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Chair

Mr. James Bezan

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● (1205)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

I have one piece of committee business that we need to deal with quickly. We have a budget item that we need to deal with for the study—to pay for witnesses who have attended committee.

The total amount is $17,950. Could I have a motion that the committee adopt the proposed budget in the amount of $17,950 for its study on the NATO strategic concept?

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): I so move.

The Chair: Is there any discussion? Seeing none, all those in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you.

In the interests of time—because of our votes, we are delayed—we're going to have both of our witnesses appear together as we continue with our study under Standing Order 108(2) on the NATO strategic concept and Canada's role in international defence cooperation. Joining us are Jack Granatstein and Professor Ernie Regehr.

We welcome both of you.

Professor Regehr is a research fellow from the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Waterloo.

We're looking forward to your opening comments.

If each of you can bring us your opening comments and keep them under 10 minutes, that would be very much appreciated.

Mr. Granatstein, could you start first?

Dr. Jack Granatstein (As an Individual): Thank you, sir.

Honourable members, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you.

I believe this committee can play its most useful role for this nation by considering Canada's relationship with NATO. Is the alliance still relevant for us? Is Canada still useful to the alliance? If the answers to these questions are not immediately clear—and I do not believe they are—then we might ask if the Canadian commitment to NATO should be increased, sustained as is, reduced, or even ended.

We have not asked such questions since the government of Pierre Trudeau came to power in 1968. It is long past time to ask them once more. Why? Because the alliance's experiences in Afghanistan have been difficult, to understate matters. Nations, including Canada, until the end of 2005, imposed caveats on what their troops were allowed to do. Many members contributed no troops or small numbers of troops and could not be moved to do more. The alliance's command structure was sometimes ineffective, and the United States for a time all but refused to operate within or cooperate with NATO's ISAF structure. These flaws had serious tactical consequences, and I would suggest they led to unnecessary Canadian casualties.

Professor David Bercuson and I discussed some of these questions in a paper we wrote for the Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute.

Some might argue last year's Libyan operation demonstrated that NATO could work effectively. I do not believe this to be the case. First, France all but hustled NATO into the operation, launching its own air strikes. Second, although many member nations did good work, not the least our air force and navy, many members either refused to participate at all or placed severe caveats on their forces' role. Members had too few aircraft available, too little ammunition, and a shortages of pilots. The command structure, ably led by a Canadian general officer, nonetheless had the familiar flaws of uncertain command and control and lines of communication. While successful in toppling Gadhafi, the operation, more than anything, demonstrated the military weaknesses of the European members of the alliance.

Now matters are worsening, and will worsen further, as the global and European Community financial situations force cuts on alliance members' defence budgets. NATO's “smart defence” is intended to promote better and more coordinated use of members' military resources. This is a fine idea, but given more than a half century of history, there's very little to inspire confidence that NATO will be able to make this work. The reality is, if it wished to, Europe would be completely able to defend itself without North America's help. The U.S.S.R. is gone, and Russia, while a potential threat, is not likely to be a serious one for at least a decade. There are no other challengers in sight. A wealthy continent even now, Europe can and should do what it feels necessary to protect its interests.

The United States, like Canada, is turning its gaze towards the Pacific. There are challenges to come there, not least the rise of China as a military, economic, and political power. No one is suggesting war, but there is a need for increased preparation, enhanced readiness. Given the American financial troubles and given our own, we might ask if adequate attention can simultaneously be paid to both Europe and Asia. I think it cannot.

I'm not suggesting that Canada quit NATO. The alliance links us with our friends and it serves our national interest. But perhaps we should downplay our interest in and commitment to NATO, as in fact we have been doing by withdrawing from some alliance military programs. Perhaps we ought to begin looking for new partners to work with us from North America. Britain and France, although perhaps less so in the future under the Hollande government in Paris, appear willing to defend western interests. The Australians and New Zealanders provided excellent troops for Afghanistan and are historic partners in the Commonwealth. In the future, perhaps the Republic of Korea, Japan, India, Singapore, and other nations might be willing to join in what we might call an expanded anglosphere.

● (1210)

I do not see a new formal alliance in the immediate future, but it is not unlikely that there will be new coalitions of the willing—democracies that are capable of operating well together and that share an interest in protecting and advancing their common values.

I'm a historian, not a futurologist. Historians have enough difficulty trying to understand what has already happened, let alone what might happen tomorrow. But it is the task of government and members of Parliament to plan for the future. Your committee, ladies and gentlemen, can contribute to this by thinking ahead.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Granatstein.

Professor Regehr, please.

Dr. Ernie Regehr (Research Fellow, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Waterloo, As an Individual): Thank you very much.

I appreciate the invitation and welcome the opportunity.

I've prepared a background paper. I understand it has been distributed. In the next few minutes, I want to summarize some of the key points. I will devote my attention exclusively to the nuclear elements of the NATO strategic concept and posture, as did the paper I have submitted.

Though disagreements abound, we are still in a moment of some real opportunity for advancing nuclear disarmament. NATO's 2010 strategic concept partly reflects that increased international attention to and support for the pursuit of a world without nuclear weapons.

Paragraph 26, the central arms control paragraph, stands in sharp contrast to the 1999 strategic concept. The latter was effusive about nuclear weapons on European soil being “vital to the security of Europe”. It insisted that deployments in Europe “remain essential to preserve peace”, and that nuclear weapons in Europe were “an essential political and military link between European and North American members of the Alliance”.

