

**Conference of Defence Associations Institute
11th Annual Graduate Student Symposium**

Canada's Security Interest

**“NATO and the New Russian Reality:
Coming to Terms”**

Speech By:

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****Check Against Delivery***

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It is a pleasure to welcome you all here to Kingston – Canada's first capital. Your presence here at the CDAI symposium featuring graduate research is very welcome. The future of defence and strategic studies depends on new perspectives, fresh and innovative talent and bright minds seeking better answers through empirical methodologically sound research.

CFB Kingston, the Canadian Defence Academy, RMC and various other intelligence, doctrinal training and land force strategic activities started here, have made CFB Kingston the intellectual core of Canada's land force future. The Conference of Defence Associations is right to recognize this important role by having this event here every year. It is an honour to support it – and a special honour to be asked to offer some perspective on one of our oldest and more important alliances.

Next to our status within the British Commonwealth and our defence of the Empire from the Boer War through to 1945 and next to the Ogdensburg Declaration that united Canada and the United States and Canada in mutual defence, the NATO Alliance is our longest ongoing defence obligation.

It has arguably been one of the world's most successful alliances. Its purpose was the promotion of democracy and common defence. It was conceived as a transatlantic alliance to prevent Russian aggression beyond the borders of the old USSR and Warsaw Pact satellite states. Its core border was the East German frontier.

Through Turkish support – which came with our Turkish NATO allies largest standing army in NATO, NATO was very much present on another crucial Russian border as well. This was a serious Canadian and American commitment to the defence of Europe.

We had over five thousand Canadian troops staged for decades in Germany among many thousands from other NATO members. We had squadrons of jetfighters at times with nuclear tipped ordinance aboard.

That presence and that of American, British, German and other allied troops on mainland European soil, along with the air and naval fleet capacity essential to magnify and amplify allied force punch and resilience was a trip line Russia had to consider very carefully before any adventurism into Western Europe or Scandinavia. For many years Canadian forces based in Canada and Europe drilled a supportive landing of forces and kit in Norway to aid any defence necessary against Russian expansionist forays. The nuclear deterrents of the US, the UK and France stood together in defence against any nuclear initiative our then military opponents might consider. Arctic defence was vital. Since the 1950's, NORAD and Canada have been poised to intercept Russian bombers testing our airspace just as Canadian surface naval combatants and submarines have been there to curtail and shadow soviet fleet activities threatening vital sea lanes or coastal security. And as recently as a few weeks ago, Canadian CF-18s scrambled over Alaska and Canada's

north to meet Russian Tupolev bombers testing North American airspace.

I review all this so that the context of the multi-billion dollar investment in NATO and hundreds of thousands of person years, is a clear indication of how serious our commitment was and is. At some level our mid-fifties initiative in Suez to separate the Israelis and their British and French allies from the Egyptians was about keeping the peace between French, British and American NATO allies.

Our Cyprus presence was also about keeping two NATO allies of ours, if not each other – Turkey and Greece – from doing each other, the people of Cyprus and the alliance serious harm.

NATO's success was achieved when our military enemy, the USSR, stood down from its aggressive and threatening stance without a shot being fired. This happened coincident with the signing of the Reykjavik Accords between Gorbachev and Reagan in 1986 and the subsequent fall of the Berlin Wall.

And as Russia adjusted to the end of the Soviet Union under Yeltsin, and the beginning of NATO expansion, it is clear that a triumphalist tone infected some western rhetoric and analysis. The proclamation of the "end of history" was perhaps the most excessive among the triumphalist analysis.

The USSR stood down simply and directly because Secretary Gorbachev determined with his colleagues that

the USSR could no longer invest heavily in defence capacity and technology to stay competitive with the west and still meet the basic human and economic needs of its people. It was an internal decision made for legitimate internal reasons. Preceding Russian-NATO arms reduction negotiations had seen deployed some of the best and brightest from both sides. And both sides deserve credit for the outcome.

