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Chair

Mr. James Bezan

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● (1105)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC)): Good morning, everyone.

First I want to go over our agenda for today. Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), we need to elect a new vice-chair, since Mr. Christopherson has moved on to bigger and better things, I understand. Then we have our witness.

Mr. Alexander, you have the floor.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Ajax—Pickering, CPC): Mr. Chairman, with great pleasure, I would like to move that Mr. Jack Harris be appointed vice-chair of this committee.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): I want to record a dissent.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: First of all, I have to actually turn the election over to our clerk.

M. Lafleur, s'il vous plaît.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Jean-François Lafleur): Thank you.

Good morning, everyone.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), we will proceed to the election of a vice-chair. I'm ready to receive any motions for nomination to the position of vice-chair.

Mr. Chris Alexander: So moved.

The Clerk: Mr. Alexander moves that Mr. Jack Harris be elected as first vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

Hon. John McKay: I want to hear his platform.

The Clerk: Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: Mr. Harris is duly elected as the first vice-chair of the committee.

The Chair: Congratulations, Jack.

We'll now continue with our study of NATO's strategic concept and Canada's role in international defence cooperation.

It is indeed a great pleasure to be joined by James Appathurai, the Deputy Assistant Secretary General of NATO, the second highest ranking civilian in NATO. He's with the political affairs and security policy section and is special representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia, and he's a Canadian.

Welcome back. I know it's always good to come home.

I'll turn it over to you for opening comments, and we will ask our questions after that.

Mr. James Appathurai (Deputy Assistant Secretary General, Political Affairs and Security Policy, Special Representative for Caucasus and Central Asia, North Atlantic Treaty Organization): Thank you very much. Thank you for the invitation. It's a great pleasure to be here, and, as you say, it's a great pleasure to be home. I've already had Timbits, and I've watched all the highlights from last night's playoffs, which I don't normally get to see, so I'm in a very good mood this morning—but also because I have the opportunity to speak to you.

In the introductions that Chris generously made for me to all of you, I came to understand that you're all experts in foreign and defence issues, so I'll try to keep this at a high level, and I'll be happy to take any questions you may have.

It's a good moment to be examining this question, I think, because we've had about a year and a bit to implement the strategic concept, but also because the Chicago Summit is to take place in only a few weeks, where we're going to take it forward again.

[*Translation*]

In my view, the strategic concept has three primary functions. The first is to reassert the pillars, NATO's core tasks since 1949. The second is to update the alliance's strategic concept because NATO has changed significantly since the previous concept was developed, particularly after the cold war. The third function is to build the way forward. My comments will focus mostly on these three functions, and then I would be happy to answer any questions.

The first function consists in reconfirming NATO's pillars. I will speak about three of them. First is collective defence. Of course, NATO has always had and continues to have the capability to militarily dominate any potential attacker. And it must retain that capability. The strategic concept gives NATO countries the mandate to preserve the capability needed to assert that role in the future.

Second is transatlantic solidarity. The strategic concept recognizes that despite democratic and economic changes throughout the world, NATO's 28 member countries remain a community of nations with common values—democracy, individual freedom and freedom of the press. It is also important to understand that there is more economic trade between the members of this community. This provides us with a structure for political consultation on all security matters, and we use it every day. When push comes to shove, as they say, these are the nations we can count on as allies. For all these reasons, the strategic concept strengthens transatlantic solidarity.

Finally, it also reaffirms NATO's role as far as deterrence is concerned, and that includes nuclear deterrence. That is a current topic of discussion. NATO country officials will head to Chicago, including our Prime Minister, to approve a document entitled "Defence and Deterrence Posture Review", which sets out the appropriate balance between conventional forces, missile defence and nuclear power for the 21st century.

For the first time, the strategic concept states that NATO will endeavour to create the conditions necessary for a world free of nuclear weapons. That was the vision described by President Obama in the speech he gave in Prague. However, until those conditions are established, NATO must retain its nuclear capability. That sums up the first pillar.

● (1110)

[*English*]

The second role was to get NATO up to date to what it actually does now, the new roles that NATO had taken on.

First, you'll see that the second core task in NATO is crisis management.

NATO is uniquely capable as an organization to generate, deploy, command, and sustain large numbers of forces in multinational operations. No other organization can do this anymore. And I'm not saying this, I hope, to blow NATO's horn. I used to be the spokesman; I'm not anymore, so it's not my job to blow NATO's horn anymore. This is a simply a statement of fact.

When the United States was no longer in a position to command the Libya operation when it was a coalition of the willing, which included, of course, an important role for Canada, but also the United Kingdom and France and a host of other nations, there was nowhere else to go because no other organization or country can command even that kind of mid-sized operation. So there is only one game in town for large multinational operations.

Today NATO has over 150,000 troops in the field, in a variety of operations. I know you know what those are, because Jill Sinclair was here last week. But I think it's worth noting that NATO also has the political structure to go with it. It's not just a technical tool; there is a political council that directs the operation, and it's very important that military and political operations go together.

What does that mean? It means that we have to, according to the strategic concept, do more to enhance this capability as a crisis manager. That means training, different kinds of exercises. It means developing the capabilities necessary for deployment. All of these things will be addressed at the Chicago Summit. I'll come back to those, and I'm quite sure General Abrial will come back to those as well in a couple of days.

It means—and this is also in the document—enhanced coordination with civilian actors. What we've learned over the last 10 years is that military operations have changed. It used to be basically that the conflict would start, we'd hand the ball to the military, they would accomplish their goal, then hand the ball back to the civilians, and it was to the civilians, maybe with some backup, to create stability.

What we've seen in Afghanistan, and also all over the world, is that now we have to be able to do all these things at the same time. We can't achieve mission success without the civilian actors. They can't achieve their mission success without us. That means NGOs, it means the UN, it means the EU. So we are now deepening our structural engagement with all these parties, from pre-conflict situations to the crisis itself, to close conflict management, so that we do it all organically; we call it the comprehensive approach. Other organizations call it different things, but that's basically what it is.

The second part of updating what NATO does is partnership. In essence, during the Cold War, NATO was like an island. We took care of our own defence; we didn't go anywhere. Now we have, as you know, 28 NATO countries in Afghanistan, but 22 other countries are there with us, and there's close cooperation with the UN and the EU. Chris played that role for the UN when he was there. We have a network of partnerships with countries around the world that, to my mind, certainly surpasses anything I would have expected. I think it surpasses what any other organization has by far—beyond the UN, of course—in that we have 40 partners out of non-NATO countries. With them, with one or two exceptions, with about 36 to 37 of them, we have formal agreements for political consultation and practical cooperation. We renew them on an annual basis. And we have a tool box of almost 1,000 activities that we do with them on an annual basis, prioritized to what they need in terms of reform or interoperability or language training. It is a very sophisticated network that doesn't always get the limelight it needs.

Secondly, and this is in the document, we took a decision, based on Afghanistan, that partners that contribute to our operations get a structural role in how they run—developing the plan, taking the decisions on it. So the day the Qataris decided they were going to send support to the Libya operation, they were at the table, in alphabetical order. I think they were amazed—I had spoken to them afterwards—to see how we argue, people storm out of the room, we don't know what we're going to do. They really got an inside view of how policy is developed—to their surprise—in NATO. But I think it was also a very positive experience for them. But they get to shape the plan, they get to help shape the decisions that allies take on how they go. That's very important for countries that are sending troops.

● (1115)

We have a new commitment to consult with partners on a regular basis to try to prevent crises. We use flexible formats. In other words, we had a meeting on piracy, on how to counter piracy. So we thought, okay, let's pick the countries that contribute the most, bring them together, and we'll have a discussion together on how to handle it. We did the same for cyber.

Because time is short, I'll just mention quickly specific partnerships, which might interest you to discuss further. One, of course, is with Russia. You might find that a topic of interest to discuss. Secondly, we're working to deepen our relations with the countries of the Middle East and North Africa as many of them go through this period of transition. We're engaging with the African Union, the Arab League. All of this flows from the strategic concepts decision to push partnership. And let me mention, of course, that the commitment to enlarging NATO has not diminished, even if Chicago will not be an enlargement summit.

One issue that concerns the secretary general, but also me in my particular portfolio, as we're looking forward is how do we retain this *acquis* of deep partnership, which has in many ways been driven by Afghanistan, both operationally and politically, once we get past 2014? Once that driver of Afghanistan goes away, how do we ensure that we still talk to them, work together with them, can work with them, so that these things don't drift away? So that's a big part of our work now.

That's a nice bridge to the third element, which is the future. What's in the document that looks at the future?

First, it identifies new threats and challenges. One of those is missile proliferation. At the Chicago Summit, we will turn the key on the first phase of NATO missile defence for Europe. It will have four phases, so by 2020 it will be fully operational, covering all European territory and population. And the motivation for that is that more than 30 countries have ballistic missiles, or are developing them or are enhancing them. So we want to make sure we can deal with this new threat and it is being dealt with.