None of that language is present in the 2010 strategic concept. It simply notes that NATO will retain “the full range of capabilities necessary to deter and defend”—but without explicitly insisting that nuclear capabilities be based in Europe.

There is, nevertheless, still reluctance to take action in support of the welcome change in rhetoric. Growing pressure to end European nuclear deployments is proving to be a politically vexing issue within NATO. But on one level, the issue should be straightforward. The nuclear non-proliferation treaty expressly prohibits, in articles I and II, the deployment of nuclear weapons in non-nuclear weapon states. The U.S. and NATO are currently alone in not complying with those two articles.

An estimated 200 B61 gravity bombs are currently deployed in five NATO countries. The justification is that it is an arrangement that goes back to before the treaty's 1970 entry into force, as did a similar Soviet Union-Warsaw Pact arrangement. It was tolerated in the Cold War context, but that tolerance is now wearing thin.

In the NPT review process, there are persistent calls for all nuclear weapon states to ensure that all their nuclear weapons are returned to and held within their own territories, that the capability for their rapid deployment to other states be eliminated, and that all nuclear training with non-nuclear weapon states be ended.

Germany has called for an end to nuclear deployments on its territory, partly out of concern for NPT compliance. The European nuclear deployments are now defended largely as symbols of political solidarity. Indeed, it is the conventional wisdom that the B61 bombs have no military utility.

In other words, the U.S. and all the current host states—Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, and Turkey—could comply with the treaty requirements without any adverse security consequences.

The European states that host the B61 are all facing decisions on replacing the aircraft that currently carry and deliver them—a series of individual national procurement decisions that could end the deployments by default. The Eurofighter, the likely replacement choice for Germany, does not currently have a nuclear-capable version. The Dutch, the Italians, and the Turks are considering the F-35.

In each case, adding a nuclear capability would add some $5 million to $10 million to the per unit cost. The Belgians are considering not acquiring a new fighter aircraft at all, thus ending their nuclear role.

The added financial costs for nuclear capability will be an issue in each of these countries, but even more so will be the political costs of an explicit decision to commit to a nuclear role for the next three to four decades that the new aircraft will be in service.

In the meantime, the U.S. is committed to upgrading the B61 warhead, including modifications to the tail assembly, in the interests of greater accuracy against hardened targets. If the B61's heightened accuracy were to be mated to new F-35 stealth fighter aircraft based in Europe, the result would be, from Russia's perspective, a significant escalation of the nuclear threat.

● (1215)

Even so, Russia does not justify its retention of non-strategic nuclear weapons primarily as a response to U.S. nuclear bombs in Europe. NATO's massive conventional superiority is the greater concern. Russia accounts for less than 6% of world military spending, while NATO states collectively account for about 60%. As long as Russia regards this overwhelming conventional force as a serious challenge to its regional interests, it will resist the final elimination of its tactical nuclear weapons. Two decades have now passed since the end of the Cold War, and it is past time for the mutual suspicions between NATO and Russia to be challenged and seriously addressed.

Notably, through the pursuit of a genuine mutual security community within the OSCE region, in testimony before this committee a few weeks ago, the Department of National Defence ADM for policy said that NATO has consistently told Russia, “This alliance is not about you. It's not against you.” It was an important point about pursuing mutual security interests, but the defence minister of Lithuania told this committee only a week or two later that it's absolutely about Russia. Lithuania and the Baltic and East European states seek collective defence against Russia as the priority NATO mission: “Our main concern,” said the minister, “is Russia's intention to dominate the region and the Baltic states.”

So NATO has not sent a consistent message to Russia, and neither have NATO's actions been unfailingly consistent with mutual security objectives. B61 modernization is one example, and ballistic missile defence is another. It is true that Russia is given to exaggerated claims about the likely impact of European missile defence on its security and the reliability of its deterrence, but it is also obvious that missile defence is a major drag on efforts to reset the overall Russia-NATO relationship. Some laud BMD as an element of smart defence, as did the Lithuanian minister, but there is a significant expert community that asks what is smart about a military deployment that relies on unproven and still hotly debated technology, that is deployed against an uncertain threat, and that undermines a key NATO arms control objective, namely the elimination of sub-strategic forces?

All of this suggests some constructive policy directions for Canada. I won't list all of the ones that I have suggested in the paper, but perhaps we could talk about those during the discussion period.

Thank you.

● (1220)

The Chair: Thank you, gentlemen. I appreciate that both of you were able to stay under the 10-minute time limit.

In the interest of time, we're going to have five-minute rounds right through to try to get as many members up with questions as possible.

Mr. Harris, would you kick us off, please?

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

Thank you to both of the witnesses for coming to share your thoughts with us today.

First of all, Professor Granatstein, I don't know if you're deliberately trying to be provocative here, but your reputation precedes you. The idea of us as a Canadian nation joining with others to form some sort of “anglosphere” in the world as a military alliance strikes me as not the kind of thing that a bilingual, multi-founding nation country should be engaged in.

Obviously we share a lot of interests and values with some of the countries you mentioned, but surely the interest of international peace and cooperation must depend on Canada cooperating with and trying to make friends and strategic alliances with people like the Lithuanians and NATO and the other nations of the United Nations that perhaps use our knowledge to help them learn from us some of our skills and values.