The founding principles of NATO in 1949 were not about reforming Russia or liberating Soviet block states. They were about protecting the free world from Soviet incursion or military aggression. To be sure, in places like Canada with large Polish, Ukrainian, Serbo-Croatian and other diasporas, aspirational liberation sentiments were always present – and an integral part of our community politics in many parts of Canada. Prime Minister Diefenbaker spoke eloquently of liberating the satellite states at the U.N. – but that liberation was not a NATO military purpose. We had independent diplomatic relations with those Warsaw Pact states – we did not challenge the legitimacy of their governments.

This history tells us something very clearly. When an alliance is focused and coherent with a clear and precise purpose, it can succeed.

But when an alliance's goals are diffuse, the core assumptions become stretched as do our capacities and political will. Today, with NATO presence in Afghanistan, with the history of NATO's intervention in Bosnia, in the

former Yugoslavia – an area NATO would not normally engage and in the latter, a place that Europeans failed to initially address as an internal European problem, our alliance has been and is being tested. The Bosnian effort, while courageous and successful – and where Canadians did outstanding work – was not about an attack on Europe. Afghanistan, because it erupted from an Article 5 response to an attack launched and planned in Afghanistan against a NATO member, is more complex. But it is still, in its present form, a stretch – justified and unavoidable – but still a stretch of the original NATO purpose.

Institutionally re-assessing how we can shape a coherent NATO for the future is a critical strategic priority for Canada, a country whose foreign and defence policy has always depended on multilateral initiative and alliance coherence.

In the re-shaping, whose underlying policy direction should be a Canadian strategic priority, our relationship both present and future with Russia must be a vital consideration. And, the Georgian event, while important, must be assessed in its appropriate context without either undue bluster or complacency.

Russian development since the end of the USSR has been characterized by economic collapse, governmental disarray, consolidation and resource revenue based fiscal stability. Its leadership has reflected this cycle. Throughout that long period, there has been neither adventurism nor irresponsibility on Russia's part. Communism has been

replaced by what might be best typified as a consolidated authoritarian form of limited democracy and a state-managed capitalism which is more about power and power-source management than free markets. But it is entirely consistent with Russia's history, people and approach to management.

Since the end of the Soviet Union, there is no way one might describe Russian activity in the broader world that does not include the world “responsible”; “perfect” would not apply as an appropriate epithet, but the foreign policy of few countries if any would ever earn that description.

In the Middle East, despite Russia’s frustration with American policy relative to Iraq, which had a prior client-state relationship with the old USSR, Russia has been a largely stabilizing force. Its border region with the Iranian Islamic Republic has meant a balance of real politic and engagement on the electric generation side of nuclear power development as well as cooperation with multi-national efforts relative to avoiding and preventing Iranian nuclear weaponization. Russia has been responsive and supportive on the multi-nation effort led by China relative to North Korean nuclear capacity.

While Russia has her own geopolitical interests which she promotes in the near abroad and in regions of strategic importance to her trade and supply routes, so do we, so do the Americans, so do the Chinese. It is important that we do not fall into the far extremist trap of confusing legitimate geopolitical interest and its pursuit with hostility.

Our own Arctic is a case in point. The Americans, the Russians, the Danes all join Canada in having a strategic interest in the disposition of various border debates and contests in the region. I wholeheartedly support our Prime Minister and Canada's traditional view of our sovereign dimensions and boundaries in the region. But I do not view as hostile the Russian or American protestations or presumptions to the contrary. On balance, a peaceful sort out, a peaceful agreement to agree on some parameters and disagree on others, will likely characterize our process and purpose in that region.

The challenge of enclaves of ethnic Russian character throughout bordering regions of Eastern Europe is not new. European history is clouded with difficulties between sovereign states about borders and territory since the days of Charlemagne. Russia's overall comportment in this respect is no better or worse than others. The World War II decision of the Stalinist Russian Administration to militarily achieve a broad area of soviet hegemony was a serious geopolitical mistake, ultimately unsustainable and wrong headed. But in terms of what the Nazis had done to Russian civilian populations during World War II, Russian excess and totalitarian expansionism can be easily explained by Russians to fellow Russians as a necessary margin of safety against any further threat. That the cost of that margin helped, along with the demoralizing reality of Communism and totalitarianism, to destroy the Soviet economy and impose relative poverty on generations is a fact of history. But that fact, which contributed to NATO's resolve and coherence, is just that, a fact of history.