The second one is cyber, and the role for NATO here is one that we're just working out. The strategic concept says that NATO should get engaged in this where it reaches a “threshold that threatens national [...] security” and that surpasses the ability of the country under attack to deal with it on its own. I think it's the right definition, because by definition it can be those things, but it can also not be reaching those thresholds and countries will want to deal with it on their own.

We just approved the new policy on cyber. How we engage with non-NATO countries is a very open issue. The question to which we can expose our systems to non-NATO countries, even the most trusted ones, is something that's very much an open discussion in the alliance.

The second part of that is capabilities, and I know you discussed that extensively with Jill last week. It's important to remember as we go through cuts—Canada and all the other countries in NATO now are looking at that—that NATO has and will remain a group of countries that represent 50% of the defence spending in the world. We have the most capable, best-equipped, best-trained—because of Afghanistan, I won't say thanks to Afghanistan—and by far the most experienced interoperable troops in the world, and not just with each other but with non-NATO countries as well. Our forces really are unmatchable, so we should approach this discussion, I think, with some confidence.

But it is also true that €45 billion have been taken out of European defence budgets in the last two years. The U.S. has just announced $450 billion plus. That number could go up. So we have to make sure that in 2020 we still have what we need.

There are, in essence, two initiatives that you will see launched at the Chicago Summit: one is called smart defence and one is called the connected forces initiative.

Smart defence is making sure you have what you need, prioritizing on your top ten capabilities so that you don't buy everything; buying together what we can no longer afford to buy separately, such as air-to-ground surveillance; and specializing in roles so that everybody doesn't have to do everything. The Baltic states—you discussed this last week—get air policing. They can't afford aircraft, but they do have very substantial roles in Afghanistan.

Those of you who have travelled there may have visited the Lithuanian provincial reconstruction team in Chaghcharan. They're doing a great job. I think they're at 4,000 metres.

Chris, you can correct me if I'm wrong, but I think it's something like that.

● (1120)

The highest point in Lithuania is 352 metres, so they're not necessarily in their most comfortable terrain, but they do a great job.

So everyone is doing what they can.

The connected forces initiative is that you have what you need but ask how it all works together. That's about interoperability, standardization, joint training, and working with partners.

These are the two initiatives you'll see launched from Chicago that flow from the strategic concept. But General Abrial is the man who is doing all of this. I don't want to go into too much detail; he can do it.

The final point is reform. NATO headquarters has not escaped the need for reform, so we are also streamlining our civilian and military headquarters very substantially. We're cutting staff, we're cutting budgets in our own headquarters, and we have created a new division also on new threats and challenges. But our entire command structure has been substantially streamlined. The number of agencies we have has gone from fourteen to three.

So there's a big reprioritization in NATO to cut all the fat so that we can invest in muscle. I personally don't think NATO had a lot of fat, and in some cases we're cutting into muscle, because we have not too much money. But what we're doing for sure is to protect the bone.

I've gone a little bit over my time here, so I will just stop, I think. This has been a general overview of the concept. I'm very happy to take any of your questions; I'm at your disposal.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Appathurai.

I understand that when you're referring to “the document”, you're referring to the strategic concept document titled *Active Engagement, Modern Defence*. Is that right?

Mr. James Appathurai: Oui.

The Chair: Perfect. I just wanted to make sure, so that everybody is on the same page here.

Also, I failed to mention that this month, May, you'll have been 14 years with NATO. Congratulations.

Before that, he was with the Department of National Defence, and with CBC before that.

Welcome home. It's great having you here, and I really appreciate your first comments.

With that, we're going to go to a seven-minute question round.

To kick us off, Mr. Harris, you have the floor.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Appathurai, you say you don't speak for NATO anymore. I don't understand that. Did you change jobs?

Mr. James Appathurai: No. I used to be the official spokesman for NATO. I still speak for NATO, but in a different role, and not to the media; that's my point.

Mr. Jack Harris: I was just curious. I thought I might have missed something.

NATO is about peace, stability, and security—security, of course, being the means for the other two, peace and stability. Amongst the member nations, I think the mere existence of NATO, maintaining that mutual defence but also stability among all of the 28 nations of NATO, is very important.

Is that one of the reasons for increasing the numbers: to increase the space for stability in the world? In that context, I guess Russia would be a potentially important partner.

● (1125)

Mr. James Appathurai: You're absolutely right that the principal motivation for taking in new members is to stabilize the region.

It's the process that matters, to my mind, as much as bringing them in. Before they can join, they have to meet a number of standards, and they work very hard to meet them. They are standards that complement well what the EU insists upon. What we insist upon is: no problems with your neighbours; proper democratic control of the military; transparent systems; interoperable forces, so that they can actually make a contribution when they get in; etc.

We push very hard for them to be like us in terms of their own internal systems and their relations with their neighbours before they get to walk through the door.

Mr. Jack Harris: Can I use Libya as an example of some of the potential problems of using NATO?

We had a UN Security Council resolution. It appeared, very shortly after the establishment of the mission and in response to the Security Council resolution, that either the U.S. or someone else had to have the command and control of facilities. NATO agreed to take on the role. But then we had NATO setting its own objectives. We had individual members of NATO, some of the defence ministers of various states—I won't mention their names, but the U.K. comes to mind—talking about what amounted in my view to mission creep, a different role from the one the Security Council had set out.

We had, apparently, according to the news last week, Canada going to Libya and, even though there was a ceasefire urged by the Security Council, encouraging hostilities.

So what happens once NATO gets involved?

We had a number of briefings here after the mission started. We saw NATO taking on an apparently different role, with potential mission creep, with uncertainty of objectives, and being criticized by Russia, for example, which had abstained on the Security Council, saying that we were being fooled, that we were really trying to do something other than what was authorized in the Security Council resolution, and that it looked as though regime change was the goal.

I have two questions.

First of all, if NATO is going to play some role, because of its command structure and ability, how do you prevent it from getting out of hand?

Mr. James Appathurai: Thank you for that.

First, of course, these issues come up quite frequently, and the Russians in particular are not shy about raising their concerns. But from our point of view, we were strictly within the mandate we were given. As you know, the mandate had three parts to it: one was the arms embargo, one was a no-fly zone, and the third part was protection of civilians.

I can assure you that all the participants in the operation, but also all the NATO allies, even those who were not sending forces, keep a very close eye on how the conduct of the operation takes place. The NATO allies are firm believers in and supporters of the United Nations, without exception, and would never do anything—and have never done anything, in my view, with one slight exception—outside of that framework. But that exception was not Libya.

From the point of view of the NATO allies, of the NATO governments, they were within the mandate. There are a lot of them around the table. We had our extra partners as well: non-NATO European members and the Arabs. They also believed that this was within the mandate. And by the way, the UN secretary general has been very clear in his public statements that he considers this to be within the mandate. Then there was an international commission of inquiry on Libya, which also concluded that what NATO did was within the mandate. So, frankly, I think there is an overwhelming body of support that makes that case.

I would go even further to say that the operation couldn't have happened without NATO. There were a number of NATO allies in the time of that period of transition from when it went from being a coalition of the willing to being a NATO operation—even NATO allies—who said "we cannot contribute to this unless NATO does it", for legal and political reasons within their own country. Our partners said the same thing—not all of them, but, for example, the Swedes, who were very clear in their own parliamentary procedure.

So our view is, first, it was within the mandate, and second, it couldn't have been done without us.

● (1130)

Mr. Jack Harris: Let me turn briefly to smart defence, which seems to be talking about specialization and defining your contribution. Again, in Libya, for example, Canada contributed frigates in the Mediterranean, fighter jets, coastal air-to-ground surface surveillance through the Arcturus aircraft, plus strategic airlift.

That doesn't sound like specialization to me. Is the aim that people should define their roles in advance of these things, or are we going to have this kind of, I suppose, "ad hocery"? Obviously, every mission is different, but is there going to be some idea that before or during a period of non-action people actually discuss what their contribution might be?

Mr. James Appathurai: Thank you.

That's a very important question, and I would suggest that you put it to General Abrial.

To put it in a general sense, specialization does not mean that any individual country would totally abandon all other roles. We still need the full spectrum of capabilities. The more capable countries, the wealthier countries, the countries that are more, let's say, expeditionary will continue to retain, if not full-spectrum capabilities, a wide range of capabilities.

We still need that, but there are countries that have smaller defence budgets or particular expertise that might invest more in one or another. For example, the Czechs have excellent chemical, biological, and radiological defence capability, so they're always in demand whenever those kinds of weapons might be necessary. Everybody's looking for them because they're the best at it, or amongst the best at it.

That kind of thing, specializing more in one area and maybe a little less in something that is already in abundance, is where I think the specialization idea is going. But we still need the full range of capabilities.

Libya is an interesting case, but I do think it's always important to look at what is happening elsewhere, even under NATO command. While we were doing that in Libya, we were also deploying extra forces into Kosovo because there was unrest there; we had 130,000 in Afghanistan, with the very specific capabilities required there; and ships off the coast of Somalia, with a lot that was required there.