Are you trying to be provocative here, or do you really believe that?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I was careful not to say that we should leave NATO. I was trying to suggest that if we are turning our attention towards the Pacific, it's a bit outside NATO's usual sphere of operations, and maybe we should be looking for people who share our values in that part of the world. The Australians and New Zealanders are obvious ones. Britain and France have continuing interests in that area. Perhaps the Koreans, the Japanese, the Indians, the Singaporeans, and those in other nations might find that they share some western interests in the face of growing Chinese aggressiveness and pushiness in the South China Sea and in other parts of the Pacific. I'm not suggesting that a military alliance should be formed. I'm suggesting we should talk to people.

Mr. Jack Harris: SEATO exists there too.

Dr. Jack Granatstein: It doesn't any longer.

Mr. Jack Harris: We'll leave that. You're right.

I don't have much time. That's why I'm moving on quickly, Professor Granatstein.

Professor Regehr, I want to thank you for your analysis and for pointing out the significant differences on the nuclear side of policy with respect to the 1999 to 2010 strategic concept notions.

Your paper suggests some of the things Canada should be doing. Within NATO, can you suggest any top two or three things Canada should be pushing for to see that new concept make some progress, now that we seem to have adopted a new approach? What are the two or three most important things we should be pushing for?

● (1225)

Dr. Ernie Regehr: I think the issue of the nuclear deployments on European soil is shaping up to be a major issue, because of the procurement decisions that are coming along. Ultimately, that's going to be primarily a European decision, but I think Canada should make its own position clear, that the utility of these weapons, whatever they once were, have passed, and that an international community that is trying to deal with non-proliferation challenges elsewhere—Iran and DPRK obviously—ought to be particularly sensitive to a policy that continues to deploy nuclear weapons within the territories of non-nuclear weapon states parties to the NPT. I think that's a particularly rankling policy, and I think we ought to push for strict adherence in the spirit and letter of the NPT law.

I think then the relationship with Russia, and that involves both the issue of the modernization of the warheads the United States is planning and also the deployment of ballistic missile defence, is also a particular concern. Germany and Norway and some other states have called for new, reinvigorated discussions within the Russia-NATO Council on cooperation with Russia. I think we ought to be pushing that strongly and calling for a halt, at least, or a slowdown, a pause, in ballistic missile defence deployments until we get a better understanding and some assurance that if ballistic missile defence is to go forward, it goes together cooperatively with Russia, rather than viewed as being against Russia's interests.

The Chair: Thank you. Time has expired.

Mr. Alexander.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Ajax—Pickering, CPC): Thank you very much, Chair. And thanks to our witnesses for being here and for accommodating the unpredictable schedule today. Thank you to you both for your opening comments.

I'll start with Professor Granatstein. You're a historian. You're taking the long view on these issues. You mentioned 1968 and other high points, or low points, in our thinking about NATO and our contributions to NATO.

I think many of us on this committee are impressed by the fact that Canada's percentage of GDP dedicated to defence hasn't rivalled that of the U.K. or France, let alone the United States, since the early 1960s. There was a secular decline in that decade, a further decline in the 1970s, some recovery in the 1980s, a decline again, and now some recovery, but not dramatic.

Could you say more about where you think we are in terms of Canada's relationship with NATO? Is our strategic thinking really out of step with the rest of NATO right now? Do we really need a fundamental reconsideration of first principles? What about our overall level of ambition and commitment in terms of spending?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: In my view, we're not spending enough to keep up with what we need to do. We have caught up a good deal in filling the holes in the military, but we still have too few personnel. We still are remarkably short of equipment in certain areas.

And of course we are effectively out of NATO except when we choose to participate. We have staff officers there. We've withdrawn from some small but key programs in NATO that we'd had people committed to until recently.

We did, of course, participate with NATO in Afghanistan and in Libya, but those were in effect "wars of choice", if I might use that term. We went with NATO because it served our interests, as we believed, to do so.

I think that's now where we are, effectively, with NATO. We're in a wars of choice situation. We're distant from it, but we will, if it serves our interests, participate in further military operations or further alliance operations of some kind. But it will be choice.

Now, that assumes that an article 5 conflict arises and NATO's solidarity is called into question; then, yes, I believe we would participate. We should realize, of course, that this could occur again fairly soon.

There's been some suggestion that Turkey might find itself in a situation where, because of the Syrian situation, it calls on NATO to act, to defend Turkey. We would, I assume, respond. How we would respond is another question. I can see us dispatching a ship, but it seems to me unlikely that we would be providing substantial ground troops at this point.

● (1230)

Mr. Chris Alexander: As you know, this strategic concept provides for three main roles, tasks, vocations for NATO. One is collective defence, which is the historical legacy role. The other is crisis management, the wars of choice, or missions of choice. Not everyone contributes equally to them, as we've seen. But then there's also cooperative security.

I'd like your comments, Professor Granatstein, on that issue. NATO's strategic concept talks about the opportunity to work with partners around the globe to shape the operations of the future, and yet, at the same time, it's a security organization that's keeping the door open only to European members.

To what extent can NATO be relevant to addressing the Asian and other global security challenges you see, and to what extent should we work through another regional security arrangement?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I guess the thrust of what I was saying in my prepared comments was that NATO is not necessarily the best vehicle to approach the Pacific. Not all NATO countries have interest in the Pacific. Not all NATO countries care about it.