So NATO's challenge is very direct. What and who are we defending and against whom in particular? Do we believe that Russia is planning an un-provoked attack on any NATO member nations? If we do not believe that, do we believe that NATO's duty is to surround Russia with NATO members? Do we really believe that the new NATO front line is the Russian-Belarus Border – or should be? Or the Ukrainian border? Are we prepared to send thousands of Allied Troops to Poland or Lithuania or Latvia to defend against a possible Russian attack? Is that a rational expectation for anyone to hold or to which a realistic country might aspire? Is that, in terms of how European members of NATO have kept their troops from any real combat exposure in Afghanistan, a realistic expectation?

If the answer to any of the above is no or perhaps only maybe, that implies a very real core premise for the refocusing and strengthening of NATO in the future.

It also argues that we must look at Europe in the context of peaceful spheres of influence as opposed to the old NATO and Warsaw Pact divisions, the borders of which constitute the likely conflict space of any combat between those two military alliances.

The United States has a sphere of influence in the Americas, Western Europe and Asia. Sovereign democracies like Canada or Japan or Italy, who consider ourselves strong American allies, both within and without

NATO, do not view ourselves under totalitarian American menace. Surely, it is legitimate for Russia's sphere of influence to be regarded in the same way. A country of Russia's size, history, population, resources and military history has a legitimate right to a peaceful sphere of influence to its east and west, north and south. A future and successful paradigm for NATO would do well to reflect these spheres of influence as opposed to seeking in any way to surround Russia in a fashion that will evoke the old fears that have existed throughout Russian history, under the monarchy, the communists or the transitional or present consolidated regime. Russian initiatives with Venezuela and Cuba in our own back yard of the Caribbean must be and can only be understood in this context. If one concludes that Russia has no plans to launch an unprovoked naval attack on Barbados or South Florida, which strikes me as not an unreasonable conclusion, the only possible purpose of her renewed presence is to make a point. For better or for worse, Russia has not become comfortable with anti-Ballistic Missile facilities in her direct and bordering proximity. Whether that is a posture for domestic purposes or a failure of the Bush administration to make the case in ways Russians might have been expected to understand is an open debate. But I point out, as humbly as I can, that the Bush administration's proposal has yet to receive support from either the Chretien, Martin or Harper administrations right here in Canada. So, we should be shocked that our Russian friends have yet to sign on?

I think it is perhaps time that we ensure that Canada's European and global stance relative to Russia, be driven on our realistic perception of her intentions, capacities and potential as either an enemy or ally, as opposed to what may very well be an outdated NATO stance. NATO and its activities as a defence alliance going forward, an alliance I support and believe we should strengthen, should be indicative of our common views on a peaceful, economically and strategically balanced world. Diplomatic assurances and cooperation require military back up and deployable capacity-always. But diplomatic and economic partnerships will have more to do with keeping the peace and advancing human development than pure military capacity. By the time military capacity is required we are all paying for progress with massive losses and diminished aspirations. History is deeply clear on that front.

Ideally, Canada should propose a NATO reform that is based on a core military capacity when nations who are members are attacked; a staged approach to NATO membership so that the mere act of joining does not instantly produce combat obligations for other members – obligations few members, including the United States are prepared to quickly discharge; and a criteria for joining that assesses the ability of prospective members to manage border disputes peacefully before joining. Democracy in member states and prospective member states should be a genuine test; as should the adherence of the military in that country to the authority of a duly elected democratic government. Membership should also be staged and conditionalized before full membership is attained. And,

the Mediterranean Dialogue, and the mid-European dialogue and a south Asian form of the same should be deepened and expanded. Over time, the NATO alliance should turn into a Democratic Defence Alliance that uses military, aid and diplomatic deployment as necessary to pursue anti-terrorist, anti-aggression and sovereignty protection purposes for all member states.

And in that transition, NATO should reach out to Russia, China and the Shanghai Cooperation Council, which incorporates both of these plus other Asian states. For NATO, stasis and the doctrines of the Cold War may be comforting – but there are predictive of an end to meaning and relevance.

Canada and the world would be weaker if that decline continued. It is up to all of us to reach beyond and above that sclerotic option for something substantially more dynamic and real.