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Chair

Mr. Stephen Fuhr

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● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.)): It's about that time. I'd like to welcome everyone to the defence committee this afternoon.

More importantly, Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg, adjunct professor, Royal Military College of Canada, and Dr. Mark Sedra, president, Canadian International Council, thank you both for attending today.

We're here to discuss Canada's role in NATO. I would like to invite Dr. Meharg to open with her remarks. You have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg (Adjunct Professor, Royal Military College of Canada, As an Individual): Thank you for inviting me to testify to the committee. It's an honour to be with you today.

My expertise is in post-war reconstruction, and I'm often called upon by the Canadian Forces to work with them on the identity and cultural dimensions of security, in essence how to manage the people problems that arise in conflict and post-conflict environments, especially when planning goes awry, and how to better measure the successes of our interventions.

Last week I was part of a panel presentation with my U.S. colleagues on redefining the instruments of power related to reconstruction and stabilization, an operational capability that Canada's armed forces have been involved with for many decades, in particular through our NATO commitments. From these two perspectives, I will approach this briefing to you.

Today I want to offer three topics for your consideration. The first is the benefit Canada derives from its involvement in NATO. The second is the way that Canada measures this benefit, and the third is how a certain secure future is built on this involvement.

To begin, I will orient us to what we know about Canada's commitment to defence and security. We know that Canada is part of a collective security web in which we commit our defence capabilities so that we can work shoulder to shoulder with our allies in insecure environments around the world, but also to protect our national sovereignty and the security of Canadians. We know the international security environment in which interventions and the entire spectrum of armed operations are occurring is no longer recognizable. The suffering of civilians happens in an ugly, dirty, violent, and heart-wrenching reality that the world shares through digital media, and in which our militaries are deployed.

First, what benefit does Canada derive from its involvement in NATO? It's no surprise to you that in Canada we have the luxury afforded by our geography. We do not have the world's downtrodden at our doorstep, breaking down the door to get in, which produces the security dynamics in most, if not all, NATO countries. We do not have our own eastern front to defend.

Instead, Canada has an identity born out of our distant and vast geography, which affords us time to consider our defence and security decisions, our policies, and our strategic outlook. Canada is not in a threatened state—putting cyber-threats aside—and experiences something called ontological security of the state. Ontological security is the preservation of self, so the ability of a state and an individual to preserve its sense of self. In the same way that individuals experience threat to their very being, so too can a state.

Individuals and states fear uncertainty as an identity threat and suppress that fear through routines to which they become attached. These routines can come in many forms such as Canada's involvement in NATO. Changes to this involvement, such as budgetary, political will, or even uncertainty regarding the U.S. administration, can really undermine these routines. This results in a lack of consistency, and when routines change, relationships change too between Canada and our allies.

The people who represent Canada at NATO headquarters and throughout the NATO system are deeply affected by these inconsistencies because they are known to undermine the meaningful relationships among our people and those representing our allies. Undermining routines and relationships contributes to ontological insecurity of a state, and therefore, affects a sense of a certain future. This logic, again, applies to individuals and the state. In other words, consistency creates a certain future. Certainty allows states to interact with one another. The interactions inform behaviours and cause something called routinization. Routinization forms meaningful relationships, and these things underscore the level of security that a state can experience.

NATO is no more than the security and defence practices that its members, including Canada, have agreed to engage in, which means that its continuation depends on the constant reproduction of those practices. Individual and group-level routines at the strategic, operational, tactical levels in headquarters, and when forces are deployed at NATO missions, thus constitute NATO, which in turn stabilizes the state's sense of self, including Canada's.

Empirical research in various areas of social psychology confirms that uncertainty generates identity insecurity, which is really resolved through routines. Canada's involvement in NATO reinforces its security of self because it's involved in the routines that express our membership there.

● (1535)

The second point is how Canada can measure this benefit. The international community has become preoccupied with measuring the effectiveness of its activities in complex emergencies, marked by the very expensive U.S. invasion and subsequent reconstruction of Iraq in the early 2000s. This focus on measuring effectiveness is partially motivated by a need to calculate the costs of our interventions, because many of our activities have a huge price tag, yet levels of success are not commensurate and can rarely be justified. At one point, Canada was very interested in measuring the effectiveness of its work in places like Afghanistan, because we witnessed the realities in the field, which compelled us to make the goals, plans, and systems of our interventions more effective.

From this, I want us to consider measuring the benefit we derive from our involvement in NATO, rather than our performance at NATO. Although this is not the typical way of framing measures of effectiveness, it serves as a useful activity in better understanding the level at which we seek to be involved and how this involvement reinforces our own sense of Canadian state security.

Measuring derived benefits comes from our routines and relationships. Canada is already a part of some NATO routines, and it becomes important to the activity of measuring benefit by participating in activities that align Canadian interests and values within the alliance. These could include developing a few Canadian Armed Forces-focused capabilities that neatly fit into the collective security web woven by the alliance, the OSCE, the EU, the UN, and NORAD; increasing our support for NATO deployments in deployable resources, personnel, and financial support; developing a visible representation of Canada's commitment to UN resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security in our future alliance contributions for at least the next 10 years, which means deploying more women on NATO missions, serving in headquarters, and participating at all the different levels; and increasing active involvement, shoulder to shoulder, in multinational training and live exercises to improve our in-theatre relationships, which is a self-serving involvement that ensures that when our forces deploy with our allies, we are protected through a logical chain of command, reliable comms, and logistics in the field, as well as the necessary combat support when deployed to non-permissive theatres of operation.

This alignment of routines and the corresponding relationships that are formed confirm Canada's Warsaw summit commitments and strengthen the web of collective security that Canada has invested in for more than 70 years. If we do them well, and with the right level of political will, Canada can move effectively within the alliance by providing focused capabilities that serve the wider spectrum of NATO operations. These focused capabilities are ones that we already have, such as humanitarian aid and disaster response operations. They just need to be made ready and available when NATO begins to require its members to manage crises within the wider spectrum of operations, from air strikes all the way to aiding in humanitarian emergencies.

My third topic is Canada's certain future. What we know is that Canada reinforces its ontological security by participating in collective security and the meaningful relationships that result from a long and positive history with the alliance. From sociological theory, we also know that consistency creates a certain future. This level of certainty allows states to interact with each other. Canada should think of its continued involvement in NATO as a way to create a certain and secure future.

Let me describe this. NATO is made up of member states, and these are represented by people. These people practice routines of membership and, over time, build meaningful iterative relationships, relationships that can be repeated. I have noted that routines and relationships are the keystone of ontological security—the security of state—which is equally powerful at the state level and the individual level.

Last, I urge us to consider investing in iterative, repeating relationships at headquarters, at all levels, and on NATO missions; doing away with questioning how or why to be involved in NATO; and contributing to a certain and secure future for Canada by committing to the NATO systems and routinized structures, which reinforce patterns that already exist. This means putting more effort, including some funds, into what is working already, and doing that for 10 years.

I urge us to also consider refocusing on the benefit of the relationships to Canada's ontological security, rather than focusing on the amount of recognition that Canada gets from specific efforts within the alliance, and last, measuring the effectiveness of Canada's involvement in NATO by asking the right questions, first, about the effectiveness of our iterative relationships within the alliance, and second, about the value of the decades-old routines, practices, systems, and patterns that contribute to Canada's sense of a certain future.

● (1540)

By connecting the three topics I've described for your consideration, we have a useful perspective to derive benefit from Canada's involvement in NATO, we can more easily measure the benefit we derive, and we can establish a more certain and secure future for Canada.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Meharg.