We need a lot in a lot of places. In a time of restrained budgets, we need to make sure that certain countries invest more in one thing or another.

The Chair: Thank you. The time has expired.

Moving on, Ms. Gallant, you have the floor.

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

Mr. Appathurai, given your experience at NATO, what can you tell this committee about the strategic concept paper?

Mr. James Appathurai: The overview I gave you was the essential elements of what I think is important in the document. It's a document that has to last for 10 years, so it is at a certain level of generality. What I like about it is that it's readable for an average person, which was the aim. Also, because of that, I think it has the political engagement from the leaders who signed up to it—I think they actually read it—and a lot has now flowed from that. It is a constant reference point.

As I said, it has to last 10 years, and Chicago should draw quite heavily on it.

Is there a specific thing—?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: How was it put together?

Mr. James Appathurai: This one was put together a little differently than previous ones. The previous ones were developed through what you might call the traditional process of negotiation. Those of you who have been diplomats before have had the pleasure of that process. It is gruelling and endless and often results in something that's very difficult to understand.

Here the secretary general himself took a very personal role in drafting and developing it. He worked at a very high level, so we didn't put it into the machine. He worked with the ambassadors directly, and then with the heads of state and government directly, and he had a small team to support him. Because of that, I think it is a much better document.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What role did Canada play in its development?

Mr. James Appathurai: Canada had a very important role. There was a small group put together before the strategic concept was drafted to basically create a framework or an early draft and certainly to go through all the issues. Canada had a representative on that team. Then the draft was put to us.

Not all NATO countries are represented on this, so the secretary general asked Canada to contribute. I can tell you there were others who said, "Well, the Americans are there anyway, so why do we need the Canadians?" He deliberately made that choice because he was well aware that this voice should be heard.

Once that was prepared, Canada played the same role as everybody else.

● (1135)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Earlier you were talking about how we're capitalizing on the niches or areas of specialization of different countries. What is seen as Canada's area of specialization?

Mr. James Appathurai: This is my personal view, so I want to keep it as a personal view, but I don't think Canada is one of the countries to which the alliance is looking to play a role like the Czechs of specializing in one particular area. Because of our geography and our history, Canada has always had very broad spectrum capabilities. We're always going to have broad spectrum capabilities because we have a lot of water and a lot of air space and a lot of land to protect.

This country has always built forces for expeditionary operations, so we can do that in a way that newer NATO members cannot because they have built their forces for territorial defence or they're landlocked or whatever.

All of these reasons, the broad range of capabilities, which your colleague just described, are actually a strength of Canada that NATO would welcome.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I see that you're the special representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia. Would the membership of the Republic of Georgia augment or detract from the strategic concept at this time?

Mr. James Appathurai: The NATO allies have been very clear, because at the same time they were agreeing to the strategic concept, they also agreed to a communiqué that restated the decision of Bucharest that Georgia would become a NATO member. That didn't have any caveats to it, except that they would have to meet NATO standards. That's what they're doing and working to do.

I think there's no ambiguity between these two concepts. Of course, Georgia has to meet those standards. I don't want to be naive. Russia looks very suspiciously at this process, and their relations with us have this constant burr under the saddle, which is Georgia. It is one of the very few points—if not the only point—of real principle where NATO and Russia constantly disagree and consistently disagree. They do not want to see Georgia in NATO. We say they're a democracy and they meet the standards. They are a democracy, they have a right to join, and they've taken the decision that they will join.

I can't say that it's not a complication. It is a complication. Any move by Georgia to try to get closer to NATO is of real political importance to everybody because of how Russia might react. The principal point remains firm, and I'm quite sure it will be reaffirmed again at the Chicago Summit.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: So there has been no movement in their designation from aspirant country to one at the next level.

Mr. James Appathurai: There has been no movement in either direction, downwards or upwards. But because of their reform, they have moved closer to NATO. The secretary general has made that statement as a clear statement of policy. But their final decision on whether or not they will join has already been made. No country has had that before. They are the only country in the history of NATO that has gotten the commitment, "You will be in."

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What are the implications going forward for Canada as a result of the Lisbon 2010 strategic concept paper? Does this change the way Canada approaches NATO-led missions like Afghanistan or Libya?

Mr. James Appathurai: I think that's probably more of a question for the Canadian government than for me. Canada has always been—and I don't say this because I am a Canadian or an international civil servant—an active, staunch member of NATO. They are an active staunch member of NATO now the way they were two years ago and three years ago.

I don't necessarily see that this has affected Canada's commitment one way or another. Canada is a very committed country.

● (1140)

The Chair: Thank you. Time has expired.

Mr. McKay, you have the last set of the seven minutes.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for coming this morning.

I've been reading a book on the west's relationships with the Middle East, then known as the Orient. I'm not going to name the book or the author because it's exceedingly boring and I don't want to be on the public record as depressing sales for this book. One of the chapters is devoted to Napoleon's invasion of Egypt. What struck me about that chapter was the extraordinary preparation Napoleon went through when he decided to invade Egypt. Obviously the military preparation was extreme, but one thing he and his people did, which I thought made the invasion a success, even after the British kicked him out and they were still there, was to make an effort to understand the Muslims, to understand Islam, to understand their thinking.

For the foreseeable future, the various theatres of conflict that we can imagine are going to involve Islam in some way or another. If you just go through your list of countries, virtually every one of them is an Islamic country.

I wonder what you could tell us with respect to how NATO is involving itself with Islam as a general proposition, but also with regard to specific themes and variations on Islamic culture, Islamic religion, Sunni, Shia, and all this other stuff. If Napoleon got it 200 years ago, surely we should get it now. I just wonder what you can tell us about NATO's engagement.

Mr. James Appathurai: That's an extremely relevant question, and one that we discuss extensively.

The first point to make is that one of NATO's great strengths is that Turkey is a very powerful and prominent member. It plays a number of roles. One, of course, is it can and does provide exactly the kind of knowledge and expertise that you expressed. I think it is true, and I can even say it on the record, that the knowledge of and expertise in NATO on the Arab world in particular and the Muslim world more widely is certainly not what it should be.

I have a good experienced team of—I can't say Arab Canadians—Arab "NATOans", Arabs, natives of NATO countries who are also from Arab countries, who work on Middle East and North Africa issues. Without them we would be a little bit lost.

Turkey plays a very important role to provide knowledge. It also plays an important role as a bridge to those countries.

Hon. John McKay: Literally and figuratively?

Mr. James Appathurai: Literally and figuratively. In Afghanistan, in Pakistan, in the Arab world increasingly, as I'm quite sure you're aware, Turkey has had a mixed, let's say, image in the Arab world. That image is becoming ever stronger.

When Prime Minister Erdogan goes to the Arab world, there are tens of thousands of people in the streets cheering him, which is a new thing. We have a natural ability because of Turkey to bridge to that region, but we do need to keep on working on expertise, knowledge, and understanding.

The Arab world is not monolithic. You quite correctly hit on one of the key divisions, which is the Shiite-Sunni division. I work quite extensively now in the Arab world because of this job I have, and I'm constantly learning.

It is also the case that many nations in NATO, such as France and the United Kingdom, have had long experience in the Arab world.

Hon. John McKay: But a mixed history, a colonial history, and that's a big problem.

● (1145)

Mr. James Appathurai: It can be a problem, but it also brings with it decades, if not a century plus, of expertise. In the British foreign ministry there is someone, a friend of mine, whose official title is "Chief Arabist", because this guy knows everything and he has been everywhere. They devote a lot of attention to it.

Hon. John McKay: I'm encouraged to hear that NATO has become cognizant of this issue and actually has been focusing on this issue, because within I think the reasonably foreseeable future, those conflicts....

One of the ways in which this seemed to play out in the Libyan conflict had to do with various levels of intelligence sharing. There was intelligence that primarily the U.S. wouldn't share with anybody; then there was intelligence that the U.S. would share with some of its best buddies; and then there was intelligence that was one grade above seeing it on Al Jazeera.

Given that intelligence is the *sine qua non* of how you conduct an operation, how is NATO going to deal with the various levels of ability to share intelligence?

Mr. James Appathurai: Again, that is an excellent question. In fact, the secretary general came in with the same question and has pushed intelligence from a forum inside NATO, which I encourage you to get a briefing on, perhaps in a less formal, less open structure. He has created a fusion capability within NATO that has substantially enhanced an intelligence unit, in essence, has substantially enhanced intelligence sharing among allies. You are quite right that there are trusted, and more trusted, and more trusted circles when it comes to intelligence sharing, and that's just the way it is. It can be enhanced.

We have an intelligence body within NATO that goes out to certified systems of individual nations. When they reach a certain standard, they get access to certain intelligence. We do try to create an objective standard. That's part of the membership process. They have to meet the minimum standard to get in, but then we can keep working with them to see if they can do better. It is a very delicate issue, and most of all with actionable intelligence.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. John McKay: Is there—

The Chair: Time has expired.

Hon. John McKay: Oh. I wanted to get into one more very, very delicate issue.

