HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on National Defence

NDDN • NUMBER 022 • 2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Chair

Mr. Rick Norlock

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● (1145)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC)): We'll call the meeting to order.

For those present, especially our witnesses, my apologies. The workings of the House of Commons are such that from time to time the best laid plans of men and men...and men and women too, yes of course.

Today we are continuing on with our study of the defence of North America.

Our witnesses are Stephen Saideman, the Paterson Chair in International Affairs at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University. We also have Dr. Alexander Moens, a professor of political science at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver.

Thank you you very much, gentlemen. As usual you will have a 10-minute introduction and then we'll start our questioning and answers. Please start. I'll let you gentlemen decide who is going to be first.

Dr. Stephen Saideman (Paterson Chair in International Affairs, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am honoured to be invited to speak to this committee.

The starting point for any conversation about Canadian security is that Canada is in a rare position in the world. Geography limits the threats that Canada faces, and its economic strengths and its political stability mean that Canada is quite secure compared to the rest of the world.

While there is much talk about terrorism, cyberthreats, and other unconventional challenges, the reality is that Canada is secure enough that it can make mistakes without paying too high a price, which is a good thing since Canada does tend to make mistakes because its politicians refuse to face some of the difficult trade-offs and make the hard choices needed to confront the changing realities of 21st century defence. Of course the problem is that mistakes can still be quite serious as they can endanger Canadian soldiers, pilots, sailors, and others working for the Canadian government.

To be clear, many of the defence procurement challenges are not new to Canada, nor new to advanced democracies, nor the fault of the current government. That Canada is facing recapitalization of its navy while having to purchase replacements for the core of the air force is a real problem. In my family we try to buy one car at a time and pay off one car at a time, space those purchases out, so that we are not facing too high a price at any one point in time. That worked great until a school bus rammed my younger car.

In the case of Canada, the life spans of the ships and planes were entirely predictable, so it should not have been the case that Canada needed to replace all the ships and the planes and the Arctic patrol vessels all at the same time. Even if the accounting allows for all the stuff to be spent at the same time, I'm not sure Canada has the expertise inside the government to run so many programs simultaneously. Clearly, we apparently do not have the shipyard space to be building many ships at once.

Still, this government has been in office for quite some time, yet refuses to face the trade-offs that must be addressed. The best example of this is the notion that more than $3 billion can be cut from the budget without any real consequence. Perhaps the most important and least necessary denial of reality is this. We have been keeping to a symbolic level of 100,000 troops, which is very costly, and it's almost entirely unnecessary. That is a commitment to a symbolic level. Personnel costs are a huge part of the budget, more than 50%, so if we're going to cut the military budget we should cut there, as well as other places.

The refusal to do this, combined with the large procurement projects, means that cuts will fall on operations, maintenance, and exercising. In the U.S. there is always much concern about the hollowing out of the force, that they will still have much equipment and many soldiers, sailors, marines, and pilots, but they will lose their sharp edge due to a lack of practice. This is going to happen in Canada. Here the consequences are being ignored for the symbolism of being strong on defence by keeping the force at that level.

Experts know that the government today is spending about the same as it was in 2006, once you control for ordinary inflation. The problem of course is that inflation in military equipment is hardly ordinary. A flat budget is problematic when inflation is significant. Exacerbating this is the move to emphasize industrial benefits of defence programs so that systems that are built in Canada are advantaged in competitions over those that do not employ Canadians.

The shipbuilding program seemed to be a good idea, to have a nationwide competition to decide where in Canada the ships are built. The problem is that restarting long-dormant shipyards means that Canada will be paying a premium for these ships, and a hefty one at that. The ships will be much more expensive and almost certainly less capable than those made in Europe or elsewhere. This will almost certainly mean fewer ships, which means that DND should be thinking now of what a smaller navy means, including what kinds of cuts can be made to the number of sailors and officers, since fewer ships means fewer sailors and fewer officers.

Of course, this speaks to an enduring problem. Canada's military should be designed to fit Canada's strategy: an assessment of the threats Canada faces, the means by which those threats will be dealt with, and a balancing of commitments and capabilities.

The Canada First defence strategy was overcome by events a long time ago. The new strategy that takes seriously the fiscal constraints and the increased costs of equipment will recognize that Canada will have to do less with less, not more with less, including a smaller navy, a smaller army, and a smaller air force. Canada can still be a good partner in NORAD and a good ally in NATO as long as the forces it contributes to the various missions are not hollow. Smaller is better than hollow.

Rather than cutting by default and cutting by accident—literally in the case of the navy with some of the accidents it's had—Canada can, and should, make difficult choices. This government is actually in an excellent position to do so since—here is where I become the political scientist—the opposition parties are unlikely to pick up votes from those who want more defence spending. To be sure, those problems are not unique to Canada, as most advanced democracies face these problems: tighter budgets, defence procurement challenges, and alliance commitments.

● (1150)

Canada can choose the traditional path, which is to muddle through, but this time the stakes are higher since the programs are so very expensive, and all of this is coming to a head at this time, at the same time.

I look forward to our conversation today.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Moens.

Dr. Alexander Moens (Professor, Political Science, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm thankful to the committee to have this opportunity to share my thoughts on the defence of North America.

Canadians feel reasonably secure. There is a widespread sentiment we can afford to concentrate on domestic economic matters and put defence questions into the future. I assume you do not have many constituents pressing you for more defence spending.

As a result, some will counsel you to choose narrow designs for Canadian defence policy with niche areas, limited capabilities, and low budgets. Though resources are scarce and priorities required, I would like to argue that our values and interests in light of ongoing international insecurity require a broad definition of Canadian defence policy.

First, what we are defending is priceless. Our Canadian liberal constitutional democracy is highly valuable because it offers legal protection for individual freedoms including life, speech, religion, assembly, and property. These freedoms form a moral interest, moral because the individual has infinite value. As a Christian realist, I would argue this value derives from God's creation of every human being to be his image bearer.