Dr. Sedra, the floor is yours.

Dr. Mark Sedra (President, Canadian International Council, As an Individual): Great. Let me start by thanking the committee for inviting me to speak to you today. It's an honour for me to do so.

There's no doubt that NATO is an indispensable pillar of the liberal global order that has been in place since the end of the Second World War, an order that has helped furnish Canada and the west with an unparalleled era of peace and prosperity. But is it still relevant today?

This is a question that has come up time and again since the fall of the Soviet Union. After all, the alliance was formed to act as a bulwark against Soviet expansionism and aggression in Europe during the Cold War. NATO's raison d'être was gone.

I believe, however, that NATO can be as relevant today as it ever was but with a big caveat. It must remain vigilant in responding and adapting to the rapidly shifting global security environment.

Before I explain in more detail how NATO can position itself as an adaptive organization that will be indispensable for global security for the foreseeable future, let me say a few words about how the alliance has evolved since the end of the Cold War.

The wars in the Balkans in the 1990s presented NATO with its first major post-Cold War era challenge and dispelled any notion of the alliance's irrelevance. NATO-led interventions on the doorstep of western Europe helped to halt civil conflict and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia. These missions would pave the way for NATO's first out-of-area operations in Afghanistan, from 2003 to the present, and in Libya in 2011.

While the current situations in Afghanistan and Libya are far from stable, and the broader international interventions in both countries could scarcely be described as successful, this should not cloud the important and impactful role that NATO has played in both countries.

When NATO assumed control of the International Security Assistance Force, ISAF, in Afghanistan in August 2003, the Taliban was just beginning its comeback. I was there. The situation in the country has gradually deteriorated ever since, but this is attributable more to the broader failings of the U.S. and western strategy in the country and the dysfunction of the Afghan government than it is to the actions of NATO.

One of the peculiar facets of insurgency warfare on full display in Afghanistan is that you can win almost every battle against an enemy—and NATO surely has against the Taliban—and still lose the war. The current chaos in Libya, marked by the emergence of competing national governments and the division of the country into militia-controlled fiefdoms, often colours people's opinions of the NATO air campaign in 2011. We must not forget, however, that NATO intervened in Libya to halt an impending atrocity as Gadhafi's forces rushed to the city of Benghazi to crush a rebellion and create, as Gadhafi publicly proclaimed to the world, rivers of blood.

Make no mistake, the NATO mission led by a Canadian general prevented an impending war crime. Despite these interventions, the utility of NATO continues to be challenged. President Donald Trump has called it obsolete, although he would walk back the claim after his first NATO summit.

Despite such rhetoric, NATO remains a critical component of the global collective security architecture and vital to Canadian interests. Let me list some reasons why I believe this to be the case.

First, NATO's value extends well beyond the security sphere. It continues to maintain a sense of political unity and common purpose among its diverse 29 member states, many of which have been adversaries in the past, in the recent past.

Second, it is one of the cornerstones of the global multilateral system that Canada helped to build after World War II, which amplifies our voice and influence on the world stage.

Third, it can play an important role in bolstering perennially under-resourced UN peacekeeping missions, providing the kinetic capacity that today's more dangerous missions increasingly lack.

Fourth, it can serve as a vital tool to facilitate co-operation in the Arctic, an area of critical interest to Canada and several other NATO member states.

● (1545)

Finally, it can act as a counterweight and deterrent to a militarily resurgent Russia, particularly after the 2014 intervention in Ukraine.

While NATO continues to be a major strategic asset for Canada and a key to western collective security, its continued relevance depends on its ability to adapt to changing geopolitical and security conditions. In recent days NATO released its "Strategic Foresight Analysis 2017 Report", which rightly emphasizes the fluid and complex security environment that demands "the transformation of NATO's military capacity, to ensure the Alliance remains relevant and credible, now and in the foreseeable future".

An old saying in military circles—although I'm not from the military—warns that militaries should be wary of always preparing to fight the last war. NATO must heed this warning and modernize, innovate, and diversify to prepare itself for the coming challenges.

Here are four areas where NATO could take action in this regard.

First, NATO must avoid the temptation to be overly Russo-centric in its posture despite the recent rise in tensions with Russia. Rather, it must be prepared to confront an array of 21st-century security challenges, from cyberwar and terrorism, to pandemic disease and climate change. NATO must continue to consolidate its transformation from a Cold War military alliance to a multi-dimensional security body. Previous NATO missions to counter piracy in the Horn of Africa, secure the Mediterranean Sea, and support disaster relief in Pakistan and even in the U.S. in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina shows the alliance's capacity to respond to a multiplicity of challenges. It must continue to develop this broad spectrum of capabilities.

Second, NATO should become a global hub and centre of excellence for security sector reform, the process to build the capacity of military and public security institutions in fragile, failed, and conflict-affected states. NATO has supported military training activities on an ad hoc basis in an array of complex settings, from Afghanistan and Iraq, to the Balkans and sub-Saharan Africa. But it should develop more institutionalized and rapidly deployable security sector reform capacity, which is desperately needed in many unstable countries and regions making difficult transitions.

Third, NATO could assist other regional organizations such as the African Union and the Organization of American States to develop their capacity for collective security and peace support operations. The alliance has already embarked on this road with the African Union, providing airlift support to its peace support mission in Somalia, and expert training to its fledgling African standby force. The alliance could expand these capacity development efforts to build a robust and integrated network of regional security organizations, thereby strengthening the global collective security system.

Lastly, in light of the nuclear crisis in North Korea, NATO—and this is a long-term goal—should work to reduce nuclear stockpiles and contribute to international nuclear control regimes, working alongside the UN, IAEA, and global civil society actors.

Ensuring that a massive alliance like NATO is constantly adapting to changing geopolitical and security conditions—and they're changing rapidly—requires political will and resources. The resource issue remains the elephant in the room. A consistent and not wholly unwarranted criticism of NATO is that it's become a two-tier alliance, comprising a small number of states contributing their fair share, and a larger number of free riders that are not. Only five of the 29 NATO member states, by my count, have met the 2% of GDP target for defence expenditures set by the alliance in 2006.

● (1550)

Canada is one of the countries below the 2% threshold. I think, however, there is validity in the Canadian government's argument that, despite its failure to meet the spending target, it has consistently punched above its weight in other areas, most notably troop deployments, as the current mission in Latvia shows.

In fact, a case can be made that NATO should develop a new metric, apart from just spending, that takes into account contributions to ongoing alliance activities. Nonetheless, for the alliance to survive and thrive in the future, it must be appropriately resourced by all member states. The government's plans to increase defence spending encapsulated in the defence policy review is a good sign that Canada could lead other NATO members in making new investments. Indeed, I do think Canada is well positioned to drive innovation and modernization across the alliance.

In this period of geopolitical volatility such leadership is invaluable and may need to come from countries like Canada, with the U.S. and other alliance members increasingly preoccupied with domestic challenges and isolationist pressures.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Sedra.

For meeting context, we're going to have you until about five o'clock. That will give us enough time to go through one round of formal questioning. I have a speaker's list here. Then we'll go into about 30 minutes of committee business.

This is the white flag for when it's time to surrender, to yield the floor back to me so that I can transfer to somebody else and make sure everyone gets a chance. If you're speaking, just glance over here once in a while so that I can get your attention and move along so everyone gets an opportunity. Sometimes that's difficult for me.

Mark Gerretsen, we'll start with you.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the two witnesses for being here today.

