving toward sanctions? Well, there's nothing real. Is there a possibility of real agreement? It's not very likely.

I don't know how one overcomes that. It's the failure of the UN to get its act together that leads to coalitions of the willing, that leads to eventualities like the Iraq war in 2003, where in the absence of UN ability to move, the United States felt obliged to act in its definition of national interest.

That is not the most desirable way to proceed, but we should understand at least why it happens. It is because the UN is simply not able to do that. That's the problem we face. How we fix that, I don't know.

Mr. Peter Braid: You mentioned the subcontracting of peacekeeping operations to NATO and the Organization of African Unity. Why has the UN needed to subcontract?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: It's simply because it couldn't do the job itself. It couldn't put together a force able to fight a war, fight a robust enemy, or engage in hard operations. It was simply unable to do that, so it had to go elsewhere to achieve that. Sometimes it has worked, sometimes it hasn't.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I give the floor to Mr. Bachand.

● (1200)

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Granatstein, do you believe that subcontracting tasks will become more frequent? Also, is NATO in danger of becoming the military arm of the United Nations?

[*English*]

Dr. Jack Granatstein: It's a possibility. The experience in Afghanistan, however, has not been so positive that NATO is likely to whoop and cheer if it's asked to engage in some difficult operation in a far-off part of the world. That doesn't mean it won't. It's quite often the case that NATO is the only possible organization to do a difficult job that most nations believe should be done.

Obviously it's preferable for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to operate in area—in its sphere of influence. But it is a good thing that there is an organization like NATO that is, in some circumstances, willing to go out of area to do those jobs that must be done. What seems to be clear, unfortunately, is that the United Nations is not likely to be able to do those jobs on its own, and that will lead to requests for NATO.

All I will say is that NATO should be able to act in a more efficient way than it has so far. I talked earlier about the necessity for NATO countries to buy into an operation before the commitment is made. I think that's critical. That's the one lesson that stands out from Afghanistan. There must be buy-in from the members of NATO to participate. It's not enough to say NATO is going in, and then have 15 members say “Okay, but we're not going to do anything. We won't fight and we won't provide anything.”

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: You seemed to say earlier that the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, which has held many meetings, wanted to participate... Were you thinking of the NATO strategic framework being developed at this time? Yes.

Let us talk about this strategic framework. We know that NATO is in increasing danger of becoming the subcontractor of the United Nations. As you know, there have been long debates about this. I have been a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO for 10 years now. Two things strike me. First, the matter of cost-sharing.

Is that what you meant? In Afghanistan, I had the demonstration that cardinal points are extremely important. I went to Faizabad with German troops and I traveled the whole day long in a beautiful Mercedes jeep. At 8 PM, I was told that we had to go back to camp for security reasons because there were threats. In fact, there were not really any threats in the North.

On the other hand, when I traveled in the South, we did not go back home at 8 PM because we were not traveling in little Mercedes jeeps. We had to travel in LAV IIIs because it was really rough. So, there is no equal sharing as far as funding and casualties are concerned. Canada pays a higher price than the nations operating in the North.

Many people are now talking about compulsory rotations so that casualties be shared among the various countries. I believe that NATO will have big responsibilities and big debates in the future, and that will not be easy either. It may be that the problems we see at NATO are even more acute at the UN. When many nations are involved, some will probably want to shirk their responsibilities and others will have to compensate.

Are you in favour of cost-sharing? Do you believe that in Afghanistan, for example, there should be a compulsory rotation of the forces so that it not be always the same nations in the South and in the North?

[*English*]

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I do agree. I think that's in fact where we have to go. You have to put the money on the table; you have to put your people on the table at the same time; you have to accept the possibility that there will be casualties; and you have to accept the possibility that a few countries cannot always bear the burden.

Again, as I said earlier, Canada has not always been the best of NATO members. We have done our job in Afghanistan. It has been a costly job. We've done it well. We deserve credit for that, but the complaints we have raised about other countries ring a little hollow, given our past record in the alliance. So I think we have done well. I think we can legitimately point our fingers at some of our friends in the alliance, but what we must draw from this is how we can fix the alliance.