Liberal governance also mandates representative, accountable, and limited government. Canada enjoys a balance of individual freedoms and good government, and we have a duty to defend these and to help other peoples obtain them.

My point is this. We would spend 100% of GDP to defend our freedoms if push came to shove, so what does it take to keep our security level high? Is it really worth only 1% of our GDP, our prosperity? Are we really so secure that we can let our guard down so low? Let me explain why I believe this effort is too little.

States remain the key focus in international security. Groups and networks either operate in order to form states or with the support of states. Individuals are prone to harm others to promote themselves. This predominant inclination is explained by the fallen sin. In international affairs this propensity is magnified, and we have neither enough law nor enough authority to avert lawless behaviour. We need power to counter illiberal interests. Sufficient military capacity is a necessary condition to do so.

Our defence policy must ask, who opposes our way of life? The answer is two broad political interests: first, autocracy such as we find in great powers like Russia and China as well as in numerous smaller states; and second, totalitarianism such as we find in jihadist terror networks and nascent Islamist states, and in the Juche ideology in North Korea. Neither autocracy nor totalitarianism is monolithic. There are qualitative and quantitative variations in each.

Rapidly growing military budgets are found in the two largest autocracies, namely China and Russia. Both Beijing and Moscow are asserting global influence and regional territorial and resource claims. These two trends do not mean inevitable conflict, but they do mean that liberal democracies must have both the political will and military capacity to restrain autocratic ambition.

The totalitarian thread is located in a large arc of geography spanning from West Africa all the way into East Asia. Here we find jihadist and violent Islamist ambitions for domination and statehood. Many of these cause religious cleansing, political instability, mass atrocities, and lead to extremist states. Totalitarian Islamist networks and states almost invariably threaten our political, religious, and economic freedoms.

● (1155)

Now, political antagonists can evolve into democratic friends. We use diplomatic, economic, and soft power relations to advance this transition, especially in the case of China. But our defence policy must be ready for foreign policy failure. Thankfully, Canadian defence policy does not exist in isolation. Our most important partnerships are with the United States, with NATO members, and in intelligence and cyber, with the Five Eyes.

Three strategic parameters inform Canada's security supply and demand in this constellation of alliances. First, America's military power relative to the number and size of challenges is trending down. Second, NATO has a de facto war-fighting upper tier. Third, cyber is a civilian as well as military security domain in which offensive and defensive capabilities are not easily separated, and where rules are few.

What do these parameters mean for Canada's defence policy?

First, Canada and the middle powers in the democratic world must carry more defence capacity. The 1990s and the ISAF operation showed that we cannot renew defence at 1% of GDP. Defence renewal means starting from 1% as a maintenance level and investing on top of that to obtain genuine renewal.

Second, NATO's political and military flexibility is an opportunity, an opportunity to work with other constitutional democracies. Canadian defence and foreign policy should actively seek partners among constitutional democracies in Asia-Pacific, in the Arctic, and in South America. Later this month at Simon Fraser University we hope to have a conference organized between the NATO Defense College and SFU to look at the alliance interacting with Asia-Pacific.

Third, Canada needs to continue participating in robust cyberoffence and cyberdefence, including in Five Eyes and with the United States. After 9/11, some intelligence about individuals is inescapable. There is room for responsible parliamentary involvement in this balance of objectives between security and liberty. During ISAF, Canada made investments in airlift and in the army. It needs now modern air and sea war-fighting capacity. We must enter the stealth era of aircraft. We need to renew our naval surface fleet to increase our part in the U.S. naval task forces.

Canada has a moral obligation to be part of the defence of North America against nuclear blackmail. Missile defence is not an ideology but a practical military option. The present danger is North Korea, because we do not have confidence in the rationality of the regime to be dissuaded by nuclear deterrence. It has no regard for the life of its people. Canada's entry into missile defence should not be cost-free but should include an ongoing contribution and bring about substantial participation.

Arctic capabilities are difficult and expensive. Canada ought to consider in-depth trilateral burden-sharing with the United States and Denmark to provide security in this region.

Our public, I believe, has lost confidence in Canada's military procurement process. Every time I hear it mentioned in Vancouver, it is in the form of a joke. It is time, I think, to think outside the box and consider a plan that is multi-year, that involves other political parties, and that has the power to upend the status quo.

I thank you for your time.

● (1200)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Professor. You were right on time, as a matter of fact.

Mr. Williamson, you have the first seven minutes.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's good to see you both today. Thank you.

Mr. Moens, I want to pick up on your last point. Could you maybe flesh out what you have in mind in terms of a new system, an alternative system, for the forces to purchase equipment? It sounds good, what you just said in a few words there, but one of the challenges, of course, is that with a change of government, you sometimes have a change in direction or outright cancellation if priorities don't match.

I would be curious to get your thoughts on that a little bit more.

Dr. Alexander Moens: Thank you.

I have deliberately taken a broad approach in terms of objectives, values, and parameters. I do not have any specifics on a new procurement process. I think it is a broad political process that needs to stop the trend we have seen of one party when in government ordering A, another party when in government cancelling A and ordering B, and another party wanting to postpone them all. What the exact format is.... I'm not sure if it is my place this morning to try to give you details, but I do know that in my life as a teacher and researcher almost everybody believes that the process is bust.

Mr. John Williamson: All right.

Let me ask a more specific question then. I'd be curious to get an answer from the two of you.

In reference to the Canada-U.S. defence relations in regard to the defence of North America, I think it's important to discuss the replacement of CF-18 fighter jets. I'd be curious to know what capabilities and requirements you would recommend looking for in a fighter jet. Some witnesses who have appeared before this committee have indicated interoperability between allies is an important requirement. Can you comment on this? How is this important for the defence of North America?

I'd be curious to get your thoughts on this, gentlemen.

Dr. Stephen Saideman: The interesting thing about the question we face ahead is that we've had a lot of confusion about what the purpose of this plane is going to be. The reality is that we're buying this plane for the next 20 or 40 years. The threats that we face today are not the threats we'll face tomorrow. The real questions when we look at this plane are: what are the long-lasting threats, and what are the long-lasting commitments that Canada has?