Ms. Meharg, towards the end of Mr. Sedra's remarks he started to talk about measuring the benefits of Canada's contribution to NATO. For me personally, this is one of the things I think I've really evolved in terms of my perception of Canada's involvement. When we started our study on NATO, I would say I was pretty close to being a staunch supporter of Canada's needing to commit 2% of its GDP. As we studied this and as we visited the different operations that Canada is involved in with respect to NATO, it's becoming more and more obvious to me that this idea of 2% is difficult to use on its own.

When we were in Latvia, we were told that other countries are joining the battalion led by Canada because Canada is there. Out of the four battalions with Operation Unifier, the one that Canada is leading has the most involvement. As Mr. Sedra said, we continually punch above our weight when it comes to showing up. We might not have the most money involved, but when we're asked to be there, we show up.

You talked a bit about measuring Canada's involvement. Would you agree with his assessment that there's more to this than just the monetary end of it? Further to that, how do you start to capture some of these other contributions? Should we encourage NATO to apply another metric, as Mr. Sedra said, that involves more than just the monetary contribution?

● (1555)

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: Thank you so much for your question.

I'd like to address this first by talking about how we approach measuring phenomena, especially international interventions, and perhaps the work that Canada does.

I wrote a book called *Measuring What Matters in Peace Operations and Crisis Management*. I actually went over to NATO headquarters and did two dozen interviews with top brass in Belgium and talked to them about how they were addressing this problem, because at that point in time Afghanistan had come to the fore. We knew that we were not making the changes in attitude and behaviours in the local populations that we had intended and that the political rhetoric had sold to us before our deployments.

What I can tell you is that there are two ways to measure: the quantitative approach and the qualitative approach. Often, we get stuck in the quantitative approach. That's the numbers, the kilometres of roads we asphalted in Afghanistan, the post holes dug, the seats in the chairs at the training events, and the mentoring programs. We focus on quantity. I think what my colleague has suggested is that there's a balanced approach to measuring. We probably need to measure that 2% commitment in different ways and break that apart differently. It's my understanding that different countries actually use a different formula to calculate the 2%.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: To that point, one of the other things that became very obvious was that everybody was calculating it differently. Even within just the monetary part, it was difficult to quantify.

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: That's right.

Just beware that there's no perfect measurement out there, no perfect metric, that will allow us to calculate Canada's ability to punch above its weight. We either need to lobby at different levels at headquarters to figure out what a better formula is, but that could take years—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: That's where I'm interested. I'm limited in time, but I'm interested in knowing.... Our opportunity here, as a committee, is to recommend to the government to take various different actions as it relates to NATO, at least in the context of this study.

Would you suggest or recommend that the government encourage NATO to change the formula that it's currently using instead of just this monetary approach?

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: No.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Can you explain?

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: I think there would be too much effort.

There's always effort in education and effort in changing policy that already has a track record, so it's possible that we just want to change our approach to how we measure our 2%.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: What if NATO doesn't recognize that?

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: Then we probably have to have a discussion about what benefit Canada's deriving from its involvement in some of the operations that we participate in. We need to sell it on both sides.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Sedra, would you like to weigh in on that?

Dr. Mark Sedra: Yes.

What I would say, first of all, is that there's no question that there is a need across the board among NATO member states to increase defence spending to support the alliance. I am not an expert on monitoring, evaluation, and developing metrics to measure these sorts of things. There's a science to it, and Sarah knows that better than I.

However, I would say that I think there is a need to, in addition to the spending category, look at some of these other contributions that alliance members are making. There is no question. If you look at Afghanistan, Canada was—to overuse that term—punching above its weight. It made major commitments to the mission. We suffered proportionately more than any other NATO member state as a result, and that has to count for something.

● (1600)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: In your opening comments, you referred to the different classifications of countries and you said some were free riders.

Were you putting Canada in the category of a free rider?

Dr. Mark Sedra: No, because I actually do very much buy into the notion that our qualitative contributions are so great that I wouldn't put us there. I think that there are nations that are both underspending and not making the contributions to the alliance activities that are necessary.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: My next question can go to both of you as I have about 30 seconds left.

How important is it to have countries like Canada that bring clout with them to the organization, because they're regarded as countries that are genuinely—not that all aren't—trying to make a difference respecting NATO's contributions.

Dr. Mark Sedra: I think it makes a big difference. I think we carry weight, especially now with some of the geopolitical shifts we're seeing and some of the changing views of the United States and others. I think it carries a lot of weight to come from Canada.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Ms. Meharg, do you want to—

The Chair: I'm going to have to—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You didn't put up the flag.

The Chair: You missed the flag because you weren't looking over here.

I will commend you on an excellent round of questions, Mark.

Mr. Yurdiga.

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for participating in our study, which is a very important study.

My first question goes to Mr. Sedra.

In the context of the rising threat of Russia, we see Turkey has decided to purchase the Russia S-400 missile defence system. To me it seems that would be a detrimental factor for allied cohesion. Do you see this as a problem that can be overcome or is this always going to be something on the back burner?

Dr. Mark Sedra: I think that's a good question. It raises another issue that, in a way, is an elephant in the room. NATO has often prided itself as being a club of liberal democracies, but the reality is that many member states are not as liberal and not as democratic as they were even five years ago. Turkey's an example. You could also talk about recent developments in Hungary, Poland, and elsewhere.

What does this do to cohesion within the alliance? I'm concerned. I think this is something we are going to see emerge more over time. It's going to cause rifts within the alliance and will require leadership from, you would hope, the United States. It's played that role in the past. Whether it can play that role going forward is a big question, or whether countries like Canada and some of our European allies can step up and play that leadership role.

That being said, I do strongly believe—and I mentioned this at the beginning of my remarks—that there's always been differences of opinion within NATO, and that's one of the benefits of having an alliance like this. You had Greece and Turkey sitting at the table not long after they were in open conflict with each other and it helped to contain conflict. I think some of the differences we're seeing, some of the reversals in democracy that we're seeing in many of these countries, could be a reason to keep NATO together, to push back against that. But it is something that's a concern.

Mr. David Yurdiga: Thank you.

Sarah Meharg, NATO and the United Nations share a commitment to maintaining international peace and security. Can you comment on the framework for NATO-UN co-operation, and the evolution of NATO-UN co-operation in the field?

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: I can speak to some of the field realities better than I can to the headquarter realities.

Picking up on a point that Mark made, NATO is there to provide the kinetic operational capability that the UN cannot muster efficiently or effectively, but from a field perspective, we've gone through a transition and a transformation over the past 20 years on something that emerged as hybrid operations. We moved into all sorts of different kinds of joint activities, joined-up activities, the comprehensive approach.

The UN and NATO forces were all using these types of modalities to work together, and when I speak to the importance of routines and relationships to how Canada sees itself, delving into those field realities where, again, perhaps Canada is working shoulder to shoulder with the Hungarians and the Bulgarians and the Poles and the U.S., we build those relationships that create the problem-solving mechanism required to get things done. Without the relationships there and without the routines we've been practising, exercising, and simulating over the past 25 to 30 years with our NATO commitment, we really fail to get things done in the field.

● (1605)

Mr. David Yurdiga: Thank you.

The second part of my question follows that same line of thinking. You mentioned post-war reconstruction in your presentation, and I assume many phases are involved. What is the biggest challenge in stabilizing the region, and what should NATO's and the UN's involvement be in this complicated process?

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: Could you specify a particular place?

Mr. David Yurdiga: Afghanistan, for example.

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: Reconstruction has also transformed over the past 15 years. What we know about reconstruction and stabilization is that often there has been no suspension of hostilities, but we have the defence sector, the development sector, and the diplomatic sector, as well as the non-state sector, the humanitarians and the NGOs, all working together to try to make change in a recipient population while bombs are still dropping and bullets are still being fired.