The new strategic concept, it seems to me, really must deal with this head-on and face it, and recognize that burden-sharing is real. We can't expect the Americans to do it all; we shouldn't expect Canadians to carry the entire burden for as long as we did in Kandahar. At minimum, it is scandalous that those German troops won't go out after eight o'clock. You could have rapid reaction forces within Afghanistan that could move quickly by helicopter to an area where there is a crisis. To me, that would seem to be a minimum response one could have, where you have different provinces with different nations running them.

Let's be clear: the NATO operation in Afghanistan has not exactly been a huge success in terms of coordinating different training methods, different operational methods. Some of the flaws in the alliance have shown up rather clearly, and one of the obvious fixes, it seems to me, is to create a NATO civil operations branch, a secretariat or directorate, so that we don't make the same kinds of mistakes we made in Afghanistan the next time around.

● (1205)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I will give the floor to Mr. Boughen. You have five minutes.

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Professor, welcome. I just have a couple of questions.

You alluded a number of times in your speech to the size of the Canadian Forces—the army, air force, and navy—and you also chatted a little bit about the capabilities of the forces. Could you share with the group what you think the size of the forces should be, and how you see them doing the job in terms of their capabilities?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: We have a force now of about 65,000 regulars and approximately 30,000 reservists. I think we need a minimum of 10,000 more regular force personnel, and a reserve force of approximately 50,000. In other words, we need a force of about 120,000 all told to be able to do the things we want to do.

The fact our infantry are so short-staffed that they have to pirate companies from one battalion to fill out the ranks of a battalion that's deploying is an indication of the difficulty we have.

This, of course, costs money. This takes time. It takes training. I don't think there's necessarily a shortage of recruits at the moment, but there is, however, a shortage of training spaces—for training trainers primarily—because of the stress of the deployments. That's another advantage of the R and R period that I had suggested was necessary. It allows the training system to catch up.

On capabilities, again I think we need to be a multi-purpose force, given our location, given our image of ourselves and our responsibilities around the world.

The area that I think is in most serious difficulty is the navy. There was a letter by the chief of maritime staff yesterday, I believe, that talked about how the navy was taking maritime coastal defence vessels out of service, laying up some of the frigates, and reducing the capabilities of some of our already obsolete AORs. This is pretty serious.

We've waited far too long for the shipbuilding policy to come out, on which various acquisitions hinge, and we're into a crisis, given the long lead time it takes to acquire ships. I think the navy is critical for us. For a force with about 8,000 personnel, it has done extraordinarily good service around the world. It can't keep that up very much longer, and unless we get under way quickly on acquiring new fighting vessels and new support vessels, we are going to be in very serious difficulty.

● (1210)

Mr. Ray Boughen: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I will give the floor to Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have two areas of questioning.

You established that there's vital interest in the Caribbean and Latin America. Obviously, we have issues dealing with global warming, oil exploration in the Arctic, and some strategic issues with regard to contested space there. In the Pacific Ocean, there's the rise of China, particularly maybe an arms race, and dealing with the navy. When Professor Bland was before us, he argued we should be building a navy-centric rather than an army-centric military in order to respond to these issues. Could you comment?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I have a great deal of regard for Doug Bland, who's a very capable and thoughtful man on these issues. There's a lot to be said for being navy-centric. However, it is much more expensive than being equal among the services, or being army-centric or air-centric. The cost of ships is staggering, and it goes up all the time. If we're going to go that route, and a case can be made for it, we need to be prepared to spend more money than we have been spending thus far.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I appreciate that.

If we did not have an army, navy, or air force, and we were to design one in order to respond to the national interests you've indicated, how would you design it? What would you suggest we really need?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I guess I would suggest that we need an army, navy, and an air force.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: But of what capabilities, what role, in order to respond to these types of issues? You don't need an army, navy, and air force, necessarily to respond. If we believe that some of these are the critical issues.... We could have emphasis in certain areas, in other words.