The Chair: If you behave, maybe we'll get around to the third and final round and you'll get another chance for your five minutes.

Moving on, we have Mr. Trottier.

You're going to kick us off on the five-minute round.

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Appathurai, for coming in today and for your deputation at the outset.

I want to ask you a few questions about interoperability. It comes up a lot in our discussions in Parliament. It comes up in the news a lot. I just want to understand if there are any provisions in the strategic concept paper that really talk about interoperability, both from a force level as well as an equipment level, from a communications level, and I guess also an intelligence level, something that Mr. McKay referred to.

Could you describe what's in there? And what's the vision around interoperability, please?

Mr. James Appathurai: First, yes, it is in there. I could find the page, but in essence it's in both the chapters related to core mission one, which is collective defence, and even more to core mission two, which is crisis management.

What I would draw your attention to, though, and what I would suggest you ask General Abrial about particularly, is the connected forces initiative, because that's the new framework around which we're going to be pushing interoperability.

But you're absolutely right; I mean, Libya was so impressive, for me, because it really demonstrated to what extent NATO.... Not only NATO is plug-and-play, but that we decided that...a number of partners would wish to contribute—Sweden, Qatar, for example—and they were plug-and-play. The next day Sweden's forces were flying wing to wing with ours.

I won't go into the boring acronyms, but we have a system by which partner countries designate forces, earmark them for NATO operations to meet a high standard and shape our military headquarters, and send people out to certify them at a high level. When they get to high level two, they're basically fully interoperable with ours. Their radios work with ours, their computer systems work with ours, the munitions are the same gauge. So they can just do it.

The connected forces initiative will basically take that to the next level and make sure that all of our forces, and to the extent we can with our partners, have more training, more exercises. You'll see, for example, the NATO response force; I don't know if you've heard of this, but it is a response force that brings together the best forces from all the NATO allies. It will now start training much more regularly, training in the field. The United States has designated a brigade to rotate into that on a regular basis as part of their commitment to European security. The brigade's a pretty big commitment.

The focus of these exercises will precisely be that, so—

● (1150)

Mr. Bernard Trottier: You describe a lot on the force level. What about on the equipment level? What kinds of requirements would there be of Canada to be interoperable with regard to its major equipment contributions?

Mr. James Appathurai: This is definitely a question for General Abrial. I don't want to go into too much detail. I think that's more for the military.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Okay. Fair enough.

Just to change direction a little bit, obviously when NATO was set up after World War II, the main notion was collective security. Recent missions are focused more on the responsibility to protect, if you think of Kosovo in particular, and to a large extent in Libya.

Is there specific language in the strategic concept paper about the responsibility to protect as a move away from, say, less collective security? And what does that mean in terms of where NATO will get involved in the future? What are the limits around responsibility to protect?

Mr. James Appathurai: You know, that's an interesting question. I don't think there's a specific reference to responsibility to protect in this strategic concept. My recollection of the debates around the development of the document is that they were not too much about that.

In essence, NATO is about defending the interests and security of its members where that is threatened. The operation in Kosovo was very much about the fact that this region right next to NATO's borders was burning. There were refugees going in every direction. It had every potential to spread. Afghanistan, while not formally a response to the September 11 attack, was clearly because we felt, allies felt, that Afghanistan posed a threat to everybody.

I don't think the principal motivation for going to Afghanistan was to protect the civilians. That was very much part of the role, but the motivation for going was to ensure that Afghanistan could not be a safe haven for a terrorist attack against us and everybody else.

Libya was a little bit different, that's true, but that comes back to what I was discussing before. I think in the case of Libya, it did pose a threat to our security interests. My own feeling is that Libya was taken on by NATO principally because there was no other way for this UN mandate to be executed. But responsibility to protect is not here.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Okay. Thank you.

Now—

The Chair: Mr. Trottier, your time has expired.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Five minutes go by fast when you're having fun.

Moving on, we have Madame Moore.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Moore, you have the floor.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to ask you a few questions about ally cooperation in security matters. We are talking about actively contributing to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. I want to know how that will be done, what is the plan?

Mr. James Appathurai: The document contains a chapter on arms control and disarmament. Many of the allies strongly believe that they or NATO should play this role. Clearly, NATO's mandate to help control arms is one thing, but arms reduction is another.

I want to start by pointing out that we have reduced the number of nuclear weapons in Europe by more than 90% since the cold war. NATO has already done a lot in terms of this reduction. The alliance also helps facilitate and support the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which sets out limits, controls the flow and ensures transparency with respect to weapons in Europe. There are problems with the treaty right now, but NATO is still a key part of that treaty.

As for operations, NATO has been crucial on the ground in terms of taking weapons away from combatants, locking them up and destroying them. It did so in the Balkans and Afghanistan, but not in Libya. NATO could perform that function in Libya but the country has not requested it. Nor has the organization responsible for monitoring the entire process, the UN, made such a request. NATO, then, does play a role in all these areas, but not a key one, shall we say.

● (1155)

Ms. Christine Moore: Is NATO gradually going to reduce its interventionist activities in favour of a more political role? In other words, will the alliance make every effort to use political measures more to prevent conflicts and intervention, in particular?

Mr. James Appathurai: That is an excellent question. For the first time, the strategic concept actually sets out a role for NATO in terms of pre-crisis and post-crisis involvement, precisely to prevent conflicts.

The alliance has somewhat played that role in the past, for instance, in Macedonia, a site of conflict a few years ago. I admit, however, that I still cannot say how this chapter is going to be implemented. We are talking about how NATO can have a larger role in preventing conflicts; we discussed it last week. But that question has not yet been answered. As far as this document goes, I cannot say that NATO has clearly defined its conflict prevention role.

Ms. Christine Moore: Is it working with the UN on the issue?

Mr. James Appathurai: That is actually what we are discussing. I would say we used to do more on that front in cooperation with the European Union, in particular. That partnership has diminished, however, because of external problems, but I think NATO could certainly perform that function. It has the capability needed. So far, all we have are vague answers to that question. I wish I could give you a better answer. In my view, I think we should perform that function, but we have not found the basis it would take to really see it through.

Ms. Christine Moore: In terms of the smart defence concept and restructuring, clearly the financial resources of a number of countries are becoming increasingly limited. Implementing this type of concept would likely mean pooling capabilities, streamlining operational commands and favouring political measures over military activities. With such an approach, it is possible that NATO could be just as effective, but with less money.

Mr. James Appathurai: That is at the heart of smart defence. As I said, our military budgets are still quite substantial. Together, the U. S., Europe and Canada account for 50% of all military defence spending in the world. So enough money is being invested, although it could be spent more efficiently.

But if the allies do not coordinate their efforts, if they do not talk to their partners about what they are going to do before they do it, and if they do not coordinate efforts in procuring essential equipment, it is highly likely that the team will have too much capability in some areas and too little in others.

That is precisely the thinking the Secretary General is trying to promote with the smart defence concept.

[*English*]

The Chair: Merci beaucoup.

Mr. Chisu, it's your turn.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for being here with us today.

I do have a question relating to the area I know quite well, eastern Europe, and in this context I will say that historically we have had tension between NATO and Russia, yet in recent years there has been an effort to increase the dialogue between NATO and Russia and to smooth over relations.

Does the strategic concept address the need to improve the relationship with Russia, especially with a subject like nuclear disarmament? There are also some Russian troops in some of the countries that do not desire them to be there, and they are close to the NATO border. So even though there was an Istanbul conference requesting the withdrawal of the Russian troops and so on, I don't know if there has been any follow-up on those things.

● (1200)

Mr. James Appathurai: The strategic concept has two paragraphs devoted to Russia, and it clearly states our commitment and desire to have a deeper strategic partnership with Russia.

We have a NATO-Russia council, where Russia sits as an equal. All NATO-Russia issues are decided by consensus with the Russians. We have a substructure, a partnership, and a whole range of actual cooperation, particularly on Afghanistan with Russia, that really is very substantial. So there is a good foundation.

On the other hand, missile defence is a major irritant for them, and we are trying to find a way to provide them the reassurance they want and to have cooperation between their system and our system. There should be a conference taking place about now, or in the next couple of days, on missile defence in Russia that I think you will find very interesting, because it's the Russian view on NATO missile defence.

The bottom line is that there is a lot of potential. I think if we have missile defence cooperation it will change the way we look at each other, because for the first time NATO and Russia will be defending European territory together, as opposed to looking at each other like this. But I think it is also safe to say there is a lot of room to improve trust. That is something running through all of our relations. There is not a lot of trust. President-elect Putin has made some very tough statements on NATO since he won the election, so I think we're in for a very interesting few years.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: I think there is an increasing interest in these relations for us because in the Arctic we are in the neighbourhood of Russia, so it is quite important that the NATO-Russian relationship is on a good track.

But in this context I will go a little bit further. How is NATO dealing with the emerging military power of China? I ask this question because, as you know, they are looking at Afghanistan, and Afghanistan has a border with China. I didn't see any commitment from China in Afghanistan and all the other stuff.