We have a problem on our hands, and the UN is much better at managing what happens after a ceasefire. They are preset to understand how to recover, reconstitute, and stand up a society again. NATO is not functional in those capacities in the same respect, so there's really a good way for those two groups to work together, as Mark said, with the kinetic capability at the front end, although NATO does get involved in relief after disasters and offering humanitarian aid in some shapes and forms.

It seems there is a good merging of the capabilities, but we just have to think through.... Actually I find Canada is more able to contribute to NATO. It just seems that there are more mechanisms in place for us to contribute easily and effectively than there are for us to contribute through the UN mechanism.

That's something to consider while you're pulling the report together. It just seems that we have developed more lines through NATO, through communication and interoperability that way, which we can probably see more results from if we focus more on them.

Mr. David Yurdiga: I have 30 seconds left, so this will be a quick one.

With the actions in eastern Ukraine and what we see on the eastern flank, and the growing instability in the Middle East, and so on, what should NATO's priority be at this point? We're all over the place but what is the biggest concern for NATO members?

Dr. Mark Sedra: That's a good question.

One of the things is that it's hard, of course, to see a NATO mission in Ukraine, given the proximity to Russia and the existing tensions. I think also NATO has to be very careful in how it would see an intervention in the Middle East. I'll just say very briefly it was involved in Iraq, for instance, but specifically on a training mission. NATO was involved in Afghanistan in a more multi-faceted, integrated mission.

Clearly, when it comes to Ukraine, I don't think it's workable. I think there are options to support, for instance reconstruction in Syria and Iraq, but I think it would probably be targeting security sector reform, which is what I talked about earlier.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to both our witnesses for being here today.

I'm going to start with Dr. Meharg, I guess largely because I'm a recovering academic. I'm very interested in your theory of how we find value in NATO. I just want to try it out to see if I understand it. According to your theory, we see ourselves as an important player in NATO. We see ourselves as a leader in NATO. The way we value that would be by continuing to find opportunities to lead, and by repeating those leadership activities. Is that a good understanding?

● (1610)

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: Yes, and not just in leadership but at the different and multi-layered mechanisms that are NATO—but you got it.

Mr. Randall Garrison: In terms of what we're doing right now, Canada's taken a leadership role in Latvia. Certainly we've tried to take a leadership role in the area of women, peace, and security. Are there other areas in which you see opportunities for Canada to lead at NATO?

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: I want to suggest that Canada become more involved in the multinational experimentation process. We contributed a lot of effort and a lot of intellectual horsepower. Really, it was a Canadian Forces experimentation process, but Canada led it. I think it was called MNE 5, multinational experiment five—or it may have been four that we led here.

There's a process involved that allows us to add the innovation and the intellect and to problem-solve as only Canadians can. Oftentimes that tap of resources and assets has turned off for us. Sometimes it trickles and sometimes it flows, but we have to think through that when we are in operational commands or in leadership positions. Leading at the multinational experimentation process level allows us to give that innovation contribution that is sometimes absent from other levels and mechanisms within NATO.

Mr. Randall Garrison: That's great. Thanks.

Dr. Sedra, I think your fourth point—I guess I would call it maintaining relevance—was about NATO's working to reduce nuclear stockpiles and taking other measures.

My first question to you would be this. Do you believe it would be a contradiction for a NATO member to sign the nuclear prohibition treaty?

Dr. Mark Sedra: I don't necessarily think it would be a contradiction. When I was talking about a reduction of nuclear stockpiles, I wasn't necessarily talking about full prohibition or relinquishing or destroying all nuclear weapons. It's looking at strengthening the global regime, for instance to prevent states like North Korea, Iran, and others from acquiring nuclear weapons, but at the same time working with major states like Russia and the United States to reduce their stockpiles.

I don't necessarily see it as joining the movement toward prohibition, although I'm saying realistically over the long term I think that's where it has to be moving.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I guess I'm asking if you are stating this as something NATO needs to do. Is this an opportunity for Canada to lead within the NATO alliance? I'm going to relate the two questions I've just asked.

Dr. Mark Sedra: Yes. I think all those are areas where a country like Canada has an opportunity to lead and to move forward. You can't do everything at once, of course. I mentioned these. It's a menu of opportunities. I think they're all issues that NATO is positioned to make headway on. Canada will have to carefully assess where it can make the most impact and what will be in its national interest, but I think they're all activities that have to be considered.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Since Canada is a country that decided not to take on nuclear weapons a long time ago, it would seem to me that perhaps we have a unique opportunity among some of the major players in NATO to pursue these initiatives you're talking about.

Dr. Mark Sedra: Yes, especially in light of what's happening on the Korean peninsula, and especially if you consider the fact that we have worsening tensions with Russia. In the past that has been an area where some headway was made in terms of mutually reducing nuclear stockpiles and so on. That's an area that has to be considered. I know it sounds counterintuitive because of the nature of the geopolitical situation right now, but I think that could be seen as a way to reduce tensions over the long term by finding one area where you can achieve some common ground.

I think there's a growing acceptance that, in light of what's happening in North Korea, the proliferation of nuclear weapons is one of the most profound security threats to the planet.

Mr. Randall Garrison: In terms of NATO, you've raised the next place I would like to go. You started talking about North Korea. What is the relationship of NATO to those more regional, if you like, problems like North Korea? We heard you talking about strengthening regional organizations. Is this the kind of example where, when there's an absence of that regional organization, NATO may be able to play some kind of role?

Either one of you can answer that one.

● (1615)

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: Geography matters. Although it doesn't matter as much to the nuclear proliferation argument because it really doesn't matter where you're located because you are affected in some way, geography matters in NATO. It has a geographic name. We have to know that it can't be all-serving around the planet and serve in theory in what they call regional security complexes, this idea that particular regions evolve against a common threat and they will strengthen and solidify the ways and means to protect themselves.

Where two groups have always been fighting one another, if there's a common threat to both of them, they will work together and create a security complex to be able to counter the threat. NATO in a way can't necessarily be everywhere because it's intended to serve the countries from a geographical position around the north Atlantic. I just want to put that in there because I am a political geographer.

The Chair: Dr. Sedra.

Dr. Mark Sedra: I'd like to offer a slightly different perspective, although I absolutely see the danger of mission creep. This is a quote that always sticks with me. German defence minister Peter Struck, years ago when he was rationalizing the war in Afghanistan—Germany and NATO being in Afghanistan—said that German security depended on the security of the Hindu Kush mountains. He meant that security threats defy borders and regions nowadays.

When we talk about cybersecurity you cannot say that we're just worried about cybersecurity in the north Atlantic region. When we worry about terrorism it's the same. NATO has engaged in out-of-area operations. I would argue that many of the global threats we face are transnational threats, so we have to view them as such. Whereas I agree we have to be very careful, that's why I talk about working with regional organizations. NATO shouldn't be everywhere. If you can work with other actors on the ground, that should be the option you take.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Alleslev.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you very much.

The discussion of metrics is the most important conversation we need to have because part of the conversation of course around the relevance of NATO is always tied to money, and while money is only one benefit in return for that, spending has to be another part. Qualitative and quantitative measures will help us to define how, why, or whether or not we're being successful.

But I do understand we've almost confused or intermingled the conversation around the benefits and metrics of a mission, or a military intervention versus the metrics and value of membership in NATO. I just want to be clear, do you agree those are two separate things and must be viewed and measured separately?