The reality is that we of course have a very large coastline. We have many interests that affect the Pacific. It will be much more important to us than it will be to most other NATO members. Do we want to be in a situation where we're dependent on the Lithuanians to vote for collective action in the Pacific?

Mr. Chris Alexander: Probably not.

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Probably not. It's not the right way for us to approach this.

Mr. Chris Alexander: I have two seconds left—

The Chair: No, your time has just expired. I have to be diligent here, and judicious.

Mr. Trudeau, you're on deck.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair.

I went from having seven minutes with each of you to having five minutes with both of you, so I will ask my question fairly quickly and then allow the rest of the time for both of you to comment.

NATO was of course created largely in response to the pressures of the Soviet bloc, or ended up becoming what it was because of the Cold War. That model, with certain exceptions—the concerns around Turkey and Syria, for example—has largely been supplanted by concerns of....

I mean, even the action against Libya was not really against Libya. It was against a specific regime and an individual in Libya. But the idea of states warring against each other seems to have fallen out of... at least what is our current experience. This has an impact on both what NATO is doing and what NATO needs to do, but also around nuclear disarmament, as you've talked about, Professor.

I'd like to hear, first of all, how we're managing that shift, or how we should manage that shift, from being about warring states, which was the old model of peacekeeping, to much more anti-terrorism, promotion of security, guerrilla warfare between different factions within states.

Secondly, you talked a lot about nuclear deterrents...but talking about both, in that regard, having individuals or organizations that aren't states beginning to access nuclear weapons, and how that affects the nuclear atmosphere we're in, linking a little bit to certain conventional munitions—chemical, biological, or, specifically in this case, cluster bombs—that have larger implications than others for our global security.

I'd turn it over to both of you, please.

● (1235)

Dr. Ernie Regehr: Thank you.

The threat of proliferation of nuclear weapons to non-state actors, or nuclear materials, even if not in weapon form, has had the most sobering effect on the move towards stricter adherence to non-proliferation and disarmament. When Kissinger, Sam Nunn, and George Schultz made their statements about nuclear disarmament, that's one of the things they were particularly concerned about.

We're recognizing that the notion that we can have a stable international community in which some remain “have” states of nuclear weapons for a long time while others do not is not possible in a world in which nuclear material, nuclear know-how, is widely dispersed. Any emerging industrial country—Iran would be an example—that has some universities and a scientific community, plus access to nuclear materials, can gain access to nuclear weapons. They have particular relationships with non-state groups. That's the most sobering element of it.

By the way, placing small bombs in a whole bunch of airfields around Europe is probably not the best security move.

Dr. Jack Granatstein: To go to the other part of your question, if I may, NATO still thinks of itself in a Cold War model—state-to-state conflicts. That's what it was set up for, and I think that's still largely the mindset.

The comments by a Lithuanian foreign minister that my colleague mentioned suggest that some members of NATO think that way. I would add that some members of NATO are probably right to think that way. If I lived in Lithuania, I'd take that view very strongly.

Some things don't change. But the technologies of warfare will maybe change dramatically. We're talking about cyberwar now. There's an area where NATO, in its own interest, and all of us members of NATO in our own interests, must pay much closer attention. It's clear that this is a weapon that can be used with extraordinary consequences on civil society, let alone military society.

Before we came into session, I was talking with Professor Regehr about the F-35 and the fact that the Chinese have apparently already stolen much of the technology that's gone into that.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: [*Inaudible—Editor*].

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Maybe we can buy them cheaper.

There are many ways of fighting wars now, and I think NATO needs to be able to prepare for those.

The Chair: Thank you. Time has expired.

Mr. Chisu.

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

Thank you very much, Professors, for being here today.

I would like to set the stage. In 1949, when NATO was created, Canada had a major role. Canada was a contributor to two world wars, in which somehow, through NATO...it established peace in Europe. Now, two generations haven't fought a war in Europe, with the exception of the Balkans. But still, NATO contained that situation. Now NATO has 28 nations, and most of the eastern European nations were formally in the Warsaw Pact.

I am from eastern Europe, and I know for sure that NATO is still a warranty today against the ambition of Russia to maintain political hegemony and political influence in that part of Europe.

What can we do, as Canadians, to maintain our role that we had at the foundation of NATO? How do you see this role, that we still have something to say in the business of NATO?

● (1240)

Dr. Jack Granatstein: It's been more than 60 years since the founding of NATO. While I'm inclined to agree that Russia is a threat of a kind to eastern Europe, it is a threat of a different kind than it has been for most of the last 60 years.

Is Russia liable to send troops into eastern Europe tomorrow? Very unlikely. Is it possible it might do so 10 years from now? Possibly. But fundamentally, surely this is a European problem.

Canada has an interest, but it is somewhat less of an interest, I would suggest, than what we had 60 years ago when it was a worldwide Cold War taking shape. I don't see the Russians being likely to take that kind of approach on a global scale in the near future.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: I was asking about the situation with Russia because it borders us in the Arctic, so we cannot say that we don't have an interest in Russia.

If you are looking at Russia, and you are putting yourself in the mentality of Russia between the two world wars, they created that big industrial machine between the two world wars and nobody believed it. But now, as a big country, with China on the right and NATO on the left, they are starting to feel squeezed. They will do something, so we need to react. They are bordering us in the Arctic, and the Arctic is opening, so we cannot just neglect our interest in them.