It is not in the paper, but you are looking at the prevention of conflicts and so on, and it is an emerging military power in Southeast Asia. They have the little island of Taiwan...with millions of missiles pointed at them, and recently on the Scarborough Shoal there was a conflict between the Chinese and the Filipino navies.

Can you address this?

Mr. James Appathurai: First, of course, you're quite right that there's a lot of discussion on China. This year China's defence budget will equal the defence budgets of the top eight NATO allies, not counting the U.S. It gives you a little sense of proportion. Asia's defence spending will equal Europe's defence spending for the first time this year. It would make sense to look at it.

But NATO does not see China as a threat. We don't want to engage in rhetoric that makes conflict with China a self-fulfilling prophecy. I say this on a personal basis, not as a media line. If we constantly call them a threat, then they will feel threatened. As an alliance, we don't take that view. We need to engage with them as an international community, and as NATO, and help bring them into a system that has to accommodate them as much as it has to accommodate us in order to protect what you might call the global comity.

We have a shared interest in free seas, free space, free information, and free trade. So there is a lot on which we can base ourselves. Chinese ships and NATO ships are working together off the coast of Somalia right now. There's a lot of potential to do more. Even so, the Chinese are careful about NATO. They wish to develop relations step by step. That's the expression they use, and they are famously patient.

● (1205)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Kellway, you have the floor.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and my thanks to Mr. Appathurai for being here today. It's been a very interesting discussion.

One comment you made was about the development of the strategic concept document and the advantage in the way it was drafted. It didn't go through the machine, as you called it. I'm a bit stuck on the nuclear arms issue. There seems to be some ambiguity in the document about nuclear arms. There are statements to the effect that as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance. There is a reference to the supreme guarantee of security provided by strategic nuclear forces. Yet it also refers to creating conditions for a world without nuclear weapons. Can you decipher all of that and clarify which way NATO is heading on this issue?

Mr. James Appathurai: First, you're right that there are two messages there. It's not just one message. We have countries in NATO, just to get to the politics, that are deeply committed to nuclear deterrence. They believe that to abandon nuclear deterrence in a world full of nuclear weapons would substantially compromise their security and NATO's security.

Second, all the NATO allies agree that, while there are lots of organizations or nations focused primarily on disarmament, NATO's job is security. We have to be the last line of defence. Yes, we can help create conditions. Yes, we can work towards that goal. I can tell you that President Obama's speech in Prague resonated with all the allies as a definition of a goal that we want to work towards. But NATO's job is defence. We will keep working towards those goals, but we have to keep the ultimate guarantee. The allies really landed on that position.

That being said, the commitment to work towards those goals is very strong, particularly in some countries. I don't think it's any secret that the German government and the German foreign minister are heavily committed to nuclear disarmament and want NATO to work in that direction. This bears on the discussion surrounding the document on deterrence and defence posture review. It will be approved in Chicago. We're going to make it public. It goes into detail about where the balances are and what our goals should be. I would recommend it to you. It didn't go through the same process, so I'm not sure how readable it will be. It kind of went through the machine.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: In response to Mr. Chisu's question about China, you said that if you keep calling them a threat, they'll see themselves as a threat and that's not helpful. I'm wondering about the NATO missile shield. Isn't that saying in a loud way that we still consider certain countries to be a threat? Could you tell us about that missile shield, where it is in its development and what its future might be? After all, we're trying to establish some trust between ourselves and Russia. Doesn't this initiative undermine the ability to establish that trust?

Mr. James Appathurai: First, I will just say with regard to China that we have not received the slightest indication that the Chinese are concerned in any way with the NATO missile defence system.

Russia is concerned, and Russia's defence strategy hinges.... The big pole in the tent is their strategic deterrent, so anything they think might undermine their strategic deterrent is of great concern to them, just to understand their perspective.

Technically, in terms of numbers, in terms of the speed of intercept, and in terms of the location, the NATO system cannot—even if we wanted it to, and we don't—undermine the 5,000 or whatever nuclear warheads and missiles that the Russians have, but they continue to ask for more in terms of guarantees. We're trying to offer them access to the technical parameters to witness the tests. We've offered them joint centres, one for data exchange and one for joint interception, so that they can be in the system and not out.

We believe we can get there, and we believe we can get there because they don't want a system that threatens them, and we're not building a system that threatens them, so there has to be a meeting point at the end. There is a big upside, which I mentioned before, which is that my neighbour in Belgium and the guy in Moscow will know that NATO and Russia are working together to defend them together.

So I think we'll get there, but we might have a little bit of a rocky time until then.

● (1210)

The Chair: Thank you.

Please go ahead, Mr. Norlock.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Through you to the witness, thank you for being here this morning.

I'm going to just tap some very fundamental questions, the kinds of questions that are referred to at the place where you buy your Timbits. They're the people who pay the freight, sir. They're the people who pay the taxes that help us afford and—to use some of my constituents' words—to belong to the international clubs that Canada belongs to. They ask me—and I think I give them the right answer, but I'll listen to you to get the right answer, and you can say yes or no—and I tell them that NATO is an evolutionary organization. In other words, they look at NATO and they ask why we have all these other folks way off from the Atlantic join.

Maybe you would answer in a few sentences, because I have several follow-through questions that are very important to my constituents. Would I be correct in saying that it's an evolutionary organization?

Mr. James Appathurai: Yes.

Mr. Rick Norlock: They also ask what the difference is as we expand NATO to every country on the face of the earth, and I explain why we might want to do that. Then how do I explain the difference between the United Nations and NATO to people? I used to say that NATO was, in the past and is currently, to some extent, the UN's muscle. How do you respond to a statement like that?

Mr. James Appathurai: There are three things. One is that NATO can't expand to every country on earth; we can only expand in Europe. That's a charter restriction. We have partnerships with many other countries, but certainly it won't expand.

Second, NATO doesn't have the money, or the mandate, or the ambition to do what the UN does. We only do security, and the UN does everything.

The third thing I would say is that to a large extent you're right; NATO has been the muscle for the United Nations. Having worked on UN peacekeeping when I was at DND, I think we should be glad about that, because the UN cannot handle 95% of the things that are given to it to handle. If we relied only on the UN system and blue helmet peacekeepers, they would never be able to manage it.

I would direct your constituents to what Ban Ki-moon has said about the NATO intervention in Libya. He said, "We've saved countless lives" on the UN mandate. They could never have done it.

So I think there is an upside for both organizations.

Mr. Rick Norlock: The differentiation I like to make, and you can correct me if I'm wrong, is that the difference between NATO and the UN is that the UN does the blue helmet peacekeeping but NATO does the peacemaking. Would that be correct, or is that too definitive a role?

Mr. James Appathurai: Well, the UN has also taken on tougher roles where they didn't wear blue helmets. But you're right that NATO takes on the tougher end of peace operations, which the UN cannot handle. I would put it that way.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Very good.

While we're talking about our relationship with Russia and nuclear disarmament, Canadians love hockey, so the best defence is a good offence. You say that peace and security of the membership in NATO.... Would you agree with me that part of that peace and security is the ability to play offence as well as defence? And if you agree with that statement, could you expand on that a little bit?

● (1215)

Mr. James Appathurai: I would say this: sometimes, and more and more, keeping yourself safe at home means going to the problem before it comes to you. That's why we are in Afghanistan. Frankly, the problem came to us. We need to make sure we don't get more problems from there.

It's not just that kind of problem. Libya also would have just metastasized into a bigger problem. Kosovo would have metastasized into a bigger problem had we not gone to it. Waiting for the problem to come to you in a globalized world is simply to fail.

I agree that sometimes you need to go away. Security at our borders sometimes requires going to someone else's, but only when it's our security that is directly threatened. We do not want to give the idea, to anybody, that NATO is sort of gallivanting around the world trying to solve everybody's problems. We're not. When there is a clear and direct threat to us, we can't wait until it strikes us.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Generally speaking—again, not wanting to put words in your mouth—what NATO prefers is to have the United Nations make the determination; in other words, to use my words, to legitimize the operation. Then NATO takes over as the sometimes muscle of the UN. Would that be correct? We use the United Nations as the international forum and NATO legitimizes its actions by living up to or operating under the umbrella of UN direction.

Mr. James Appathurai: You used the word "prefer". That's the right word. NATO will always look to the UN for a mandate for expeditionary operations. Except for a moment of the Kosovo operation, that has always been the case. NATO does not need the mandate of the United Nations to operate. Certainly, when it comes to the defence of an ally, it has a treaty obligation to each other, which does not require UN mandates. When we are defending ourselves, we can do that on our own authority.

The Chair: Your time has expired.

Mr. Rick Norlock: That's why you're a diplomat and I'm not.

Mr. James Appathurai: It's like *Jeopardy.* I love this.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Brahmi, you have five minutes.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I also want to thank our witness, Mr. Appathurai.

I have here an article from this morning's *Ottawa Citizen* about a report that came out just ahead of the upcoming summit in Chicago. The report found that Russia and the U.S. combined possess 2,800 non-strategic nuclear warheads. For the record, could you comment on that number?