I have been very ambivalent about the F-35 project because it is incredibly expensive and the development process in the United States has made Canadian defence procurement look like it's actually not that problematic, because the F-35 has had all kinds of controversies about what it is and how expensive it's going to be, and all the rest. But I think the enduring reality that Canada faces is both as a member of NORAD and as a member of NATO. One of this plane's key selling points, as far as I understand it, is its interoperability.

What we've seen over the past 20 years in Canadian efforts in the world is that Canadian planes don't fly alone. They fly as part of other missions. So they flew to drop bombs on Serbia and Kosovo, they participated in the Libyan mission, and they're now participating in the reassurance package in eastern Europe. These are all part of NATO. So it does make sense that whatever plane we purchase interoperability be a fundamental feature of the plane. I think some of the competitors are actually pretty good at that, but there are various arguments we have for the various planes.

I do think interoperability is fundamental because Canada will never have enough capability, enough planes that is, by itself to thwart any menace besides the random one plane flying over the Arctic from Russia. But in any real crisis, it's not going to be one plane.

● (1205)

Dr. Alexander Moens: I'm in general agreement with my colleague. I want to add a few points.

First of all, the stealth capability, just beginning, is a capability that we ought to join because it's a process that we will join with NATO partners, and the United States, of course, in the development of an aircraft into the future. The F-18, even the Super Hornet, is an airplane built 20 or 30 years ago that has kept going, and that is not an option for the future. There may be some bridging possibilities, but for the future I think the reality of having a manned fighter plane will remain a necessity, especially given the enormous air, land, and sea space we have, for Canada to be in the frontier of technology.

Mr. John Williamson: Thank you.

In the same vein, in terms of our ability to project power or to monitor our coastline, the Canadian government considers the Northwest Passage part of Canadian internal waters, while the United States and various European countries and allies maintain it is an international strait for transit passage allowing free and unencumbered passage.

What do you recommend Canada do to assert our sovereignty over the Northwest Passage?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I have to side with the Americans on this, that Canada, as a country that depends greatly on trade, depends on passage between other straits in the world. Our shipment of oil—if we want to ship it elsewhere—is going to pass through straits that belong to other countries. By the law of the sea, as I understand it—I'm not any legal expert by any stretch—basically Canada is pretty close to being alone in interpreting the Northwest Passage the way it's interpreting it. I think the best interest of Canada in the long run is to trade, essentially, and compromise with the United States over the Northwest Passage, and perhaps get a better slice of disputed territories beyond where Alaska and Canada meet offshore, where there are controversies over where the territory is.

Thus, I think in the long run it's not going to be beneficial to Canada to have a fight of Canada versus the rest of the world on a point of international law that Canada has agreed with up until this point in time, until it became inconvenient up north with the melting of the ice cap.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that response.

Mr. Harris, you have seven minutes.

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

It's rare that we have such a divergent view in a panel of two before this committee, but your views are equally interesting on both sides of the fence, I must say.

Also, we're very wide ranging, although we're studying the defence of North America. I will ask one question about the overarching issue we're dealing with, the joint strike fighter. Of course, stealth is one aspect of it. It's being challenged daily as to how stealthy, and when, and what the technology will be, and if it really is going to last, even if it was perfected for now, and how long it would actually be effective.

Also on interoperability, we've been told by the general in charge of transformation for the NATO alliance that interoperability has to do with how you work together, and that the NATO allies—28 nations—all bring what they have to the table, and their key is to figure out how all this works together and that interoperability was not the same aircraft. So that's also a debate that we're confronted with.

I will ask both of you, in terms of the defence of North America, we being the second largest country in the world, with a huge coastline and sovereign space. Is there a geographical imperative with respect to Canada's situation that might determine what kind of aircraft, or what kind of capabilities we might need to be able to patrol that space, to provide domain awareness, to provide interceptability, for example? Would these things play as equal or greater a role than having the same aircraft as somebody else?

I could ask both of you to deal with that.

● (1210)

Dr. Alexander Moens: I think the comment about interoperability you mentioned is very true, but it is not exclusive of technology. Neither is the question about the F-35 exclusively around stealth. It's about developing an aircraft with technology from today into the future, rather than working with—

Mr. Jack Harris: Can we stay away from the aircraft itself and talk about the requirements and expectations and what our priorities are as a nation for the defence of Canada, and about participating with the U.S. in the defence of North America?

Dr. Alexander Moens: I would say we don't know what our threats will be in five years from now. Therefore, since what we are trying to do in Canada is so ambitious and so difficult, we must be very careful not to go with the best, most modern technology available.

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I'm a skeptic, because I do think that in arms races, advantages get offset, particularly in that particular field. We've seen a lot stories about that lately. I do think that the concern for the next plane would be how much area it can cover, not necessarily measured entirely by how far it can fly but by how far it can sense, and whether it has weapons systems that can reach out. The problem with Canada is that it's just such a very vast country, and any plane would have a hard time maintaining control over the entire airspace.

I think one of the priorities would be which planes have the best sensor package combined with the best ability to use weapons that are long range to compensate for the fact that they're going to be based in Bagotville and Cold Lake, and that means there are lots of places that are hard to get to.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you.

Professor Moens, we've had a number of witnesses so far in terms of the defence of North America talk about the Arctic as not exactly a demilitarized zone, but that we don't see any military threats in the Arctic, and the Americans tell us that they don't want to see the Arctic militarized. You're probably the first to suggest that we should have a joint plan with Denmark and the U.S. for military capability. Would you go that far—military capability in the north?

Why do you see that as being the circumstance? We even have Russia talking about not wanting to militarize the Arctic.

Why would you see that as important? Is it not an extremely expensive thing to try to do?

Dr. Alexander Moens: In my comments, just to clarify, I did not use “military capability” in that sentence.

I meant the ability to have air and maritime surveillance among three countries, because Denmark and Greenland guard the east flank, the United States guards the west flank, and we are in the middle.