Dr. Jack Granatstein: We don't need the Canadian Forces to deal with global warming. We don't need the Canadian Forces to deal with most of the threats in the Arctic—some, yes. We will need the Canadian Forces to deal with the threat from China, if it comes to that.

What we need are well-equipped, well-trained, mobile forces that can play a part with our friends in meeting the various threats as they arise—threats to us, where realistically we must rely on the United States for the heavy lifting if there is a direct threat to our territory, because any threat to us is almost by definition a threat to the Americans. The Americans aren't going to seize our territory by force. They may try to exercise influence over us, but I would argue that we achieve the best kind of defence against that by having the capability of actively looking after our own territory.

We count on the Americans for support in a crisis, and that is fine, but we must be prepared to contribute to other parts of the world—UN operations or coalition operations—and that requires a certain kind of capacity.

Again, our first priority should be home defence; the second priority should be North American and hemispheric defence.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Recognizing, obviously, those limited capabilities, but being able to maximize what we do have.

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Yes.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: In response to Mr. Martin, you made a comment that reminds me of your book *Who killed Canadian History?*, about maybe push-back with regard to Canadians of Somali descent. We're all equally guilty around here of killing Canadian history, it seems. We pander—and I think the word is "pander"—to those who come from abroad to this country. We don't say leave your baggage at home. We're now apologizing for events that occurred 100 years ago, 200 years ago, 300 years ago.

How do we say what is in our national interest when many people who come here say that's not in our interest, it's in somebody else's interest? How do we establish that, in order to have the military forces being able to execute what we see as our national interest?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Your colleague Mr. Dosanjh has spoken very well and effectively on that subject in the last couple of weeks. I thought he made points that every Canadian should ponder and consider very closely.

The test for us must be Canada's national interest. It's not the national interest of the old country where their people came from. That can't work. It has to be our national interest, as Canadians. If you choose to come here, you buy into this country. You must do that. A government that permits people to assume that this country will always follow the old country's efforts to achieve whatever goals it's trying to—and all our governments have for the last 50-plus years—is deluding itself.

We are Canadians. Our national interests are the only tests that matter for our governments.

● (1215)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: We should all read the book too.

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Buy several copies. Give them to all your friends.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: You're in the second edition, so yes, I think we could do that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Payne, you have the floor.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Professor, I understand you are absolutely a wealth of knowledge here. One of the things you talked about, of course, is our national interest and in fact when we should be going into missions. In particular, you talked about the executive and Parliament but also about how important it is to convince the Canadian people on a mission. You did also talk about our fixation, if I might put it that way, with peacekeeping. I know that there are situations and that Afghanistan is in our national interest, but in that case we are actually working on peacemaking. So my first question to you is what could we do to convince Canadians that this is in our national interest?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I was very impressed when the present Prime Minister came into power in early 2006 and went to Afghanistan, as really his first trip abroad, and spoke very strongly about why Canada was there, why it was in our national interest to be there. That was a speech by a Canadian political leader that I had been waiting for for a long time.

Unfortunately, the issue began to be rather divisive in Canada as the war went on, and there was a substantial lack of that kind of speech from the Prime Minister and from government ministers as the war went on. Public support went down. There was a lack of explanation from our politicians as to why we were there.

I have always believed that if the Prime Minister had made that 2006 speech again, in 2007 and 2008 and 2009 and 2010, then the public support would have held up for that commitment in Afghanistan.

It requires leadership. We need our politicians to tell the truth to the Canadian people about why we do the things we do. Sometimes truth is hard. Sometimes it's probably enough simply to say that we must do our share of the dirty jobs, but you need to explain to Canadians. I think there's a well of idealism in the Canadian people. They want to believe that we do good in the world, but sometimes doing good is difficult and it requires real explanations from our political leaders.

I think it's absolutely critical, and I can understand the minority government situation and all the difficulties involved, but it's absolutely critical that we have leaders who will speak the truth to the people. That's a requirement of the job, it seems to me.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you for that, Professor.