What is your opinion of that?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I wouldn't for a minute suggest that we neglect the Russians. I would suggest that we assess properly what threats there might be from them and react to them in an appropriate way. We may have a different idea of what those threats might be. That's all.

I think in the Arctic, at the moment, we're much more likely to be cooperating with the Russians than combatting them.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: You're speaking about the nuclear issue. When the Warsaw Pact in the 1990s...conventional weaponry was part of the Warsaw Pact and Russia and the nuclear situation was balanced. Now it is reversed. Conventional superiority is on the side of NATO and you have an imbalance on the nuclear side.

How do you think nuclear disarmament can proceed in this situation when it is a perceived threat from both sides? It's a reverse threat.

Dr. Ernie Regehr: To quote the Lithuanian minister again, and perhaps too often, she also said, quite explicitly, after talking about the concerns about Russia, that there's no military threat from Russia.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: What about Kaliningrad?

Dr. Ernie Regehr: There are concerns about what may or may not be in Kaliningrad.

But she did say that.

I quoted Karl Deutsch. His definition of a mutual security community is one in which a pluralistic group of states abides in which the idea of them going to war with each other to solve their problems is really unthinkable.

It's unthinkable for much of the Euro-Atlantic communities. It's probably not entirely unthinkable, but I think the move towards disarmament is in seeking ways of reducing the threat posture both ways and finding ways of commonly addressing mutual interests, as we have in the Arctic.

The Chair: Thank you. Your time has expired.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Moore, go ahead.

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

Mr. Regehr, you are a disarmament expert. NATO's strategic concept includes a commitment to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. I would like to hear your take on NATO's efforts to control arms and the biggest challenges it faces in that regard.

I have another question about arms control. Some of the world's biggest arms exporters are NATO countries, and the regions they export weapons to include north and northwest Africa, and the Middle East, places like Libya, Algeria, Syria, Yemen and Egypt.

Until recently, Canada was selling arms to Libya, Algeria and even Egypt. No one saw the Arab Spring coming or the fact that thousands of civilians would be killed with weapons made in Canada, the U.S. or France. We do know, however, that the leaders of these Arab countries, like Colonel Gadhafi, didn't turn into dictators overnight. There had likely been some awareness for a while that the arms sold had perhaps been used for many years to kill or wrongfully imprison civilians.

What stance should Canada take on this issue? What position should we adopt or try to advance with NATO when it comes to arms control?

● (1245)

[*English*]

Dr. Ernie Regehr: Thank you very much for that.

I think we have to understand that NATO, as a collectivity, does not have a major role in direct arms control negotiations. NATO can play an important role in shaping the environment in which arms control negotiations take place, but those negotiations are either much narrower, bilateral, between Russia and the United States, or are much broader, multilateral, within the UN context. So NATO as an institution I think doesn't have that direct a role, but it shapes the environment.

Of relevance there are two very important obstacles to arms control, which I've already mentioned, and they are ballistic missile defence and the conventional imbalance in forces between NATO and Russia. Both of those are going to be very important as we move down towards lower levels. In strategic arms control there will be movement down to lower levels. Russia is already below the new START levels in the number of weapons it deploys. So it's going to continue to go down. But I think the further down it goes, the more ballistic missile defence and the imbalance in conventional will be a factor. Ballistic missile defence can be dealt with either by pausing it or by doing it very overtly, cooperatively, with Russia. That's the only solution there. On the conventional imbalance, it means a reinvention of the relationship between NATO and the Russian Federation in particular. I think that is what's required there.

I'm happy to say a little bit about the conventional arms and the export of conventional arms, partly because at the United Nations we're moving in July into negotiations on an arms trade treaty. The U.K. has been a particular champion of that. For a couple of years now there have been preparatory committee meetings towards an arms trade treaty, and that's going to come to the fore this summer when the negotiations take place. I think that's going to be very difficult, because of the wide range of economic and political interests involved in the export of military commodities. But the attempt to create some international standards of restraint is very important. Canada has been largely supportive of the move towards an arms trade treaty, and I think it needs to continue in that direction. Some issues like human rights criteria, for example, need to figure in prominently, and those are things that Canada should be promoting.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much. Your time is up.

[*English*]

Ms. Gallant, you have the floor.

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

Professor Granatstein, you mentioned F-35s in passing today. I recall an article that was published in April; it was on the costing of that. It mentioned that now they have to factor in not only the cost of the plane but also the parts costs, as well as added equipment, and the maintenance. So spares and maintenance have to be factored in. Has it not been customary over the past number of years, 10 or 20 years, to also include projected fuel costs and wages for the pilots, for example?

● (1250)

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I believe so, yes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

I want to go back now to the aspect of having not a formal alliance but looking at the Pacific. You mentioned that you didn't need a specific, formal alliance. In the absence of having a command structure or a set of articles, a constitution, upon which to base decisions, how would this work? Would it just be ad hoc?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Coalitions of the willing, which we have been part of in the past. Realistically they would probably involve a U.S. command structure into which other nations would fit. It would obviously help if we were thinking this way to undertake exercises with some of the nations in the Pacific. We are in fact doing this. We participate in RIMPAC each year, and we're participating in a bigger way than usual this year. We have closer relationships with Australia. We have growing relationships with Singapore. In other words, we're de facto moving in this direction. I think this is a good thing. We have friends in some parts of the world who we should talk to more often about military cooperation.