So I do not mean this to be the militarization of the Arctic, because I agree with you that we do not have a Russian expression of interest or activity that would suggest that it's needed. But I do think that rather than trying to decide the Northwest Passage, which I think is not an important security question, there is an important need for joint surveillance among like-minded states.

Mr. Jack Harris: In your view, then, is NORAD and its mechanisms inadequate for that purpose, or are you suggesting that NORAD should have some joint capability with Denmark in terms of surveillance and domain awareness?

Dr. Alexander Moens: I'm suggesting the latter.

Mr. Jack Harris: That's interesting.

Perhaps, Professor Saideman, you could tell us, in terms of cooperation with the United States.... We had an interesting witness, a professor from Montreal, Professor Roussel, who talked about being a cautious continentalist, and who, I think, was expressing that in our dealings in partnership with the U.S. over continental defence, we need to be careful when defining what we want and what we don't want.

Do you have any views on how Canada and the United States can cooperate on continental defence, on the defence of North America, yet ensure that we don't have questions about our own being, as they say in Quebec, *maîtres chez nous*? Is that an issue for you?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I think the United States and Canada have a lot more in common than in conflict over protecting North America. The threats are similar—cyber, terrorism, those kinds of things, those distant kinds of threats. I think there's a lot of room to manoeuvre. I think we have a lot of experience through NORAD. I think we could build on NORAD. I would actually say that we could expand NORAD to cover the sea side of things, because there's a need to cooperate off the shores of our countries.

● (1215)

The Chair: We'll have to end that thought there.

Mr. Leung and Mr. Warawa are going to share their time, so I will let you know when three and a half minutes is up.

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Willowdale, CPC): Thank you, Chair, and yes, I do want to confirm that I'll share half my time with my colleague Mr. Warawa.

Defence takes many dimensions, whether for economic benefit, for geographic or border protection, for acquisition of more geography, or for protection of trade routes.

I'm interested in your comment that Canada's defence policy should follow or enforce our foreign policy. This is in light of the fact that most of the European countries you talk about in NATO have their own defence capability to manufacture some of those assets, and they in fact use that. Britain, France, and Germany use that as part of their economic policy. Canada's a middle power, and we don't have that capability to be an arms producer.

Going back to post-World War II, our foreign policy was one of peacekeeping, which has evolved over time to peacemaking and peacebuilding. In those three successive models, I'd like to hear how we can move forward in the 21st century to maintain that foreign policy and still maintain a modest defence capability, considering the fact that we will not be manufacturing that in Canada because we simply don't have that capability.

Dr. Alexander Moens: Thank you.

To clarify, what I said in my comments was that defence policy and foreign policy and other domains of policy, of course, as an expression of our national interests, our Canadian interests, work together. But there comes a point where if our foreign policy objectives do not materialize, we must have certain defence capabilities that go beyond that. So if, for example, we are not able to work well with these two threats, and they form threats or they infringe upon the rules of international behaviour, for example in Ukraine, as we're witnessing today, we must have defence capabilities to deal with that. So that was my point.

Does that address your question?

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Well, not completely.

What happens in the unlikely scenario that our foreign policy and that of the United States clashes? How do we align ourselves then with our defence asset procurement or our ability to maintain our sovereignty and independence?

For example, it's always being tossed around, saying, “What happens when the United States all of a sudden wants all of our oil or all of our fresh water?” I'd like to hear how we can align that policy or whether we're always going to be at the mercy of the United States.

Dr. Alexander Moens: No, I would not use the word “mercy”. As mature liberal constitutional democracies, our disagreements will be settled by negotiations and by politics.

I did not mention other liberal democratic countries in my two political opponents for that reason because I do not believe our defence policy needs to aim for that option.

The Chair: Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Thank you to both witnesses.

I'm a replacement at this committee, but I find this a very interesting discussion.

In the interest of time, I'm going to be asking a question of Mr. Moens. I wish I had time to ask questions of both witnesses.

Mr. Moens, you said that liberal democracies need to have the will —and I'm paraphrasing—and the ability and equipment to match that will. You also said that defence policy must be ready for a foreign policy failure.

Mr. Putin, in Russia, has a high approval rating from the general population of Russia for aggressive action. His approval rating is actually increasing by his tactics, so there is a will within the Russian population for this.

Could you address the will that you see within the general Canadian population, and the will within the American population, and how that's affecting the priorities that we have for defence?

● (1220)

Dr. Alexander Moens: I would first make a small comment to your reference of Putin in Russia, since under Putin, Russia is increasingly becoming an illiberal autocracy. We have to be careful of what the Russian people really want. It's not the same as the free expression of interest as we have in our country.

Regarding your main point, in the case of the United States, I believe, their capability is still enormous. The comments I made about renewal and investment in defence would not come in quite the same way to the United States.

In the case of Canada, as trustees of the people, I believe you have a role in educating the Canadian public of the need for a defence capability. As a university teacher, I'm trying to educate my students about the needs of foreign policy and defence policy. I think the Canadian public understanding of our defence policy is a bit low, but there is a lot of room for the Canadian public to understand it better in the future.

Mr. Mark Warawa: The United States is going to be making fairly substantial cuts to its military funding. How do you think this is going to affect Canada's interoperational capabilities with the U. S.?

Dr. Alexander Moens: I don't think it will affect our interoperable capabilities in the near future, but I do think it's an enormously important signal for middle powers like Canada, France, Australia, Japan, and others to fill the gap of capabilities in the world, relatively speaking, that are being abandoned by the United States.

If we don't, then our political opponents will fill that gap and that will make us significantly less secure.

The Chair: Ms. Murray, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Thank you, and thanks for being here to provide your thoughts about these interesting issues. I'm just going to follow on with this discussion.

Mr. Moens, you are implying that Canada needs greater military capability to fill the gap and to be able to pitch in, in the case of foreign policy failure. Are you advocating an increase in the budget for National Defence, and if so, how much?

Dr. Alexander Moens: Yes, I am. I am indicating that.