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: Yes.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: That's excellent. Then let's talk about the value or metrics for NATO overall because missions are a little dicier. There is the military execution leadership and our role in that. There's our role in thought leadership and one of the key things that you talked about is our relationships within our roles in NATO. In recent memory we have withdrawn a number of people at all levels, in NATO headquarters, in academia, or in research and development, or the Arctic, or any of those kinds of roles.

Back to your relationship conversation, do you think there's value in having and measuring the number of people involved in key areas, which we define as being integral to that which Canada is focused on at all levels within the broader NATO structure?

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: We need the numbers to tell us that part of the story, but it's only a small part. As human beings we have trouble approaching the stories about relationships, the narrative about our involvement in NATO, in a way that is meaningful for somebody else to understand. This is the problem we face when we're measuring not just the numbers. We have to approach it in a slightly different manner. Why I chose that perspective to share with you today is that after reading some of the transcripts of past meetings I didn't want to repeat what some of the other witnesses have shared with you. I wanted to go somewhere slightly different.

● (1620)

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Brilliant.

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: The metrics component, understanding how to report to government, how to measure that Canada is getting benefit, securing itself as an entity called “Canada”, and strengthening its brand, its sense of self, and its sense of purpose in the world just by belonging—not questioning what we belong to but just by the nature of belonging—and the routine over almost seven decades —

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Then take it to that next level about participating and being in those conversations at its seat at the table, a seat at the table in NATO procurement, or a seat at the table in the research and development of a certain program, or a seat at the table in the thought leadership around the NATO Defense College and the academic vision of where we are going next. Would that address quantitative and qualitative?

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: In a way, it would. I appreciate your bringing it up. I'm sure Mark will have something to add, too.

In my experience, if you don't take a seat at the table, you don't have a voice in the discussion, and there are some pretty important discussions going on within the international realm of security right now. If Canada is not participating.... As I said, it's a multi-layered approach. NATO is not a thing out there. It is something we produce in our membership in it. Just belonging to particular components of NATO allows us to have what you are talking about and to have that seat at the table. We can be part of the discussion.

Dr. Mark Sedra: I would completely agree. I think that it matters, absolutely. That is the crux of what I was talking about. When we have to revisit or rethink the metric, contributions of personnel at all levels of NATO operations, not just troops in the field, are absolutely critical for the functioning of the organization.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Outstanding.

Your next caveat is that if we don't adapt to the next war—and I don't even mean war but the changing environment in which an alliance finds itself, because we still tend to be focused on the past—and become agile and quick.... Are we in a race against time? Is there a sense of urgency that we and other NATO members should be communicating, that it's not just a question of adapting but getting it done quickly and having a model that allows us not just to move but to move quickly?

Dr. Mark Sedra: Yes, I think that's it. The reality is that a big alliance like NATO tends to move slowly. When you talk to some NATO officials, you get the sense that they are preparing to fight a pitched tank battle in Europe against Russia one day. That's not the way the war will...if there is a war. Actually, I shouldn't say....

If a conflict was to emerge, most likely it would be in cyberspace or through the use of non-state actors. I think there has to be an acceleration. You used the term “thought leadership”. I think a big part of where NATO should be going is to think about new ways and new approaches to collective security and common defence.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: We, as parliamentarians in NATO member countries, should be advocating as loudly as we can to encourage that sense of urgency in adapting and becoming more agile.

Dr. Mark Sedra: Absolutely. One of the worrying things about the recent geopolitical shift is that it has brought back some of the old binary thinking of us versus them, the Cold War thinking. I think we have to get back to looking at this as a dynamic, rapidly changing security environment, with a multiplicity of—

Ms. Leona Alleslev: This is a bit of a delicate question. We talk about it being the relationships, the shared values, and all the security that comes with being part of that organization, yet my colleague mentioned Turkey looking at weapon systems from Russia. We have a very stringent process around how countries should become members of NATO. Is the time now to at least start having a conversation as an alliance about what to do if a member is no longer part of that ideological framework?

The Chair: As much as I'd love to hear the answer to that, I'm going to have to yield the floor to Mr. Robillard. Maybe someone else will pick up on that, because it's an excellent question.

● (1625)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Sedra, your biography says that you are the co-founder of the Security Governance Group, a private consulting firm focused on security issues.

Could you tell us how your work on security issues, in the area of private consulting, is affected by NATO-related issues, its presence in the world and the contributions of its members?

[*English*]

Dr. Mark Sedra: I wear multiple hats in my career. Currently, the bulk of my attention goes to running a not-for-profit think tank, one of Canada's oldest international affairs think tanks. That's a little plug. It's called the Canadian International Council. However I was, for the last five years, running a consulting firm. Our main focus was to provide research-based consulting to support countries like Canada, UN agencies, states—the United States was one of our clients—in security-sector reform, so the training and capacity building of security forces in conflict-affected countries. We were primarily doing some of the thinking behind some of these. We weren't implementing these capacity-building programs, but we were researching and providing advice on the best approaches to take. We were working with many NATO member states on some of these issues.

I'm also an academic. I teach at the University of Toronto and the University of Waterloo. As I said, I wear many hats.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: How are NATO's borders and cooperative security adapting to the current global security environment?

[*English*]

Dr. Mark Sedra: You were saying borders and co-operative security—I'm not exactly clear. Are you asking how the collective security system is run in light of the fact that there are borders and issues of sovereignty and so on? Yes.

In many ways, we are seeing the erosion of the traditional notion of sovereignty in terms of security threats. For security threats, whether you're looking at transnational crime, terrorism, cyber-conflict, or global pandemics, they don't respect national borders. When we talk about supporting a multinational organization like NATO to confront these threats, there are going to be concerns among some member states that this could violate the principle of sovereignty, and some may see that as threatening.

In many respects, this trend of populist movements we see globally is a reaction to this type of globalization and the erosion of the principle of sovereignty. I think as responsible states that want to address these issues in a holistic and comprehensive way, we can only do that through partnerships and through multilateral organizations like NATO. No state is an island. Even the most powerful—the United States—cannot address these threats alone.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: In your view, how do Canada's contributions to NATO serve the country's defence and foreign policy interests?

Should we enhance our contributions to NATO?

[*English*]

Dr. Mark Sedra: Yes. I believe that increasing spending on defence—and there is movement in that regard already—so that we can make a larger contribution to NATO.... Also, and I said this earlier, I think we make such an important qualitative contribution in terms of personnel, leadership, and thought leadership already, that there are opportunities if we were to expand our role in those areas. If we can take on a greater leadership role, that can offset some of the shortfalls in resources. I truly believe that is a way to go and something that's badly needed, because there are deficits now in leadership within this institution as a result of what's happening in the United States and elsewhere.

● (1630)

Mr. Yves Robillard: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Gallant.

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

You reference the rapidly changing global security environment. In the news recently we have the issue of artificial intelligence as it applies to defensive or offensive measures, and specifically—over the weekend—the threats in relation to armed drones. Even if the UN bans their use, we have nations that disregard UN conventions all the time, and we of course have the proxy wars and the non-state actors.

How should NATO contribute to security with respect to artificial intelligence? We're told with cybersecurity that in order to be defensive you have to be offensive, so do we need to go down the offensive route with armed drones as well?

Dr. Mark Sedra: I am not an expert on this issue, but I do share the concern of some of the civil society organizations that are advocating a prohibition of fully autonomous weapons systems. These are weapons systems where no human is at the joystick. These are targeting people based on algorithms.