Mr. James Appathurai: I did not read the article, so all I can say is that there are strategic missile heads and non-strategic missile heads. Under the START II treaty between the U.S. and Russia, each country is working on reducing its number of strategic nuclear warheads. There is little talk right now about non-strategic nuclear warheads. The number of non-strategic nuclear warheads Russia has is something that concerns a number of our allies.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: What are NATO's plans with respect to tactical nuclear warheads?

Mr. James Appathurai: That is outlined in the strategic concept, but NATO would like to talk to the Russians about reducing the number of non-strategic nuclear warheads in Europe and moving them outside NATO's borders. This involves mainly the Russians, since it is primarily them who have this capability. The U.S. president has already said he would like to initiate talks with Russia on the matter, but so far, the Russians have not agreed to any discussions, not with us or them.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: These tactical warheads came about in the cold war era. Is it safe to say that, in today's post cold war world, there is no longer a need for them?

● (1220)

Mr. James Appathurai: The fact that we reduced the number of these warheads in Europe by more than 90%, as I pointed out, shows that they are indeed paramount to our strategy. Russia, however, is maintaining them. We believe we could bring down this number much further, but we need to discuss it with the Russians, and, as I said, they are not yet willing to address that with us.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: I imagine it will be discussed in Chicago as well, during the summit. Isn't it an important part of the discussion?

Mr. James Appathurai: I am not sure whether the topic will be discussed in Chicago, but I am certain it will appear in the documents.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Thank you.

I want to come back to another point, what you said when you were asked about the role Canada should play in the smart defence strategy. You gave the example of the Czech Republic and its nuclear, biological and chemical defence capabilities. You said that Canada didn't have the authority to reduce one of those aspects. Isn't that a bit contradictory? We are talking about how some countries do not want to get rid of their entire arsenals or their military capability.

Mr. James Appathurai: I did not say that Canada didn't have the authority to reduce or not reduce one of those aspects. It is up to Canada to decide what it wants to do.

I said that Canada has a range of capabilities that are very valuable to NATO. We do not want Canada to abandon its arms and focus on just one thing. That is not at all in line with smart defence. What that strategy means is that, more and more, certain countries do not have enough resources to afford total defence capabilities. If they continue to strive for total defence, they will end up with many areas of limited capability without any real capability. They are better off investing more in one area of capability.

Furthermore, smart defence sets out a list of projects, on three levels. General Abrial could explain everything. These projects concern essential capabilities. Groups of countries will develop the capabilities, with one country heading a specific project. I believe there are about 14 level-one projects. Canada is taking part or is planning to take part in these projects, like all NATO countries.

I did not mean that Canada should specialize in a single capability.

[*English*]

The Chair: Merci beaucoup.

Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, sir, for your presentation.

As you summarized for us, the strategic concept paper outlines three essential core tasks: collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security. We heard from the assistant deputy minister, Jill Sinclair, who told us that Canada's preference or focus has been on the crisis management side, whereas Europe's focus has probably been more on collective defence.

My question for you is, how does Canada work with our allies to ensure a balanced and effective approach on how these three core tasks can be met, and what is the dynamic at NATO when trying to balance those three focuses?

Mr. James Appathurai: That's a very fundamental question. As NATO gets bigger, you have more countries that have slightly different priorities. Let's put it that way. The countries in the south look at the Mediterranean and want to ensure that it's peaceful so they want to reach out there. The countries that have had, let's say, more mixed relations with Russia are still concerned about Russia and want to ensure that NATO builds that relationship and can maintain its strong defence. Canada, like others, has been more expeditionary. The French and the British, for example, also look in that direction.

It's a question of balance, and that's why there are three. Canada does, I think it's safe to say, work very actively to ensure NATO's expeditionary capability remains strong and focuses on that, but no one in Europe doubts Canada's commitment to collective defence either. I think, as Canadians say very often—but it's true—there are graveyards full across Europe that demonstrate Canada's commitment to collective defence, so that is not in doubt. If you want to see it, you should come for Independence Day in the Netherlands and watch Canadian troops walk down the street, and see how many young children are out on the street. Dutch kids go to Canadian gravesites and tend them to this day, so I don't think there's any concern about that.

The final point I would make is that we believe in NATO that with some exceptions expeditionary capabilities are usable also for collective defence. We still need to move them around to where they're needed within NATO territory or somewhere else. We still need some heavier capabilities in reserve. We have plenty of that. But the more we invest in expeditionary capabilities, which Canada is pushing, we believe at NATO headquarters the better we are at collective defence as well.

● (1225)

Mr. Mark Strahl: On the last one I mentioned, cooperative security, one of the things we heard about in our study on readiness was cyber-security. You mentioned it as kind of an emerging area of concern for NATO, and I think that's the impression we got everywhere. It's an emerging threat.

My question is, what is NATO's role in combatting cyber threats? Are they actively looking to prevent them? Are they developing best practices? Are they looking to protect just your own infrastructure? What is NATO's role in cyber-security, and how would that benefit a country like Canada, which is also seized with that issue?

Mr. James Appathurai: I can give you four points.

One is, yes, we are first and foremost now reinforcing our own systems, including the systems connecting NATO to national systems, including this country's.

Second, we've created what's called a centre of excellence in Estonia where we bring together the experts who can, first, provide best practices and support allies, but who can also support partners. So if a country comes under attack, we have basically rapid reaction teams that can go in and provide the best possible advice and support to those countries.

Third, we are engaging, but much more slowly, with non-NATO countries that are interested in this. Here we're still trying to figure out what we can do and what we can't do, as I mentioned.

Fourth, we're working now more and more closely with the EU when it comes to standard setting, because standard setting is essential. That includes very simple things like supply chain protection. NATO doesn't do that, but the EU does do it. Who built your computer? You can defend it once it's in your office, but who built it, who secured it along the way, and then what's in it by the time it gets to your office? All these questions need to be addressed, because they're very important.

The Chair: Your time has just expired.

Mr. Opitz.

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome. Apologies for being late, but I had another committee meeting this morning.

I'd like to talk about some of the potentially new Balkan members from the EU. You have Croatia that's now signed up, and it looks like they're doing quite well and are quite successful. Bosnia-Herzegovina is interested in NATO membership, as is Serbia. All of those places have come a long way, I would say, since the war.

Can you comment on the likelihood of their succeeding to NATO membership? When you're talking about that, can you also talk about how is the voting structured to allow them to enter into NATO?

Mr. James Appathurai: Thank you.

There are three countries that are formally on track, and a fourth, which is basically as we discussed, Georgia, and a decision has already been taken.

For Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which I will henceforth call Macedonia, for reasons which you'll understand, the situation is as follows. Bosnia just took a big step, and I think they are now much more on track to join. Montenegro has some steps to take, but basically is in a very good position as well. The name issue between Athens and Skopje is basically what's holding that country up from moving forward. It's the way it is. We can't affect it. All decisions in NATO are taken by consensus—everything. The voting system is very simple; everyone has to agree and they're in. If they don't all agree, they're not in.

In essence, these are the three countries that are formally in the membership action plan process. The fourth is Georgia, as I mentioned. The decision has been taken that they will join. They just need to make the necessary reforms.

● (1230)

Mr. Ted Opitz: So any one nation has veto power. In the instance of Athens and Skopje, if Athens says no, that's it, that's all?

Mr. James Appathurai: Consensus is required. Let's put it that way.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Okay. I just wanted to be clear on that. Sometimes it's a percentage vote, but in this case it's all or nothing.

Mr. James Appathurai: You're quite right that in the EU they have percentage votes. We have no qualified majority voting, so which water glasses to buy has to go to a committee, and everyone has to agree, which doesn't always make things work efficiently.

Mr. Ted Opitz: There can be some real inefficiencies in that system, that's for sure. We'll see what happens there.

Can you expand on NATO's view on the Arctic?

Mr. James Appathurai: Yes. NATO is not involved in the Arctic. It has a very clear position. Some allies would like to see a discussion on the Arctic within NATO. There are others who do not wish to see that discussion take place, so it does not take place.

Coming back to your discussion of decisions, it takes consensus to have that issue on the agenda. There is no consensus to have that on the agenda, so we're out.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Sometimes the information sharing among the NATO partners has been problematic in the past, but I think now it has improved. Can you describe the system of information sharing among allies?

Mr. James Appathurai: In a general sense?

Mr. Ted Opitz: In a general sense and any specifics you would care to add.

Mr. James Appathurai: I mentioned this with your colleague. The secretary general has pushed very hard on intelligence fusion, first to improve the confidence that allies have in the systems within NATO, so they're more likely to give it, and that's been done; second, to actually improve the sharing among them, and that's been done; but third, to fuse civilian and military intelligence and provide allies with much more timely and therefore much more relevant intelligence. All that has happened, and it continues to work. But it just sort of triggered six months ago, and it has really worked very well.