Clearly, I am suggesting that experience with 1.1% of defence spending in the 1990s has shown that it isn't sufficient for defence investment, defence renewal, so I am arguing that there is evidence that 1.1% is not correct.

If you look at the most expensive period within ISAF, it's probably about 1.4% or 1.5% of our defence spending, and that only renewed a small area of our capabilities—

Ms. Joyce Murray: So you're suggesting somewhere around 1.4% or 1.5%. I want to move onto some other aspect of this.

Dr. Alexander Moens: No, probably more. I would say 1.7% and up.

Ms. Joyce Murray: All right.

I got a different impression from you, Mr. Saideman, that it's more about having clarity as to what it is we're trying to accomplish, what our strategy is, and having a strategy that really helps make decisions and choose priorities. I got the impression also that you felt there could be a better job done in military procurement that might actually give us more bang for the buck than the way we've been doing it.

I'm really interested in the idea of strategy, so my first question is this. Do you see this as needing to be done as sort of an inclusive strategy that includes, as some of the other committee testimony has suggested, foreign policy, defence policy, trade policy, foreign aid policy? Should the strategy be to do an overarching thing, and then from that drop out a defence policy, or is it your view that we can go right to having a coherent defence policy that can create some direction and prioritization?

● (1225)

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I think that every year we delay these decisions, we're increasing costs and creating greater inefficiencies for ourselves. I'd say that while it would be nice to have a whole-of-government analysis of everything, I think we need to get straight the defence picture. For these kinds of decisions, I'd say focus on including some people from foreign affairs. They have an assessment of the threats, because assessing the threats around the world is not purely a defence thing; it's a foreign affairs thing as well. I'd say get a better picture of what we think the threats are 10, 20, 30 years out, and what our commitments are.

Our commitments are very clear actually. I don't think we have to rethink NORAD or NATO. We have to think about what the implications of those are, since we are now spending money and time with sailing our ships from the Arab gulf all the way up to the Black Sea or the Baltic. We don't know actually where the ship is going, but we're spending money sending planes to Romania. That costs money.

Ms. Joyce Murray: In thinking about the defence of North America, even if it's something like F-35s or some other plane, we've had other people testify that it really depends on whether your priority is out there or whether it's the defence of North America. There are less militarized implications there. I was surprised to hear Mr. Moens say that because of our large spaces and seas, this argues for the F-35s. We've had other people argue against it. So the defence of North America tied into the planes, what priority has that versus deployment elsewhere?

In developing a strategy—just off the top of your head—what would be the top five principles or values that you would lay down first to help you make decisions of prioritization? For example, where does the defence of North America sit in relation to our defence and security issues externally? What kind of higher-level values or principles would be laid out?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: Again, I think that the defence of Canada is most important. For the military of any country the primary purpose is defence of the homeland. But as I said, the Canadian ships, planes and soldiers are not going to be used in the next 20 to 30 years for most of their day jobs protecting Canada from foreign threats. Those employed in the cyber-realm, those employed in various other realms, may be doing that on a day-to-day basis, but If you take a look at the pattern of Canadian Forces usage over the past 20 years, projecting forward, Canadian Forces were used to protect the Olympics and for a variety of other things at home. But most of the expensive missions that require advanced kit have been elsewhere: Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Libya.

In terms of making the major investment decisions, I do think Canada has a choice. It can drop its NATO commitment and not invest in ships and planes, but I think the NATO commitment is very important.

Ms. Joyce Murray: When you say something like that, what is the principle or value behind the statement?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: The principle is that Canada cannot fight alone in the world. One of the fundamental principles is multi-lateralism. Canada cannot fight alone.

Ms. Joyce Murray: What are some other principles at that core level?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: Canada will fight alongside democracies, dealing with threats to international security, and sometimes for humanitarian purposes that overlap with security interests. I don't think Canada has the ability to dedicate lots of resources to every humanitarian crisis. It's only going to happen when there's a confluence between security interests and humanitarian interests.

Libya, for instance, was both. For Canada, the stake in Libya was NATO. That was a security interest. It was also essentially an R2P mission, even if people didn't call it that. But Canada can't dedicate all of its fighters and all its planes and all of its ships to everything that goes on in the world. It has to make choices, and the choices will be when the humanitarian interests are coincident with security interests, not when they're off on their own.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

Ms. Gallant, you have five minutes.

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

I'm wondering about the Arctic. You really didn't mention it. Do either of you have any concerns about defence of our Arctic territory?

● (1230)

Dr. Stephen Saideman: When we think about the Arctic, it's really the future that we're thinking about. There's not really a present threat as we speak. But the investments we make today obviously are important for the next 20 to 30 years. Is there a likelihood of a great threat in the Arctic? It's very expensive for all of us to operate—not just for the Canadians to build new facilities in the Arctic but also very expensive for the Russians, the Americans, the Danes, and all the rest.

I don't think the threat is severe. I doubt that it will be severe down the road, because it is really hard for everybody to operate there. I'm not a climatologist and can't say what global warming is going to do to make things less difficult, but it will always be very expensive. When we face the challenge of resources, we have to deal with the places where there are the greatest risks. I think, given what we've seen in the past 20 years and what we're looking at for the next 20 years, the Arctic is an important priority, but it's not the top. It's simply not going to be a zone of combat.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

Mr. Moens, along the same lines, you specifically mentioned that the countries that threaten our way of life are Russia, China, and the terrorist groups in western Africa. Do you see any point at this time to concentrating on having some greater strength in the future for the Arctic?

Dr. Alexander Moens: I certainly think, given Russia's policies in Georgia and Ukraine, that we ought to be able to think about what capabilities an Arctic conflict would take, should there be one. I believe it is part of defence policy to imagine that and to think about what capabilities on our part would be required in conjunction with our democratic allies to deal with various potential threats.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: You mentioned concerning cyberdefence and cyberoffence that Canada already cooperates with the Five Eyes on these. Were you saying that Canada already participates in offensive cyber-ops?