I think there are too many risks right now. We don't fully understand the implications and the potential risk factors of this technology. The barriers for entry to access technology like drones, and so on, not fully autonomous drones but drones that are controlled by humans, have been lowered. You see that all sorts of non-state actors can deploy drones. Still, you don't see the ability for many groups to access this type of very sophisticated technology. We saw this also, though, with the ban on land mines. This is very challenging, but I don't think it means we shouldn't try to go down this route.

I'm very concerned about where we're going on the issue of autonomous weapons systems. I think NATO as an alliance can be a powerful voice in saying this is not in the interest of the planet, and can try to galvanize support to develop a consensus among different states on the issue. Certainly each member state will have to have this discussion internally and look at their own interests.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Within time AI is going to become more and more relatively accessible. What timeline should we be looking at to have a decision on this? The belligerents certainly are working on this. Should we not be taking some sort of action, decision-making at the very least?

Dr. Mark Sedra: Yes, and I think we have to. Just as we have with nuclear weapons, with chemical weapons, where we've had very successful control regimes, we should be looking at setting up a global treaty system, a control regime to manage this type of thing. It's going to take co-operation not only among major states but also industry. Industry is going to have to come forward and work with states to look at this issue. Part of it is that I don't think we fully understand the implications of these types of technologies yet, the risk factors and so on.

You're absolutely right. We're going to have autonomous vehicles on the road within the next two years here in Canada, so this is coming. I think there has to be some urgency in how we address this.

When it comes to cybersecurity, I think this is an area, of course, where we are further down the path. We see the threat is burgeoning. It's multiplying. I think we are behind in developing our capacity. There's no other way to say it.

One of the challenges is that you always have to be one step ahead of the aggressors. I think we have to invest more resources, and I know NATO is taking it seriously. There is movement in NATO to develop cyber-capabilities and to coordinate different member states, but there is still a lot of room where more action can be taken.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: That was the lead-in to my next question.

It took a lot of pushing for NATO to even recognize that we should be looking at cyber as another domain of defence. Even now they're saying you have to get your own doctrine in order before we can have a collective one.

Overall, can you see how NATO should function in cybersecurity? Should it just be protecting the military assets, or should it somehow be intertwined with civilian networks as well?

● (1635)

The Chair: I'm going to have to hold it there. We've run over five minutes.

I'm going to give the floor to Mr. Rioux.

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Meharg, first, your recognition of the professionalism of the men and women in the Armed Forces is appreciated. I have often heard it at conferences, and I think it's a real asset for NATO.

You talked about reconstruction. I am going to ask you both the same question, but I will sort of set aside the reconstruction of the countries in which we were involved, such as Iraq or Afghanistan. Let's talk about Russia. Right now, the primary response is to impose sanctions on Russia. Would it be possible to take a different approach toward Russia, whose economy is in big trouble, as we know? In response to the Zapad exercise, would Mr. Putin not be tempted to declare war to try to restore Russia's autonomy and to hold on to power? Would it be possible to develop more reconstruction mechanisms rather than to impose sanctions? That suggestion was raised at the Halifax Forum last weekend.

[*English*]

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: I really appreciate the nature of your question because it gets at the issue, which is that we are dealing with people. We are dealing with people when it comes to intervening in the affairs of other states. This is what NATO does. We do this with our involvement in the UN, and we do it in our own remit with the Canadian Forces. We are intervening in the affairs of states, and we greatly affect the long-term futures of the people who are receiving our intervention. I have never been a fan of economic sanctions, because the people who get hurt by sanctions are the women, the children, and the men—the belligerents, a little, and the megalomaniac leaders, never.

When we are looking at Russia, we have a situation where more of the people will be affected rather than the leadership, because of the systems that are in place, which they can go around and move above and under. When we look at reconstruction and stabilization methods, one of the better ways to work with a country like Russia is to do anything in our power to advocate building relationships, at many levels but mostly with the executive leadership. If there are opportunities that arise for Canada to be at a table, to be part of a conference or some type of economic arrangement, take the opportunity. History has shown that this creates more positive outcomes than economic sanctions and war.

Thank you.

Dr. Mark Sedra: I agree with Sarah. I think it's absolutely critical to try to keep avenues for dialogue open with Russia. We see, obviously, a very tense situation—pressure is being ratcheted up on both sides to escalate—so I think it's absolutely important to keep talking.

At the same time, we have a responsibility to stand by our allies, and that's one of the things we are doing with Operation Reassurance. With our partner in Ukraine, it is important to show solidarity and to support Ukraine, because international law has been violated and we have to stand up for those principles. At the same time, closing all doors to contact serves no one.

In terms of economic reconstruction, that would be a challenging thing to sell to some of our partners. In terms of the modalities of how we would do that at this stage, you could argue that there was a time when we could have had a more effective role in terms of economic reconstruction after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and so on. I think that would be challenging.

● (1640)

Mr. Jean Rioux: Is that it?

The Chair: That's it.

Mr. Bezan, go ahead.

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

I was just enjoying the conversation until this last round. I have a completely different idea on sanctions, as a sponsor in the House of the Magnitsky legislation. I think that targeted sanctions against individuals who are creating all the corruption and human rights abuses have been very effective. If you look at the recent list of 52 people—I'll give the government credit on this—you see that the number one name on that list is President Maduro from Venezuela. We are going after some of the leaders.

In respect to what Professor Sedra just said, we want to have a dialogue with Russia. That is why you don't see President Putin or Lavrov on that list, so that there can still be those discussions, but the senior kleptocrats around the regime in the Kremlin are definitely getting sanctioned and getting targeted. I hope to see that expand, because I think that's the only way we can actually change the individual attitudes of making these decisions, versus.... I agree. That's why we are not doing broad-based sectoral sanctions on commodities or resources, because of the impact that would have on the people. That's whom we want to win over to our side, versus what we are seeing happening in Russia.

Last week, there was a development over in Europe. Twenty-three members of the European Union signed on to a new defence security agreement called PESCO, the permanent structured co-operation arrangement. Do you see that as being in competition with NATO? How would that impact the north Atlantic security that we have in place through NATO?

I'll let both of you answer that question.

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: Again, I would just take Mark's previous words. I'm not an expert in this area. The Europeans have to manage their own security, in a sense. They don't fully rely on NATO for those outcomes. They're a parallel security apparatus that has evolved in parallel with the NATO apparatus.

My European colleagues have said that in some respects they feel very threatened right now, because they can't rely on what they consider to be a U.S.-guaranteed security in their future. Maybe this is an example of that, just a more effective and efficient signing of an arrangement that can produce some more guaranteed security results within those core countries.

Dr. Mark Sedra: Yes. There's no question that.... There's a long history in Europe of trying to create their own collective security mechanisms, and it has largely failed and is not very successful over the long term, while NATO, of course, has been a more enduring force. Obviously, I think there is some concern that there has been a major shift in the United States. It has been the glue and one of the key actors to keep NATO together. In the absence of U.S. leadership, do they have to look at other options? I think we're going to see more of these types of moves going forward. I think that's why it's especially important to recommit to NATO to try to galvanize resources to ensure the long-term relevance of NATO.

Let me take a step back about Magnitsky. I'm very supportive of dialogue, but I do differ slightly in that I do think there is a role for sanctions. I think what we've see in terms of the Magnitsky Act.... Look at the United States. We've seen that Russia has reacted perhaps most vociferously against the Magnitsky sanctions, whether that's in the United States or even here, so I think there is potential—

Mr. James Bezan: Why is that so? Because it hurts the corrupt government that they have...?

Dr. Mark Sedra: Yes. Although I'm not an expert on sanctions either, and it is a very complicated arena, I think there is some evidence that some smart sanctions, so to speak, can have some impact.