The other thing you talked a little bit about was the Congo, and there are some suggestions that potentially Canada should go to the Congo. Certainly you indicated the president suggested that the UN get out of the Congo. The other thing you touched on was infrastructure. Could you expound upon the difficulties, particularly around infrastructure, if Canada were to send troops to the Congo?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: We're a western nation. We have forces that require a long logistical chain in order to operate. We are road-bound to some basic extent. The Congo, the region of the Congo where we would have deployed, the eastern Congo, is an area where it can take eight hours to travel 25 kilometres, where there is no civil infrastructure on which we can piggyback. There was none in Afghanistan, for example, but the Americans built a couple of huge operating bases we were able to piggyback on. There is none of that in the Congo. So we would go in crippled right from the start because of our inability to guarantee our supplies, our inability to get people in or get people out in a hurry. That's a serious problem that I think should shape any decision to deploy in an area like that, anywhere in the world.

We need the capacity to be able to operate the way our forces operate. They're adaptable. They're flexible. They can do many things. But they do need secure supply lines. They do need the ability to be reinforced and to be extricated should the need arise.

● (1220)

The Chair: Thank you, Professor.

Ms. Gallant, for five minutes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm going to ask questions based on the national interest.

We've been focused lately on the Middle East. Of course there's the looming threat in Iran and asymmetric warfare to a great extent, but relatively recently we've observed some expansionist tendencies on the part of Russia. For example, the homes of Georgians in South Ossetia were shelled for a number of days, and Georgia did retaliate. It seems that the Olympics were used as a distraction. The international observers were away at the Olympics. At the end of the day, Russia has 20% more of the South Ossetian territory under its control and 30,000 Georgians from that region were exiled.

Do you see whether there is an expansionist tendency arising from that corner? Do we still need to prepare for more conventional deployments, as we had previously? In terms of national interest, would it be of national interest to play a role in the security of patrolling buffer zones, for example, in those former eastern European countries, especially those that are prospective NATO countries and have been contributing to the NATO mission in Afghanistan?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Good hard questions, and no easy answers.

When the Russians celebrated the 60th anniversary of the end of the war, they had, for the first time ever to my knowledge, British, American, French, and other troops parading on Red Square. There is some hope that Russia may turn in what we would think of as positive directions. There is some hope that Russia will not play its old power games.

It seems to me essential that we do what we can to encourage those tendencies. The idea that we would send NATO troops, or Canadian troops as part of NATO, to patrol borders of Russia and its former component states would be a red flag, to make a bad pun, to wave in front of the Russians. They would naturally see that as outrageous. Obviously we don't want them to fight a war in Georgia. We don't want them to swallow the South Ossetians. Georgia should be able to have independence, if that is the choice of its people. It probably would help a bit if the Americans didn't meddle quite as much as they have in Georgia, but it's a dicey situation.

The Russians were a superpower. They believe, in many respects, that they still are a superpower. They above all do not want to be humiliated, and it seems to me that we must be careful not to do that. That means, in my view, that we should be very cautious about absorbing some of the key areas that concern the Russians into NATO—Ukraine, for example. On many levels it makes sense for Ukraine to be a part of NATO, except for the fact that it is a large and crucial part of the former Soviet empire, and that complicates matters.

The ideal, I suppose, and we may get to this at some point, is that you have Russia as a member of NATO. You have, in effect, a European North Atlantic alliance that encompasses the entire continent. That would resolve that problem, and that is not such a fanciful dream to contemplate. I think that should be the goal to which we strive. That would resolve most of the conflicts in that area of the world, if we could achieve that.

As to the kinds of capabilities, should we prepare for more conventional deployments? In my view, yes. I don't for a minute believe that in the next 20 years we will not see conflicts of a kind that require a Canadian expeditionary force to be deployed abroad. I think that's entirely possible. I don't know where, but I think it's entirely possible that will arise.

● (1225)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll very quickly have a third round.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dosanjh, you have two minutes.