Dr. Alexander Moens: I have to admit to you that the world of cyber is a difficult world to understand. But as I understand it, when there is a vulnerability in the lines of code, which is what we're talking about in the cyberworld, there is an opportunity for an enemy to attack, but when the enemy does, he also exposes his own capability, including vulnerability. So the line between offensive and defensive action in cyber is not as simple as it is in, let's say, conventional warfare. There's nothing to be gained by taking a moralistic attitude that we will not do cyberoffence, because then you will not know much about cyberdefence either.

Therefore, we need to be working with our allies, including the United States and the Five Eyes—and I think we are already—to make sure that we are fully capable, because cyberattacks are not only a civilian domain but a military domain. We need to have a broad range of capabilities.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: You mentioned the Five Eyes, and Canada and the United States. But we also have a centre of excellence in Estonia, an eastern European country that was attacked through cyber. Do you think there should be more cooperation similar to what we have between the United States and Canada in NORAD, but spread across the NATO trans-Atlantic link?

Dr. Alexander Moens: At the moment, I don't think NATO is quite ready for the spreading of cyber-cooperation beyond what it's doing already. I think cyber is something so sensitive that it tends to develop more pragmatically with the democratic partners you trust and have experience with, and you build it up from there.

I'm not sure that we would increase our defences by making it too multilateral too quickly.

● (1235)

The Chair: Thank you very much for that response.

Madame Michaud.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to begin by thanking the witnesses for their presentations.

My first question is for Mr. Saideman.

I would like to come back to some of your comments about the process implemented to replace numerous navy ships at the same time. You said in your presentation that, based on the current results, we can see that Canada does not have the facilities it needs to do all that work simultaneously. Don't you think there is a problem with the contracting process itself? I will give you an example.

In fall 2011, the government awarded $33 billion in shipbuilding contracts over the next 30 years. The process was lengthy, but the Davie shipyard, in Lévis, in the Quebec City region—for which I am a member of Parliament—was unfortunately left out. The contracts were awarded to two yards instead of three, and not all the facilities available across Canada were really used.

I think that is a blatant example of some of the issues with the process the government implemented. I would like to hear your thoughts on the matter.

[*English*]

Dr. Stephen Saideman: One thing that we have improved or that at least has the potential to improve the procurement process is the government's proposal for a defence analytics institute in which you have experts who are not currently employed by the government—I think—to provide outside analysis of the various plans.

One of my greatest fears about Canada is about its becoming too much like the United States in one particular way, which is this. One of the worst things that happens in United States defence procurement is that every system is built in something like 400 congressional districts and 50 states, which then creates the political impetus for not killing programs.

Right now we have the shipbuilding programs, which seem to be designed more as job creation for Vancouver and Halifax than for building good ships. I'm not saying that those shipyards are not capable of doing it, but all estimates I've seen thus far suggest that we will get one ship for what the British are to get four times as many ships for.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Moreover, as you know, the Davie shipyard is the country's largest dry dock. In other words, the country's existing facilities have not been used, and that is slowing down the acquisition process for much-needed equipment. That is the issue I see here, but I think it could also come up in other military procurement processes.

[*English*]

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I see your point. I am not a shipbuilding expert, so I can't speak to the capabilities of the various shipyards. All I can do is look at things, as I always do, through a very comparative lens.

What I see is other advanced democracies realizing that they have strengths and they have weaknesses. When Great Britain, which used to be known as the naval power on the planet, is outsourcing its shipbuilding to other countries to get more capable and less expensive ships, I have to wonder about the Canadian choices, because Canada has not been in the business of building naval ships over the past 20 or 30 years—I forget the exact range of time. Starting up from scratch means it will be more expensive, and that means that we will have Canadians being employed by these programs, but we'll have less capability. So we have to face that trade-off. If we have less capability, then we have to shrink the size of our navy.

I have a big problem with the entire shipbuilding process, not so much with where in Canada they chose but with the actual choice of not buying necessarily the best equipment, because what makes sense for politics and what makes sense for Canadian defence are not necessarily identical.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Thank you very much.

I will first direct this question to Mr. Moens, but time permitting, I would also like Mr. Saideman to answer it.

I would like to know whether you view China as a friendly state or an enemy state. We have seen an increase in the Canada-China relations, especially in terms of the economy and trade. However, China is a close ally of North Korea, which is clearly considered to be a threat to the western world.

I would like to hear your thoughts on that.

● (1240)

[*English*]

The Chair: In 10 seconds....

Dr. Alexander Moens: It's friendly, in the first place. It is a friendly relationship that we need to build out to our utmost, but our defence policy has to have the capacity in case it's not friendly. For example, China is very—

The Chair: We'll save our example for later.

Mr. Bezan, you have five minutes.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank both of our witnesses. I've found the testimony today very compelling and interesting.

We are talking about the defence of North America here and we've had some witnesses who've talked about the relationship between Canada and the United States and both of you, as professors, have specialized in Canada-America relations. I want to get a sense from you of how you see our relationship at this point in time, and how some of the policy issues that are happening in the U.S. are impacting upon decisions made on the defence of North America.

Dr. Alexander Moens: Thank you.

I'm very concerned about the overall Canadian-American relationship at the moment. I believe it is a relationship in which few common projects get sufficient attention. I believe that the disagreements on Keystone XL, for example, have a significant impact on this relationship and I think there is a low expectation from the Canadian side that any significant proposals are going to come from the United States in the coming few years.

So I don't see it as a period in time where we can expect a lot of new initiatives, fruitful cooperation, beyond the routine day-to-day cooperation in our relationship. I regret that. I think the American-Canadian relationship is our most important relationship in the world, but we have to invest for better times.

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I think when it comes to defence issues there's actually very little space between us. I think the Northwest Passage is really the one big issue on the table. I think ballistic missile defence is something that we have a squabble over in terms of what to commit.

But I think Canada's performance in Afghanistan and in Libya speaks to a strong relationship with the United States. When push comes to shove, the two countries fight well together. I have a book that came out about the challenges of NATO. “Fighting Together, Fighting Alone” is the subtitle because countries fought their own individual wars in Afghanistan, but Canada was one of the few exceptions to that with the United States. They actually had Canadians commanding Americans in Kandahar with no friction at all compared with lots of other friction that was in place in Afghanistan.