The Chair: Professor Regehr wanted to jump in on this.

Dr. Ernie Regehr: I feel compelled to introduce into this discussion at least some regard for the United Nations and the United Nations peacekeeping operations. They operate in very difficult circumstances, in very productive ways, in Sudan now—South Sudan as well as in the Nuba Mountains—and still in Darfur. These are all under-resourced operations, as in the DRC. The northern industrialized communities have been largely absent from those operations, except for some financing. If we're thinking of recalibrating Canadian defence policy, I think we ought to include consideration of that, of greater involvement there as well.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: In terms of the Pacific, the coalitions of the willing, do you see any challenges in terms of interoperability and sharing intelligence, given that the NATO countries themselves find challenges from time to time?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Clearly, there would be challenges. We do have close intelligence relationships with the United States, a Pacific power, with Australia and New Zealand, Pacific powers. The challenges arise when it comes to the countries I mentioned originally—Japan, Korea, Singapore—and I suspect we would treat such nations much as NATO nations are excluded from some of the intelligence that Britain and Canada receive from the United States: we get some of it that others don't.

There were German and Dutch officers in Afghanistan who complained bitterly about what they saw as a conspiracy, that Canadians got more intelligence from the Americans than they did. It's tough in an alliance, because you trust some people more than others, necessarily.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: You mentioned that a dimension in Libya exposed certain European weaknesses. Would you elaborate upon what those weaknesses you observed were?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Many of the countries in NATO that participated in the Libyan operation ran out of bombs very quickly. Some of them didn't have pilots. Some of them refused to participate in certain aspects of the mission. Some of the communications in aircraft could not talk to other aircraft. After sixty years of an alliance, to have these kinds of problems arise in an operation just offshore, in a sense, and very close to Europe struck me as, frankly, incredible.

● (1255)

The Chair: Thank you. It's time to move on.

Mr. Kellway.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to our guests for coming today.

Professor Regehr, you referenced the F-35 and nuclear weapons in your paper and in your comments today. It was very brief, so I'm wondering if you can expand on it a bit and tell us whether, in your view, the F-35, with this capacity to carry nuclear arms, it was kind of a very intentional thought, that the F-35 would be part of a broader nuclear strategy; second, whether it is very consciously perceived as such by certain countries in the world; and third, if there's any controversy within NATO over that capacity of the F-35 in light of your comments around the non-proliferation treaty.

Dr. Ernie Regehr: The United States has always had the intention of building some F-35s with dual capability; that is, they would have the capability of delivering these particular gravity bombs, which are the B61s. The B61 is also deliverable by the strategic bomber, the B-2 bomber. But the new fighter aircraft role is to go to the F-35. There are a limited number of them, but they are there.

The question that then comes up is whether those European states that currently host B61 bombs will build into their purchase of the F-35, if that's what they purchase, nuclear carrying capability. There's an expectation that they will.

I think it's a politically loaded issue that is a few years down the line, but it will be coming to the fore. As I said, in a time of financial scarcity, the added cost will be one factor, but I think the political cost will be much more.

In Germany, there's a very strong public attitude in support of eliminating the nuclear role in Germany. Right now, the German government is protected by kind of a legacy. They've had this role for a long time, and there isn't any decision there. But when the decision comes to build this into the new aircraft and overtly declare that they, potentially, for the next 30 to 40 years, are going to continue a nuclear role, that will light a spark of political controversy I think in the Netherlands, in Germany in particular, and also I think in Italy. I'm not quite so certain about Turkey.

I think it'll be a very important political question. Not being a historian, I can predict the future, and I'd wager that Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy will decide not to include the nuclear capability.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: That's interesting.

Professor Granatstein, I hear your reservations about NATO. I'm wondering what your thoughts are on the role of NATO in the context Professor Regehr laid out with respect to the changing idea of what the nuclear threat actually is. Now we have this threat of the proliferation of nuclear arms. In your view, is NATO a useful entity in light of that threat? If so, how, and if not, why not?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I'm not sure I quite understand your question, but let me try.

Russia still has substantial nuclear weapons, but they have fewer than they did before. If I were a European member of NATO, I would be very concerned that there not be an imbalance. I would be very concerned that my side at least had enough nuclear weapons to make deterrence credible. I think we do. I think the object should be to sustain that balance.

● (1300)

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Really, I'm talking about the new—

The Chair: Your time is up. Five minutes goes by fast when you're having fun, I know.

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Mr. Chair, my time, unfortunately, is up as well, as I must leave at 1 p.m.

The Chair: Okay. It is 1 p.m.

Professor, thank you for coming. We'll excuse you. I found your comments today very intriguing and helpful.

Does the rest of the committee want to continue? I know that we should adjourn at 1 p.m., but since we started late, would you like to have a couple of more rounds of questions with Professor Regehr?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Chris Alexander: We have a vote at 1:20.

The Chair: Bells will be going off again in about 20 minutes.

Okay, we'll keep moving along.

Mr. Strahl, you're on.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Thank you, Chair. That will affect my questioning structure a little bit.

I was going to ask, in light of Mr. Kellway's question, whether the new Russian and Chinese fighter jets have the capability to deliver nuclear weapons.