[*English*]

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): I just have a couple of questions.

On the issue of the national interest, if Canadians believe that we're doing good, in terms of their understanding of what good means, then Canadians will support these kinds of excursions. There might be a situation when we have a national interest in pursuing a particular matter abroad, yet Canadians don't believe that we would be doing the kind of good that they agree we should be doing. That would be a problem.

My sense is that in Afghanistan we have not been able to convey a national interest. They believe that we're trying to do good, but that has not been brought together with the idea of the national interest.

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I think that's right.

I mentioned the Prime Minister's speech in March 2006, I think it was, in Afghanistan, which explicitly put our participation in national interest terms. And I believe, as I said before, that had that message been repeated, support for the war would have been greater than it has since become. We're facing the difficulty of what happens when public support declines while Canadians are fighting abroad. We're in Afghanistan. There's great support for the troops, in ways I would not have thought possible 20 years ago, but there is decreasing support for the mission. And that is what's driving us to pull out.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: I have one very short question.

We see that across the border in the U.S. there is more of a consensus on foreign policy. They rarely argue over major foreign policy questions in terms of the Republicans and.... At least, I see that there is more consensus.

The Chair: What is your question?

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: In Canada, do you think that kind of consensus would be healthy or unhealthy?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I'm not convinced that there's consensus in the United States. Do you think the Iraq war has consensus? Does the Afghan war have consensus? Surely not. I wish we had consensus. I think it is a great and good thing when domestic politics ends at the waterline and that when you go abroad, you have a consensus on what the state should be doing. It exists, perhaps, more so in the U.S. than it does here. But then, we have less influence. We have less power.

The Chair: Mr. Dosanjh, I understand that you wanted to share your time with Mr. Wilfert.

You have ten seconds, Mr. Wilfert. Do you want to add something?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I just want to ask a quick question to Mr. Granatstein.

You commented that National Defence headquarters needs to be reformed because of the politicization and civilianization of the military. Can you expand on what you meant by that?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I certainly didn't say that today.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: No, you didn't say it today, but you've said it in your writing.

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I don't think there's politicization of the military.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I'm sorry, I meant National Defence headquarters.

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I don't think there's politicization of defence headquarters.

● (1230)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Okay. That's good.

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I think the military has been pretty much a non-partisan force that serves the government of the day. I think we have bureaucratized.... I think we have too much bureaucracy.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I didn't see that word in your book. I only saw those other two. But okay. We'll follow up.

The Chair: I appreciate that.

[*Translation*]

Thank you.

Mr. Bachand, two minutes.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Granatstein, I would like to know if it is in the national interest of Canada to be re-involved in peace operations?

[*English*]

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Sometimes. Sometimes it is in our interest. It depends on where the peace operation is. It depends on what our forces can do.

What I don't want us to do is say that we will always support peace operations and that we will always support the United Nations, no matter what it does. I want us to be able to say that this is a good operation and that one isn't, so we'll do this one.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: As you said, philosophically and politically, the Canadian nation and the Quebec nation have a better perception of peacemaking. As politicians, we try to satisfy our electors. If someone told Canadians that it is in the national interest of Canada to end combat operations, such as those in Afghanistan, and that the foreign policy of Canada in the future will be to take part in peace operations, I believe that people would agree.

[*English*]

Dr. Jack Granatstein: It might be public opinion, but it might not be in the national interest. That's the key.

Canadians I think would benefit, and Quebeckers would benefit, from some reality checks. We need to tell Canadians that the United Nations doesn't always work very well and that the peacekeeping operations that have been undertaken abroad have not all been successes. Most of them haven't been successes.

We need to persuade Canadians that at no time have the Canadian Forces ever devoted more than about 10%, at most, of their personnel or money to peace operations. That cannot be the major or only role of the Canadian Forces. It's a real mistake to go that way. It would serve none of the interests of Canada, and frankly, it would serve none of the interests of Quebec.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Atamanenko, you have two minutes.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Merci.