● (1645)

Mr. James Bezan: I think they are smart sanctions. I think they keep Canada from being used as a safe haven for the illicit wealth and the families of those corrupt individuals.

I'll close with this one question for you, Professor Meharg. You've developed a theory of conflict identicide. I suppose you've looked backwards at things such as Rwanda, Bosnia, and other genocides that have taken place. Just recently, we went through the Yazidi genocide at Mount Sinjar. Looking forward, what about what's happening in Crimea right now with the Tatars?

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: Thank you so much for your question.

The Chair: I'll let you continue, but briefly, please.

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: The theory of identicide was created because of the phenomenon of the Yugoslav conflict and the intentional targeting and destruction of places—specifically, cultural heritage—that was intended to rid an area of the people who subscribed to those places, that cultural heritage. When you bomb their places, people end up moving out, and they never return because there's no connection to their places. It was used as a strategy of warfare in Bosnia.

When we talk about Crimea and identicide, we talk about genocide by talking about it as a "potential genocide" or a "possible genocide". Those are the frameworks we're given when we're looking at what's happening in Crimea and some of the other examples you gave. We can't really call something a "genocide" until after the fact. This is one of the problems with the international convention on genocide; you can't call something a genocide while it's occurring. "Identicide" is a good term to name what's happening, so that we can get to the possible outcomes and try to stop them.

I would suggest that, yes, there's definitely identicide occurring in that area of the world. Our Canadian Forces have mechanisms to recognize these things. We've worked very closely with the U.S. armed forces in recognizing mass atrocities while they're occurring, mass movements of people, and the trigger events. We can really cull that expertise and start to make a real difference in some of these areas before it gets to a point where the international community actually can call it a genocide.

The Chair: Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, folks. I've really enjoyed the conversation.

Our study is about Canada's involvement in NATO and whether NATO is relevant. I think that it may be because of the rhetoric of Mr. Trump during and after the election about NATO and its value to the world. I think I got defensive about NATO and started thinking about what we have to offer. Many times around here we've used the term "punching above our weight class".

Mark, I think you even used it today.

I kept seeing this study from the view of what we have to offer the world and what we have to offer through NATO, so I was really interested, Sarah, when you talked about Canada's benefit from our involvement in NATO. It kind of spun the table around for some reason. You said that you came at your testimony today at an angle that was a little different because you've already read all the testimony. I appreciate your looking for a different angle. That's given me a chance to focus on that other side.

You said that it's easier for Canada to contribute to NATO. Is that our alignment? Is that our ideology? You really never did expand on that. I have one other question, but do you want to give me a comment on what your thought process is there?

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: Yes. It's based on the empirical evidence that Canada has supported NATO interoperability for at least 35 years, knowing that our Canadian Armed Forces use systems that are interoperable with those of the other actors. We don't necessarily do that in the same way with the UN. When we deploy into a NATO mission, we are mostly speaking the same language and using the same systems and ways of doing operations.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay. Got it.

The Arctic sea ice is melting due to climate change and there's a fear that the area may destabilize because of the Russian posturing. I don't necessarily agree with Mark's comment that NATO needs to be less Russo-centric, and I know this question is going in that direction anyway. Should NATO play a strong role in this? How could that evolve, that posturing for the Arctic, and what role can or should Canada play, because it's in our attic?

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: The Arctic as a place means something to Canada. It means something to Russia, and it has a different modality for people in Scandinavian countries and Iceland. There's a different way of thinking about the Arctic from all of those different perspectives. In fact, there are multiple perspectives within Canada. The statistic that I understand is that at any one time at least 25% to 55% of the people populating the Arctic at this point in time on Canadian Arctic territory are non-indigenous peoples. There's a huge number of industrial representatives in our north.

I need to think through your question. What I'd like to say about our perspective on our Arctic, Canada's Arctic, is that we like to be part of the circumpolar countries, the council of the Arctic. The way that we contribute on the dialogue of the north on that platform is different from what it could be through NATO. NATO is a defence organization. For the circumpolar states and how we interact on that other platform, it is not a defensive or offensive perspective. I think it's important to use all the platforms available to us to make sure that we're using or sharing the north such that it contributes to everybody's win in the Arctic. I know that sounds a bit broad, and I'd love to get into this further.

● (1650)

Mr. Darren Fisher: We're not going to have time to do it.

Dr. Mark Sedra: Can I say just one thing about the Arctic? Let's not securitize the Arctic based on what's happening elsewhere. Let's not apply the lens of Ukraine to the Arctic, because the Arctic is one area where there's been a surprising array of agreement and co-operation between Russia and the United States.

We don't see a military confrontation in the Arctic. That doesn't mean we don't prepare and so on, but I've been working on the Arctic a bit more recently, and there is a great deal more multinational dialogue. The Arctic Council functions very effectively. This is actually an area where we could build goodwill. That's not to view it through a security lens, but to see that this is an area where there is very productive co-operation. For instance, on search and rescue, the Russians, the United States, and Canada work closely together pretty well still, despite what we're seeing elsewhere in the world.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Do I have another 30 seconds?

The Chair: No. You're over your time.

For the last formal question, we'll go to Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to go back to what I'll call Dr. Sedra's list of updates to remain relevant for NATO. I think in your second one you talked about making NATO a global hub for security sector reform.

Since I only have a very short time here, I'm going to ask you two questions and then let you go. First, how would you evaluate NATO's capacity in terms of security sector reform at this point? We know that Canada is very involved in Ukraine, but when you talk about making NATO a hub, how would you distinguish that? Secondly, what would it actually look like if NATO were a global hub for security sector reform?

Dr. Mark Sedra: Right now, NATO contributes to various operations and missions on more of an ad hoc basis. If there's a need for trainers, it will mobilize those trainers from different member states and send them out. What I'm talking about is creating almost standby capacity for this type of reform. There is, by the way, a whole methodology, an entire one, with many different sorts of systems and lessons learned on how to do this effectively and how to build security institutions. NATO could be a home for this institutionalized knowledge in order to really develop some thought leadership capacity in that area.

What I'm talking about is having standing capacity, and not just on the military side, but to branch off and look at policing, too, and to look also at building the capacity of intelligence agencies and to build the capacity of governance agencies that provide oversight. I'm talking about NATO developing a holistic capacity for this, because I can tell you that despite the fact that we view security sector reform as the linchpin for successful post-conflict reconstruction, there is no institution globally that has a mandate on a sufficient scale to develop this capacity, to develop these lessons learned, and to deploy broadly.

The UN has units that look at this, but they're small. They're under-resourced. The OSCE has looked at this in the past and has developed methodology and best practices, but again, it has largely abandoned efforts. I think NATO could be one institution that could take a leadership role in this.

● (1655)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Is one of the ways to do this to have a NATO centre of excellence that is focused on this? Since Canada doesn't have a NATO centre of excellence, I'd see that as an opportunity.

Dr. Mark Sedra: Yes, and in the context of peacekeeping, Canada has talked about how one of its focuses will be on building the capacity of military and security forces. I think it would be natural if Canada.... Actually, Canadians are often sought after to provide this type of support in the police, governance, and military realms. This, I think, would be an area where there would be a lot of support among our allies for seeing this type of capacity developed here in Canada.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Could that be part of a centre of excellence on peacekeeping or would you see it as a stand-alone capacity?

Dr. Mark Sedra: I see it as a stand-alone capacity. That could be knit together with the peacekeeping, of course, but it is its own.... This type of process can be enacted in areas outside of peacekeeping operations.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I see some nodding from Dr. Meharg.

Would you like to add anything to that?