Dr. Ernie Regehr: I am not aware of the Chinese. The Russians certainly do. As long as they maintain non-strategic weapons, they will have fighter aircraft with that capability.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Is that in response to the F-35, or is the F-35 design responding to what Russia has, in your view?

Dr. Ernie Regehr: It's part of a long-term strategy of simply maintaining a mix of nuclear capability from strategic—air, land, and sea—to a variety of non-strategic.The United States has gone down to virtually a single non-strategic weapon, the B61. Russia keeps a wider range.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Perhaps you could answer. I was going to ask Professor Granatstein. I'm assuming you observe NATO for more than just nuclear disarmament reasons. Some of the things he talked about were problems with a 60-year-old alliance. When pressed quickly into an actual operation, it had obvious communications difficulties and some concerns with interoperability. Would you agree with me that it's important to Canada as part of NATO to continue to participate in international exercises, and when we are procuring equipment, we make sure the interoperability of that equipment with our NATO allies is paramount?

Dr. Ernie Regehr: As I said before, I think it's very important that Canada continue to participate in military and other kinds of operations beyond its borders and that it has the capacity to make a contribution. Having said that, I think we need to adopt a bit of modesty about what can be accomplished, as both Libya and Afghanistan indicate these expeditionary operations can be very efficient, and particular elements of military operation, as in deposing regimes. As in both cases, we are seeing that the major challenge is in rebuilding new regimes. There, a different set of resources, skills, and capabilities are required. While Canada needs to maintain a capability to cooperate with allies and others, including in the United Nations, in the military peace support operations internationally, I think a much more heightened approach to the diplomatic reconstruction elements of resolving those conflicts needs to be included.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Do you think NATO is best placed to head those sorts of rebuilding efforts, or should that be left to the United Nations or another body? Is NATO designed to have that whole-of-government approach to a rebuild?

● (1305)

Dr. Ernie Regehr: I think the evidence is that NATO is not designed particularly for that. Its primary role is collective defence. It has adopted the role of crisis management with some mixed degree of success. The cooperative security needs a much broader canvas than what NATO can provide.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. You still have time left, but we will move on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brahmi, you have five minutes.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

I will be asking my questions in French.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Regehr, you talked mostly about nuclear disarmament against NATO's traditional backdrop, in other words, the Cold War and the traditional nuclear powers, so to speak.

Do you have any suggestions on the role NATO should play as far as emerging traditional powers go? Without getting into the conflicts, could you comment on the tensions that exist between India and Pakistan, and between Iran and Israel? How might the pursuit of global nuclear disarmament take shape for these two sets of countries, which are all emerging nuclear powers?

[*English*]

Dr. Ernie Regehr: I think NATO does not have a particular role to play either in South Asia or in the Middle East. I think there's broad recognition that the solutions there need to be regional, and in the case of Iran and Israel in particular.

At the NPT review conference in 2010, there was a particular decision-taking, which grew out of a 1995 decision, on the pursuit of the Middle East as a nuclear-weapon-free zone—a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. That's a very long-term and difficult process, but it's recognized as being central to dealing with the proliferation pressures in that region in the long term: that the easing of proliferation pressures there is dependent upon developing a different kind of security dynamic in the region as a whole.

It's the same thing with India and Pakistan. The tragedy is that India and Pakistan are in a heightened arms race at the moment. They are both producing fissile materials for weapons purposes at an accelerated rate. By the way, the supply of uranium for the civil program in India allows it to use more of its indigenous uranium for weapons purposes. There, too, there are regional elements, because the conventional imbalance between those two also is a major cause.

Also, there is the failure of the international communities to pursue negotiations on a fissile materials cut-off treaty, which has been on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament since 1995 and generally before that. I think the failure to produce that has serious implications for South Asia, and it ought to be a priority in trying to get the Asian arms race—there's only one word for it, I think—under control.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: If I understand correctly, then, Canada's role in NATO should be more on the materials control side. Basically, NATO should focus more on controlling nuclear materials than on deploying diplomatic efforts, as far as the tensions between these countries go.

[*English*]

Dr. Ernie Regehr: No. I think NATO has a responsibility to help create an environment within the Euro-Atlantic community that is conducive to reducing both sub-strategic and strategic nuclear weapons. That's where it has a role. That is partly a materials control problem, but it is more a diplomacy and reconciliation problem, and that's the NATO focus when it comes to nuclear disarmament.

When it comes to non-proliferation objectives beyond the Euro-Atlantic community, then I think NATO is not the context in which Canada pursues that. We are a member of the Conference on Disarmament and have been diplomatically active there. We are currently seeking or finding other means of producing the fissile materials convention negotiations, for example, because the Conference on Disarmament is stalled.

So I think the Canadian efforts need to be pursued in other forums when it comes to non-proliferation beyond the Euro-Atlantic community. NATO's focus is on getting it right in the Euro-Atlantic community when it comes to nuclear disarmament.

● (1310)

The Chair: Thank you. Your time has expired.

Mr. Norlock.

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

You broached the area of concern with regard to nuclear capabilities or proliferation, and of course we don't think North Korea has anything to do...or has the capability. Getting back to Iran, and also of course the India-Pakistan issue, which I think we sometimes leave out, NATO does have an interest vis-à-vis Pakistan in particular because of the nature of the Afghanistan conflict. And of course we deal with the Middle East, and to call the capabilities there a “powder keg” would be an understatement.