Finally, the strategic concept mentions our commitment to consult with partners. They now have the right to ask for consultation, and we hope to use it, and do use it, but hope to use it principally with conflict prevention. When they feel there's something brewing in their neighbourhood, they now can ring the bell and come to the table. We think that's valuable as well.

Mr. Ted Opitz: On some of the other issues, like Ukraine, for example, as a potential NATO member, how would that work? They're being somewhat challenged in terms of the direction of the democracy and so forth right now, so I think there's time before they're actually considered as a NATO member. However, let's perhaps advance time and say they are ready to be accepted into NATO. How does that conversation go with Russia?

Mr. James Appathurai: I think we need to first not advance time for a moment, because the current Ukrainian government has chosen what is in essence non-aligned status and revoked their desire to want to join. That's the position we're in now.

Second, there are fundamental concerns, as you've noted, about the state of democracy. Then we go forward, and NATO allies will take the decision on enlargement. Russia was not delighted when some of the current members joined NATO, some of the former members of the Warsaw Pact, or, if you define it that way, of the Soviet Union itself. But once they were in, through the teeth of Russian concern, their relations with Russia have generally gotten better because they're in a position of confidence. So I think it only reconfirmed what was already a strong position. NATO allies alone will decide on membership.

The Chair: Thank you.

We've finished our second round. We're going on to our third and final round, which allows each political party to ask another five-minute round of questions.

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to follow up on the question of my colleague, Mr. Brahmi, regarding the tactical nuclear weapons. You referred to interest in getting Russia to reduce its number. According to the figures today from the Federation of American Scientists, there are 28,000 tactical nuclear weapons possessed by both Russia and America. Obviously there are two sides to this equation. How does the other side feature in this? What statements has America made?

The Federation of American Scientists talks about the notion of the unilateral destruction of weapons. How do we get from here to there? These tactical nuclear weapons are essentially battlefield weapons, which are inherently destabilizing and dangerous, obviously. Outside of Russia and America, are there other caches of tactical nuclear weapons? How do we involve both America and Russia and whatever other nations?

● (1235)

Mr. James Appathurai: I think in essence this is principally an American and Russian discussion. Anything else is relevant and important, but when we're talking about this particular issue in a NATO context or a Euro-Atlantic context, these are the two big players. They're the ones that own them.

The United States is very careful to consult carefully with its NATO allies on the deployment of sub-strategic nuclear weapons. NATO has a role to play in setting the policy for NATO-held—let's put it that way—nuclear weapons in Europe, but we're talking about very small numbers.

The real discussion to be had is between the United States and Russia. President Obama very clearly said, when START II was agreed, that his vision for the next step of the discussion was to discuss these issues. The Americans have made their desire to work in that direction very clear. My own view is that it is for Russia to respond and to respond positively. NATO will be 100% in support of these discussions because all the allies agree that this is the logical next step for all the reasons you mentioned.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you.

To talk a little more about NATO-UN cooperation, of course, as we know, it's based on a declaration signed in 2008, which talked about liaison and political consultation, but also practical cooperation in managing crises where both organizations are involved. Again, that brings us back to Libya. I noted that United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 talks specifically of the role for the secretary-general in the management of the response to that circumstance.

Could you comment on how that role actually played out, in terms of Mr. Annan's role and NATO? Did that actually work the way it was intended? Were there problems with that? Was Mr. Annan given the respect he required by virtue of the Security Council resolution, and can you say that even though NATO was the operative arm in terms of effecting this that it was still a UN operation as such?

Mr. James Appathurai: I will first say that because of that declaration in 2008, we do have formal liaison and very deep relations, which never existed before. So we're at a totally different level of trust.

Second, on Libya, we were in discussion with the United Nations every single day and multiple times every day. They knew our plans and we knew their plans. At all levels we were communicating in a fully transparent way. So actually the level of cooperation was precisely what I think you would hope it to be. The two secretaries general, of course, spoke regularly, as well as the assistant secretary general and me and all levels below me, both on the operational and political sides. In the post-conflict phase, the UN has taken a leadership role. It has asked for NATO expertise when it comes to defence transformation, basically helping the Libyans build security.

The Libyans have not asked us. When they do—and I think they're waiting, in essence, for their June elections to be in a better position to ask for international support—whatever NATO does will be under a UN umbrella. It has a team there and we will work under it.

Mr. Jack Harris: Again, on the follow-up on Libya, I know there have been suggestions that one of the consequences of the Libyan mission was to open up the field for players such as elements of al-Qaeda to operate openly—or more effectively, rather—in Libya. Are we looking at another situation that may be brewing there that may require intervention?

Mr. James Appathurai: I don't know the answer to that. NATO doesn't have boots on the ground. We do not monitor Libya's development in a formal way. We do not have assets there. When our mission came to an end, it came to an end. There are many analysts on the ground. You might want to ask UN colleagues, but I don't think I can give a good answer to that.

What is encouraging is the way in which the political development in the run-up to the elections has happened. To my mind, the key will be that the electoral process and the political system provide the various, if you want to use the words, “militias” or “regional groupings” enough assurance that their equities will be taken into account. When they have that they'll be in a better position to give up their weapons, work on a more national basis, etc. This upcoming political process is essential.

● (1240)

The Chair: The time has expired.

I just want to follow up quickly on what Mr. Harris has raised. One thing you said in your opening comments was about NATO's role in post-conflict management. We were part of the conflict in Libya. So now, what about the management? You're saying we don't have boots on the ground; we're leaving it to the UN.

Circle the wagons here for me. How do we, as NATO, fulfill our responsibility, as you mentioned, of post-conflict management when we're disengaged?

Mr. James Appathurai: Absolutely. There are two essential ingredients for NATO to play a role. One is a UN mandate. The second is a request from the Libyan government. Neither of those is there. The Libyan government has not asked for support and the UN has not provided a mandate. When our mandate ended, we left. So we're not in a position to provide it.

Personally, I think NATO has long experience in helping governments transition—through central and eastern Europe, but also now in other parts of the world—to help build security structures that can provide for security in a post-conflict environment.

I think there's a lot to offer, but until we are asked by the Security Council and by the Libyans, we're not in a position to offer it and we won't impose it.

The Chair: Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Chair.

I want to go back to our conversation about Turkey. It's a changing role, shall we say, in the Middle East.

You rightly point out that Mr. Erdogan is hugely popular, possibly the new Nasser—I don't really know—and possibly the Ottoman Empire redo.

At this point, Turkey and Israel have moved from being probably the most friendly of Arab and Jewish states to far less friendly, shall we say. That potentially creates some difficulties for NATO's outreach, if you will, into the Arab League and into the Arab nations at large.

I'd be interested in your thoughts on how or if that will complicate NATO's continued relationship with the Middle East.

Mr. James Appathurai: You hit on an important point. To cut directly to the chase, my own view is that it doesn't complicate our relations with most Arab countries. We have deepening relations with the Arab League, with the African Union. We've had contact with the Organization of the Islamic Conference. That's all working fine. The Arab League passed its own resolution on Libya knowing perfectly well it would be NATO that would carry it out.

In my experience, and this is part of what I do, this is manageable. What is a problem is to have difficult relations between a major ally and an important partner like Israel. It creates complications in our relations with them, and NATO's relations with them as well. So we would certainly like to see an improvement in their relations.

The issue of the boats, the incident that took place in international waters, is of deep concern in Turkey. It's deeply, emotionally held. The Israelis are well aware of this, but my own view is that fundamentally they have to work it out between them. We hope they do, because they are, as I say, an important ally and an important partner. But it is really a bilateral issue on that incident, and I can't see a role that NATO could play.

● (1245)

Hon. John McKay: But it does speak to the larger issue of Mr. Erdogan's popularity probably—I say “probably”, and I would be interested in your view—being related to the perception by the Arab peoples of Turkey standing up to Israel, which is awkward.

Mr. James Appathurai: I think what we have to see, from my point of view, is the example that Turkey shows. When I travel through the region, again and again what one hears is—well, not from all parties—“we want to be like them”, or, in other words, proudly Muslim, proudly religious, and secular in the way in which we run our government, modern in the way in which we run our economy, and transparent in the way that our politics take place.

They will not look to a non-Muslim country in the same way. Turkey is not Arab, but it is Muslim, and they are a real example for reformers. We should, as far as I'm concerned, really welcome this, because without that example, many parties will not know what to work towards.

Hon. John McKay: The irony of the whole thing is that Erdogan is associated with an Islamist party and the previous party was a secular party, and yet....

Mr. James Appathurai: That may be his strength. His strength is that he is proudly religious and still carrying out a secular government. Nobody in the Arab world can impugn him for that. So I think he has a lot of potential to inspire positive change—not him, but his government. It has a lot of potential.

Hon. John McKay: My final question is on a different subject entirely. The Americans are clearly reorientating themselves to the Pacific.

This is an Atlantic organization. As the Americans are the *primus inter pares*, how do you see that, in five-year windows, playing through as America refocuses its attention on China and on Asian issues?