In terms of the security relationship, we don't have a lot of news coming out of NORAD and Canada often is frustrated by not being mentioned in the state of the union address. These are examples of actual success. Who gets attention in the state of the union address? North Korea and Iran. These are countries that Canada does not want to be associated with.

A lot of the challenge is that there are bad news stories like Keystone, but the Canadian defence relationship with the United States is a success story. We don't hear bad news about it, because it's going along very well on any given day.

Mr. James Bezan: Both of you talked about the threat assessment and we've heard from some witnesses that there is no threat to Canadian sovereignty in terms of a situation of having a rogue nation or a non-state player attacking Canada. I think there's a lot of disagreement with that. I'm always concerned; 9/11 came out of the blue and something like that can happen here. Again, that's where the Five Eyes become a very important component of how we protect ourselves.

Could both of you, Professors, talk to the threat of both non-state and state players?

I know, Professor Moens, that you did mention Russia, China, and North Korea. We talk about North Korea and Iran as rogue nations. From an Arctic standpoint we know that Russia is investing heavily in their military, a 90% increase last year in how much they are building up their fleets, air forces, and army, including reopening naval bases in the Arctic.

Dr. Alexander Moens: I think it's very important to remember that Russia has been increasing its defence budget considerably in the last several years. China in the past 20 years has, on average, increased it between 8% and 10% per year. China is also quite interested in this stealth generation, this fifth generation of fighter jets. If our relationship with China goes as we wish, then China will join the democratic world, and we'll have a much more secure, better world.

● (1245)

The Chair: Than you very much, sir.

[*Translation*]

Monsieur Larose, vous avez la parole pour cinq minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is specifically for Mr. Saideman.

In the complexity of strategic planning, either on our own territory within the international community and within the relationship with the U.S., resources are limited. We can't do everything at the same time.

You mentioned before the 20-year gap between the moment when we're ordering equipment that we apparently need without having a white paper, and when we receive it, whether or not it's going to be compatible with our future.

What's your take on products that already exist that we could buy quickly? I'm all for job creation, but at the same time how much danger are we facing? Everybody seems to say there's a lot of danger, but everybody wants to wait 20 years before we have what we need to face it. There's a fine line between both, and I think a balance needs to exist. I've spoken to many companies that always say the orders are insane when there are products that already exist that could be bought right off—

[*Translation*]

les tablettes.

[*English*]

Another point I'd like you to maybe speak about is the environmental threat, and how much we need to incorporate that, which we don't seem to see a lot.

Dr. Stephen Saideman: In terms of the first question, I think that as we look out we have to think about the defensive systems that are flexible. For instance, the navy has had these frigates that have done many different things over the course of the past 20 or 30 years. We don't know exactly what naval threats are ahead of us, but there'll be an expectation to participate in NATO task forces, to do some interception on the high seas, to do some humanitarian relief. We want to have these ships in more than one dimension, just as we want to have our fighter planes in more than one dimension because we don't really know what missions are going to take place. We can't be like the United States, which has a bunch of different kinds of planes for a bunch of different kinds of contingencies. That's not the way things can work.

I think we need to be focused on flexibility more than anything else to deal with the problems of today and tomorrow. It probably is better put in terms of problems rather than threats, because right now, to get back to the question that I couldn't get addressed, Canada is not facing a threat from Russia today. The Baltics are, Romania is, and Poland is, and because we are a member of NATO we have to participate in dealing with those kinds of threats. That becomes a Canadian problem. There are other problems we share in the world because we have larger values than just Canadian defence, such as dealing with the next tsunami.

We need to have these capabilities for these kinds of things, even if Canada's not directly threatened. But that does shape the kinds of things you want to purchase because there are some capabilities we don't necessarily need. A few years ago the army wanted to get rid of tanks because they didn't foresee a land war in Europe any time soon. They went to Afghanistan and decided we needed some tanks, but we were able to find a tank of the day that was sufficient for dealing with Kandahar.

I'd say to have a flexible approach is the best way to go forward.

Environmental security speaks to some of the other things we need to think about in terms of what kinds of equipment we need. Search and rescue equipment has obviously been talked about a lot. We need to be dealing with Arctic patrol ships. The realities of the world are that the military has an interest in minimizing its environmental impact on the planet, but it's not entirely the best solution for dealing with other people's environmental impacts on the planet. Perhaps when we get into a fishing controversy, the navy is good for confronting fishing vessels that are doing bad things. I'm not exactly sure what the navy's involvement is in fighting pollution. That kind of thinking about environmental security has to start in Foreign Affairs before it comes to Defence.

Mr. Jean-François Larose: When we talk about products that already exist on the surveillance scale, you mentioned maybe extending the mandate of NORAD to the Arctic. Correct?

Would it not be interesting, considering that we don't know when we're going to have planes, to have some drones. What's your thinking on drones, surveillance, of course, not attacking?

● (1250)

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I think that institutions are hard to build from scratch. The reason why NATO is still around is because it's better than all the other possible alliances. NORAD is a good framework to build upon because it has a record of success, a record of cooperation. It's a pretty useful institution, so it makes sense to improve NORAD and expand its coverage to the seas because we already have that software, that hardware, in NORAD to build upon.

I think whatever the reconnaissance capabilities are—whether satellites, drones, or manned planes—it makes sense to coordinate those efforts. The United States has a greater investment in all those things than Canada, so if we can get input through NORAD of what they can see—

The Chair: Thank you very much. We'll have to end it there.

Mr. Williamson, you have five minutes.

Mr. John Williamson: Thank you very much, Chair.

I'm going to come back to my question on defence of the Arctic and kind of skip the sovereignty issue and go to interest, because depending on how you look at it, if foreign ships are going through what we call Canadian waters, there will be some police oversight necessary. The same thing goes for some sort of air defence as well.