The Chair: Before we do that, you're a little over time on the three minutes.

Given the time that we have left, and my knowledge of what we're going to discuss in camera in committee business, I'm going to extend here. We'll go to Mr. Spengemann, Mr. Bezan, and Mr. Garrison, for four more minutes each.

That way, you'll have the opportunity to finish off what you were saying earlier. That will end the formal round.

I'm going to give the floor to Mr. Spengemann for a four-minute question, please.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to circle back to a line of questioning that was opened by my colleague Mr. Yurdiga.

Professor Meharg, you mentioned the components of putting this all back together as defence, development, diplomacy, and humanitarian affairs. Is that a rank ordering of any sort in terms of importance, or is it simply that these are the four components?

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: I was just referring to them as the core components. It depends on the type of operation.

We can pick up on Mr. Garrison's comment on this idea that there are operations other than war, and the Canadian Forces are trained to do work in a very wide spectrum of operations. As Mark has suggested, they're highly respected around the world. Whether you're serving in the military or you're a civilian, Canadians are a voice of reason out there. It doesn't matter if you're from the diplomatic field, in the forces, or from the development field.

The spectrum of operations is critical. This idea of peacekeeping.... Peacekeeping is only one thing in a very broad array of activities. We have to start to use that language when we're talking about what we do, where we deploy, and how we do it.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Okay. If I had the time, I would ask you a bit more about that philosophy, but I don't. It's fair to say that among those four components there really isn't a hierarchy of importance. They're equally important in terms of the outcome of good security internationally—

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: Of different phases—

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Of different phases of conflict.

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: Exactly. There's always a lead, and there should always be a lead.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: I wanted to get to the point you suggested, that NATO was the kinetic end of the spear—the sharp end of the stick, so to speak, or the lance—and that NATO doesn't do post-conflict reconstruction as well as other entities or institutions, nor should it. Why is there any need to duplicate? I'm concerned about the doctrine that is still out there in many camps that says we don't nation-build. We've seen what happens when you take the kinetic component out of theatre too quickly. We've seen it in Iraq and we've seen it elsewhere. You get conflict 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0.

How do you close that cycle in terms of whole-of-government thinking to make sure that we see a conflict through to successful post-conflict reconstruction and we don't slide back into the next iteration of that conflict? Do we nation-build? Do we have to? If we give it to the UN, the UN is more diffuse politically, more appealing, less impositionist. If NATO were to do this work, it might be seen as too western and too powerful, as not endogenous enough for local processes.

How do we close that loop to make sure it's not just a hand-off to the UN and things may or may not go into the weeds, but it is done in a cycle, success is experienced, and you don't get 2.0 of the conflict we started to intervene in?

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: To begin, we as Canada, like other nations, experiment on other people's populations when we intervene. We don't know the effects of what we do in the medium and long term when it comes to peace-building and the other operations that occur after that kinetic application is over. There are different ways to reconstruct and stabilize. We've seen what happens when forces leave too early and there's a breakdown of the security sector in general, which is Mark's expertise.

Yes, there are changes that need to be made at the UN in order to really build in lessons learned, what works where, who should be doing it—

Mr. Sven Spengemann: I'm going to run out of time in 20 seconds.

Is it fair to say that there needs to be an accountability mechanism that says not to pull out too early? A coalition, a group of countries intervening, can't just pull out at their political whim and fancy. They need to pull out when the time is right, when it can be devolved onto local processes. How do you build that accountability? Is that a fair question?

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: I think it works in theory. I'm not sure about practice.

● (1700)

Dr. Mark Sedra: I think one of the key things is that you have to follow the principle of “do no harm”. The reality is that if you're not willing to stay the requisite amount of time to see through some of the activities that you're supporting, then it's better not to intervene at all.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In both comments made by our witnesses today, they said we need to be less Russo-centric. Who is the number one source of hybrid warfare in Europe today?

Dr. Mark Sedra: How do you define “hybrid warfare”? Is it in terms of the—

Mr. James Bezan: Little green men, cyber-attacks: who's doing it? It's Russia. Who is the number one source of cyber-attacks on European member states? It's Russia. Who is the biggest challenge in the potential of invading into the Baltics? It's Russia.

How can NATO not be Russo-centric when you have Putin and the Kremlin rattling their sabres about having the biggest nuclear arsenal in the world and about being prepared to protect Russian ethnic groups around the world wherever they might be? From a military standpoint, looking at protecting your citizens, how do you not be concerned about that Russian threat?

Dr. Mark Sedra: First of all, absolutely I included that—a resurgent Russia and an increasingly aggressive posture—as one of the reasons that NATO needs to continue to survive and thrive. There's no doubt about that. These are facts, so I take the point. What I'm saying is that we have to look at it from a long-term perspective. There's a multiplicity of threats in the international environment.

As well, to frame NATO as a counterweight just to Russia I think actually can do more harm than good over the long term. If we want to take a firm posture with Russia, which I absolutely support, we also want to maintain the possibility of engaging in dialogue. That means we have to be careful in terms of how we frame some of this, because there is no question that Russia sees NATO on its doorstep as an existential threat. We have to understand their own threat perceptions as well.

Mr. James Bezan: Professor Meharg, do you want to comment on it?

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: Geography matters. If your neighbour were attacking you, you would not be thinking about the wider community threats. You would be solely focused on that threat that was closest to home. We can't blame our European counterparts for being that way. I just want to reiterate Mark's point. We don't want NATO to fall into a pattern that we have seen in history, which is being oriented to its east. We just need to broaden NATO's identity is what we're saying.

Mr. James Bezan: Let's look at something really quickly. Cybersecurity is not just a Russian threat. There's China, Iran, North Korea. What can NATO do better, especially when you talk about experimental processes? What can we be doing better on becoming able to protect and attack through the cyber-realm?

Dr. Mark Sedra: NATO can be the connective tissue among the various work that all the NATO allies are doing on cybersecurity. It can also be one of the mechanisms to urge the member states to take this more seriously, to push the members to invest in this area. On top of that, NATO can be the area where, again, thought leadership should happen, where we should be investing in efforts to be at the cutting edge. The key thing is that it brings together, because all the different member states of course have their cyber-defensive and now increasingly offensive capabilities. This is the mechanism whereby we can pool these resources and have a common approach.

The Chair: The last question goes to Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to go back to Dr. Meharg on this question of a possible NATO centre of excellence—she didn't really get to fully chime in on that—and whether a centre on strategic reform of the security sector could be separate from or linked to a peacekeeping centre. Would you see it as discrete?

● (1705)

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: I believe that if Canada is going to monetarily support and be a leader with a centre of excellence, it needs to align the capabilities of the Canadian Forces in that centre of excellence. We want to choose something that our Canadian Forces are able to do, so it's aligned with our allies and within the broader context of the alliance.

I teach hundreds of Canadian Forces personnel and they are what I term humanitarian officers and soldiers. They signed up because they are interested in doing a really good job in helping people improve their lives, elevating humanity. We train them to do so. Reconstruction and stabilization, that stuff that sometimes happens after the bad stuff happens, is an opportunity for us to excel, and if there is no centre of excellence on that particular remit, which there is not, it may be of benefit to align them and have one on that.

Mr. Randall Garrison: You might call it reconstruction and stabilization rather than peacekeeping to give more focus and link to NATO's mandate.

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg: Yes.

Mr. Randall Garrison: That's great. Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thank you both very much for coming today. That was an excellent discussion, and one that we approached in a way that we hadn't before, so I very much appreciate that.

I'm going to suspend for a minute to say goodbye, and then we're going to come back in camera to discuss committee business.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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