So given all the complexities and variations in national interests, and in particular and more specifically as it relates to Iran, because it is a true rogue nation in that it aspires to something other than just maintaining its own nation.... It's actually a bit of a jihad, if you can use that expression when you talk about an ability with nuclear weapons.

How do you begin to square some of those different...? How do you begin to make some sense of that whole mishmash? When you talk about nuclear disarmament, the main word you use is trust, and I don't see that anywhere. If you could use the trust element in nuclear disarmament in those areas, how would you go about doing that?

Dr. Ernie Regehr: To begin, I think you're absolutely right that NATO has keen interests in the South Asia situation, and also in the Middle East. I'm saying I don't think that NATO is the institutional context within which those issues are pursued. In the case of Iran, it's P5 plus 1. So that involves China and Russia as well as European countries and a NATO country.

It's a particularly difficult thing, but I think that generally the solution to the Iran problem is known. There needs to be a cap, an end, a termination of Iran's enriching of uranium to 20% and a recognition of Iran's right to continue to enrich uranium to 3% to 5% for nuclear reactors. And the international community should supply fuel rods for Iran's research reactor that uses the 20% uranium.

That's largely the formula for a solution there. It doesn't mean that Iran is going to accept it, but I think the international community has made a big mistake in insisting all along that Iran suspend all enrichment. Its response, of course justifiably, is that it's entitled to do it under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Rick Norlock: And there is the trust element in those other nations I mentioned.

Dr. Ernie Regehr: I think in the case of India and Pakistan—and I'm sure there are people here who can speak to that more directly—there isn't an ample supply of trust between those two countries. The instability in Pakistan is one thing, but the huge conventional disparity between the two is another, so that conventional disparity is not going to be repaired. It's permanent. It's always going to be that way, so that the response there is to build trust. There are some people who are working at that.

● (1315)

Mr. Rick Norlock: The other part of the trust involves Israel and Iran. Given the proximity of Israel to Turkey and the complexity there—of course, Turkey has a connection with NATO—that does involve NATO. Would you not agree?

The Chair: Your time has expired.

Dr. Ernie Regehr: It certainly involves NATO's interests.

The Chair: The final question goes to you, Ms. James.

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to pass my time to my colleague, Mr. Alexander.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Thank you, Chair.

I didn't get a chance to ask Mr. Regehr earlier, and it was my own fault for not judging time better, about the nuclear issue and the related ballistic missile issue.

You mentioned, of course, the obligations we all have on the non-proliferation treaty. Nuclear weapon states obviously have additional ones for basing and so forth. Clearly Canada remains, as NATO remains, a proponent of nuclear disarmament on the right terms in a way that enhances our security. Meanwhile, if we look at the last 10 years, probably the most disturbing trend in proliferation is in ballistic missile technology, where we're talking about a huge range of states who have them or are trying to have them, and even non-state actors who might be able to acquire them. This could be a small-scale threat to our ships if we deploy them to the Mediterranean or the Indian Ocean, but it could also be a large-scale threat to states, including NATO member states.

Given what you've said about DND and so forth, what do you think NATO's overall approach should be, within or even beyond the strategic concept, to defending its members and other partners, where there's political will to do so, against a growing threat from ballistic missiles?

Dr. Ernie Regehr: I think it's appropriate to pursue a ballistic missile defence capability. That capability is far from mature at the moment. Point defence is reasonably mature and realistic, but the problem of area defence is much more.... There you've got an expert community that is very skeptical of the defence ever being able to overwhelm offence, and that is if any country that has a sophisticated enough capacity to create ICBMs is going to have the capacity to build decoys into them and ways of circumventing missile defence.

So there is a very big job of pursuing a capability. I think where it's going wrong at the moment is the early deployment of a system that has a questionable capability but proves to be politically destabilizing in the Euro-Atlantic region.

I think the way forward is to move together cooperatively with Russia, pool resources, because we have a common interest there, and try to develop a genuine capacity, and also for mid-course interception. By the way, it's the capacity that could also have relevance as numbers of nuclear weapons get way low as protection against breakout and that sort of thing.

So BMD needs to be cooperative to be effective.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Fair enough.

You've mentioned that in South Asia and the Middle East the principal responsibility for achieving security remains regional. The UN has a role, but it has been paralyzed or blocked for various reasons over 60 or 70 years. Given that NATO is now an organization of 28 allies that has given itself the task of crisis management and of developing partnerships for security, and that NATO has partners like Afghanistan, some of the gulf states, and Turkey that are in these regions or directly adjacent to them, isn't there a role for NATO in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and crisis management over the longer term, and shouldn't we be preparing for those scenarios in the two regions?

● (1320)

Dr. Ernie Regehr: I think there are skills and capacities within the NATO community that ought to be exploited, including when it comes to verification of agreements and those kinds of things. Yes, indeed.

If diplomatic pressure can be brought to bear and harnessed from the NATO community, as the NATO community, then I think too.... I'm not entirely persuaded that this 28 set of states collectively has a diplomatic capacity or a role that, as Professor Granatstein was saying, coalitions of the willing, both diplomatically and militarily, might have, which would include elements of NATO but also other elements.

The Chair: Thank you.

Every member has had a chance to ask questions. I understand that people have places to go and people to see.

With that, I want to thank you, Professor Regehr, for attending today, for your insightful testimony, and for the debate that we've had.

I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

Thank you, Mr. Trudeau.

We're out of here.

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