This term “national interest” can be confusing, Professor. Obviously, if we are under attack, if all of a sudden American tanks roll across the border, it is in our national interest to defend ourselves.

Dr. Jack Granatstein: In that case, we surrender.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: I know many Canadians, people I have talked to, who have asked what our national interest is in Afghanistan. Do we expect the Taliban to hop on a plane and come over here and do damage? It doesn't make any sense, somehow, to many people.

Other writers and researchers have written that, in effect, our national interest is a geopolitical interest. In other words, there is a play going on in this region between the west on the one hand and China and India on the other. When you speak of national interest, do you mean that geopolitically it's in our best interest, as a western nation, to have a foothold there to ensure a supply of oil, to ensure our future energy interests?

● (1235)

Dr. Jack Granatstein: No, I don't.

You used an interesting analogy when you talked about the Taliban hopping on a plane and coming over here. It wasn't the Taliban that did that; it was al-Qaeda. They did that because they launched their planning under the protection of the Taliban. In other words, what goes on in obscure parts of the world, on the other side of it, can have a major impact on us. The hardening of our border with the United States is a direct result of actions that began in Afghanistan. That seems to me to be a clear enough indication that our national interests can be involved outside of this nation.

Yes, I'm sure that some people think in terms of oil and oil security. We're one nation that really doesn't have to, because we have sufficient resources here to take care of our needs for the foreseeable future. Maybe it's not in ways that appeal to every environmentalist, but we do have energy resources. Other countries may not.

Our national interest is basically peace, security, freedom, and democracy. Those are the things we want to see as far-flung as they possibly can be. If that requires us on occasion to commit our troops to odd parts of the world, well, that's part of the price of living in our globalized environment.

The national interest really is as I stated. There are basic, key things that every country must think about. There is the security of its people and its territory: al-Qaeda threatened our security and our territory. There is the economic well-being of Canadians: the hardening of the border is a direct result of that. That has had a major impact on us.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I will give the floor now to Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Professor Granatstein, if we withdraw from Afghanistan as per current plans, what will be our legacy? Will part of it be that we saved Kandahar province while waiting for the cavalry, the U.S., to arrive?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I think we can genuinely claim that. I think the 2006 efforts of the Canadian battle group Task Force Orion, in particular, were extraordinary, and I think we may legitimately claim to have saved Kandahar province that year, when the Taliban thought it could topple it very easily. I think the military legacy will be a substantial one. In my view, the legacy will be weakened if we pull out completely.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Thank you.

Do you see Kandahar or Kabul as the key to the country for the Taliban?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Kandahar is the homeland of the Taliban in a very real sense. Kabul is the national capital, the site of the government. They're both critical.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I don't want this to sound partisan. It's not intended to be, and I don't think you'll take it that way.

Mr. Wilfert raised the point about the U.S. Democrats and Republicans agreeing on big issues of national interest.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: That wasn't me, but Mr. Dosanjh.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Oh, I'm sorry.

I would suggest that historically in Canada, on the big issues of national unity and international affairs—the big-ticket items of international affairs, such as the world wars, and so on—that the two major parties in Canada have been pretty much on the same page. Regrettably, in my personal view, I have seen a deterioration of that.

What would be your comment on that?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I think that historically there has been a rough alignment between the parties, Liberal and Conservative. I think you're right that it has fragmented to some extent in the last 25 years. It may be that it's particularly difficult in a minority government situation to maintain that kind of coordination.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I'm not suggesting there's blame on either side; I'm suggesting there's plenty to go around.

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I think that's true.

The Chair: Okay, thank you very much.

I want to thank all the members, and thank you to our witness, Mr. Granatstein. Thank you very much for your presentation today.

We will suspend our work for five minutes and come back for an in camera meeting.

Thank you.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Additional copies may be obtained from: Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5
Telephone: 613-941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943
Fax: 613-954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: http://www.parl.gc.ca

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires en écrivant à : Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5
Téléphone : 613-941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943
Télécopieur : 613-954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : http://www.parl.gc.ca