Mr. James Appathurai: There are three things. One, we think it's a good thing that the United States is also focusing more on Asia. It doesn't mean they're not focusing on Europe. But we should want the United States to continue to play a strong role in Asia in stabilizing it. We cannot afford a situation where the U.S. would withdraw from Asia, because we would all be affected by that. So really, it's a good thing.

The second thing is that NATO has reached out to Asian partners, not in terms of playing a military role there, but in terms of building understanding and trust with countries across Asia, such as South Korea, the Chinese, as I've mentioned, and India. It's a bit rocky with Pakistan right now—

Hon. John McKay: Everyone's rocky—

Mr. James Appathurai: —but we are reaching out to them.

Third—and this the secretary general said recently in his speech—we think it's important that the European allies also have a global view, that they're not just focused on their own issues, which are important, and not just focused on their immediate neighbourhood, which is important—and the United States is also focusing on that. But they also need to be a partner for the United States in having a global view. This is something that we are pushing and that the secretary general is pushing as well.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Alexander, the last round of questions goes to you.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Thank you, Chair.

I don't know if there are any plans to make Timbits a shared capability under smart defence, or if there are any Tim Hortons franchises in Chicago, but—

Voices: Oh, oh!

Hon. John McKay: It could be part of the mission requirements for the F-35.

Mr. Chris Alexander: But whatever you ate this morning, James, I think it has given you the wisdom and the concision to give us the best overview that I've heard of what NATO is today. I hope that would be the case for many of us around the table. It was really first rate. Thank you for that and for making the effort to get here.

I have three quick questions that really fill in...not the gaps, but they touch on some issues that haven't been raised so far.

Ten years ago or five years ago, you and I would have been sitting around tables like this and spending a lot of time worrying about chemical weapons, biological weapons, nuclear proliferation, radiological sources, and so forth. Obviously they're still part of the agenda, but it struck me in looking again at the strategic concept that they are not as prominent as they once were. You spend more time talking about cyber missiles, which of course can carry these things but are a threat in themselves and can be a conventional threat, and the continuing concern about terrorism.

Could you comment a little bit on where this stands in NATO's list of priorities in the wake of the strategic concept? Has the global partnership, which Canada has championed under successive Liberal and Conservative governments, helped to reduce the profile of this global set of threats?

● (1250)

Mr. James Appathurai: I think the short answer to that is yes and yes.

I share the view that it's lower on the agenda. It doesn't get talked about as much, and it doesn't get talked about as much by ministers, presidents, and prime ministers. I think to a large extent that's for two reasons. One is that the missile threat and other threats have moved up on their own steam, but also, we do see clear success in international initiatives to identify, locate, and make safe loose—if that's the right word—chemical, biological, and radiological weaponry. We have projects, even NATO has projects, across central Asia, where we are taking radiological tailings material off the ground, out of the ground. Russian stuff is being secured. Ukrainian stuff is being secured.

There's a lot of work to do. When one looks at Libya, one has some concerns, and particularly at Syria, where there is an enormous number of chemical weapons, to make sure we keep track of them.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Tell us a little bit about Belarus. It gets forgotten. It's obviously close to Russia and Ukraine, but also to Poland and the Baltic states. What's the NATO strategy there in broad terms?

Finally, you talked about the role of Afghanistan in expanding the range and the quality of partnerships that NATO has. I think that's a very important point. Give us the hard-nosed appraisal. Is the strategic concept working in Afghanistan and in that other neighbouring country, Pakistan, which is not a partner, to the best of my knowledge, but which is crucial to Afghanistan's state? If it's not working as well as we would like, what are the shortcuts with regard to that mission?

Mr. James Appathurai: Thanks. You saved the best for last.

Belarus is going backwards in terms of democratic development in human rights. The allies would like that to be different, but the bottom line, if I can be as open as I can in this forum, is it's going backwards. Russia has enormous control in particular over the economy. Our policy is to engage with civil society. We can continue to provide support at a low level, but we can't do it at the political level, at the high level. We are very hesitant about the way in which Belarus is going.

On Afghanistan, I think a lot of what this strategic concept has written down is the result of what we've learned through Afghanistan. The close cooperation with the United Nations in the field, which you helped to lead, but all other parties, the expeditionary capability, the partnership with other countries—all of that in many ways is encapsulated in here because of what we learned in Afghanistan. Are there more lessons to learn from Afghanistan? Yes, probably. Is it all working? Probably not.

If you want the one-sentence answer, I think I would summarize the NATO view by the fact that we believe that according to the military metrics and the military mission, that part has achieved quite substantial success, despite the very many things that you see in the headlines. The statistics demonstrate that. However, there is a whole other area of politics, including regional politics, and not just with the Pakistanis, but also with the central Asians and others, where things haven't moved necessarily in the right way, to the great concern of the neighbours, like the central Asians. We're not out of the woods yet.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm going to take my prerogative as chair and ask a few follow-up questions.

As we were going through the strategic concept that is currently in place with NATO, how has this one changed or been modified from previous concepts that are fairly significant that you feel the committee should be aware of? This concept is quite a bit different from previous concepts.

● (1255)

Mr. James Appathurai: Indeed, and I'd highlight three points. I've mentioned them all, but I'll just come back to them.

First is the focus on crisis management, in particular collective security—in other words, partnership. Those things are really new. Second is all the new threats, cyber, but also energy, and missile defence. I think that is new. The third thing I would mention is what we've discussed, the comprehensive approach. There is the civilian-military relationship, in which NATO basically comes off its island and realizes that we're part of a big world and we need partners with us at all phases, not just before and after we get involved.

The Chair: A lot of questions revolve around partnerships, and you just mentioned again that that's one of the major changes in the concept. Section 32 talks about the European Union. Of course, there's a lot of shared membership between NATO and the European Union.

How do you see that partnership evolving, whether it's strengthening or whether you see greater buy-in from the European Union to the overall goals and mission of NATO?

Mr. James Appathurai: NATO's perspective on the EU has changed fundamentally in the time that I've been there. A few years ago a lot of allies were concerned that the EU would be too strong, and it would compete and suck away resources. Now people are concerned that the EU isn't going to be strong enough. They want a stronger European Union that can take on some of the burden. That's the first thing.

Second, we do a lot in the field and at the staff-to-staff level, but we are blocked at the highest level from NATO-EU cooperation because of outside bilateral issues that relate to Turkey and Cyprus, to be very blunt. As a result, there is unnecessary duplication. There isn't enough coordination, because at the political level we cannot meet, talk, and plan. We try to make things happen at the staff level, and we do. The commanders work beautifully together in the field, but this blockage is a problem.

The Chair: The document also talks about defence and deterrents, arms control and disarmament, and non-proliferation. What's NATO doing right now in relation to all the talk coming out of Iran and North Korea about their arms buildup?

Mr. James Appathurai: On North Korea, there's basically nothing. It's not a NATO role.

On Iran, NATO has not taken any formal steps. There is a process taking place in other fora. Were Iran to become a threat to the alliance or to NATO territory, of course it would be in a different ball game. The 30-plus countries I mentioned that are developing ballistic missile capabilities include Iran. Those 30-plus countries, including Iran, were the motivation for building the NATO missile defence system. You can interpret it from there.

The Chair: Finally, you said in your opening comments that there is only one game in town for large multinational operations, and that's NATO. Of course, some people picked up on that and the UN-NATO partnership.

Things are evolving around the world. In Syria, for example, a civil war is definitely breaking out. Right now it may not be a direct threat to NATO territory, although it does border Turkey. Are you guys monitoring the situation?

If the Arab League said they had done all they could from a peace standpoint and needed help to go in, and the UN asked NATO to put together a coalition of troops to move in—and I'm certainly talking hypothetically here—would NATO do it there, or anywhere else in the world for that matter, if it wasn't in direct response to the current threats the NATO concept speaks to, which is first and foremost protection of your territory, unless that country is a threat to defence of the territory?

Mr. James Appathurai: When I had my first day as the spokesman of NATO many years ago, the secretary general at the time, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, said, “Okay, here are your instructions: never answer a question that begins with 'if'.” I never did, so I won't start now.

I can say that based on what you see in the Security Council, that's not a very likely scenario. Second, NATO is not getting involved in any way in the Syria crisis at present. But in a more generic sense, I don't want to leave the impression that the U.S. couldn't command very large operations ad infinitum. They could do it forever. But once you move beyond the U.S., there is no other way to generate and sustain a large multinational operation. That's what I was trying to imply by that.

If there is a consensus in the UN Security Council that NATO should do something, considering the deep commitment of all 28 allies to the UN and the fact that we have three permanent members of the Security Council in NATO, it would be looked at very carefully.

● (1300)

The Chair: Mr. Appathurai, thank you so much for your candour and your analysis of everything that's going on. I'm quite proud of the fact that we have a Canadian civilian at such a high level in NATO and so involved in the discussions that are happening there.

The success of NATO in recent years in Libya, the role it played in Afghanistan, and the continued work on building partnerships around the world and expanding that base and membership are things I believe we all support.

We are adjourned.

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