I do wonder if you're perhaps downplaying as well the buildup that we see from Russia with naval bases in ports and a greater emphasis on sea-based capacity in the north as well, and being prepared for that.

Again, getting back to that question, we'll skip the sovereignty issue. But we'll focus on the projection of power and our ability, whether it's a military conflict or not, to at least be able to police an area that we view as our zone of influence.

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I think that's one of the challenges of having all these ships—the frigates, the support ships, the ice-breakers—being built all at once. We can't really do it all at once, and that's a challenge right now, right? So it does seem to me that building icebreakers is a priority. Building ships that can handle the north is actually perhaps a greater priority than others because it's something that is lacking more than anything else.

I would put a caution on the discussion about Russia's spending increasing by 10% or 20% per year. That is from a lower base. When we think about increasing spending, they're starting from a baseline that's much lower than the United States'. Somebody last week put it that the cuts the United States are making this year are the size of the German military budget. On the one hand that seems like a really big cut, but it suggests that the United States has a lot of capability.

Conversely, Russia is building from its low ebb in the aftermath of the Cold War, so it's trying to recover from years of neglect. The Chinese have a much more robust military program than the Russians. I'd say that we need to be concerned about their investments in the north, but as expensive as it is for us, it's expensive for them. If they're putting a lot of resources into building a lot of ports in the high north, that may not be a bad thing from our perspective because they're wasting money. They're spending a lot of money on that, just like they spent $50 billion on the Olympics that got them no reputation in the aftermath of Ukraine. If they want to waste money on things, then we should let them. We need to invest a little bit, but we need to think about a lot of perspective—

Mr. John Williamson: Let me interrupt here. You're saying that if they send a ship or a plane in, then we shouldn't be worried about a quick response. Do we not have to, if not match—and I'm not saying dollar for dollar, but capabilities, in terms of being able to patrol our airspace so that if it is infringed upon, we're right there and not turning a blind eye to it because you viewed it as a waste of money?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: Absolutely. I'm not saying that Canada should not build a next-generation plane. One of the next-generation plane's day jobs is going to be encountering Russian planes that come close, no doubt about it, so we're continuing to invest in that. As I said, we should invest in some sea patrol vessels, both for environmental security problems, having ships that are dumping waste in our Northwest Passage, and also for dealing with whatever Russian ships come close.

But the question of trade-offs is apparent. We need to focus on those capabilities that we can afford, and not just focus on what the Russians are building. We need to remind ourselves that we cannot spend ourselves into the ground trying to keep up with the Russians, particularly by working with the United States.

● (1255)

Mr. John Williamson: How's my time?

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds.

Mr. John Williamson: Dr. Moens, do you have any comment?

Dr. Alexander Moens: No.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that extra time, which I will take up.

I'm a very practical person. I believe that the people who are footing the bill for military equipment should receive the maximum benefit of those investments where possible and where practical.

So to my question, we're talking about large purchases, such as ships and aircraft. If we purchase an aircraft other than the F-35, for which we belong to a consortium of nations, we can benefit by building parts for it, with the realization that we have arguably the world's fourth- or fifth-largest aerospace industry. We have no shipbuilding capability. We used to have it, so we want to build that up. From the standpoint of building jobs, building the economy, maximum benefits to Canadians in the long term, could you submit in writing the pros and cons of both of those issues that I outlined? I don't want to take up much more time.

Mr. Harris, you have five minutes.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

I was interested, Professor Saideman, in your comments that Canada could and should do less with less, given the constraints on military expenditures.

We've been criticized for spending too much money to do too many things, and not achieving all those things, and trying to be all things to all people. In your scenario of doing less with less, could you tell us what you would leave out? That involves priorities. I'm thinking of domestic priorities, the SAR and those things that we don't do well enough at the moment. But at the same time, you said we could do NATO and NORAD, meet our obligations there, provide international support for missions, with less money. Can you tell us, is there something you would leave out?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: The classic example of this, and it's one that doesn't play well, is that Canada currently has four submarines that are semi-operable. Someone said, “We had a good year; we had 250 sea days.” That's four ships, meaning that on average one ship was able to operate for some portion of the year.

Submarines have a lot of great capability. I'm a big fan of submarines from when I was a kid reading about the U.S. submarine warfare in the Pacific. But it's an expensive capability, and Canada is unlikely to buy six, eight, or 10 new submarines in the near future, which is what it would need to actually do the job. Canada's submarines are entirely symbolic in the current format of having four submarines, two or more of which are semi-broken. To have a real submarine capability means to have a real submarine capability, and if Canada is unwilling to have a real one, I'm not sure why we should invest in having a fake one.

The problem is that if you stop having submarines entirely, then that means you're not going to have submarine capability for 20, 30, 40, 50 years out, and you lose the capability of the sailors and officers who are trained in this stuff. But the question I would then ask is this. Are we going to buy six or eight real modern subs in the near future? If the answer is no, then that's some place where we could have fewer officers and fewer sailors, and cut the size of the navy.

Mr. Jack Harris: Professor Moens, it's a big question, but you talked about being a Christian realist. I'm not sure exactly what that means. Other people who approach military matters from a Christian perspective talk about disarmament and trying to achieve peace through other means. Do you have any views on nuclear disarmament as a goal? It's listed as a goal for NATO, for example, as one of its important activities. Obviously Iran, North Korea, those are part of that but also nuclear disarmament in general. Do you have any views on that we should hear about?

Dr. Alexander Moens: I think my comment was that moral realism denotes this tendency to want justice, peace, disarmament, and the realization that interests clash and therefore it is possible to achieve only some of it. So nuclear disarmament falls, as all other types of disarmament, in the category of if the nuclear states can do it together, proportionally at the same time, then nuclear disarmament is highly desirable. If it means unilateral nuclear disarmament, I would say the political insecurity of the world is such that it would not be desirable.

● (1300)

The Chair: With that, I am going to have to adjourn the meeting.

Thank you very much. Please get back to us in writing if you want to fully answer any question that you felt you didn't, and please keep in mind the question the chair asked, and we will share it with the other members.

The meeting is adjourned.

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