

Canadian NATO
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
canadienne de l'OTAN

Report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association

67th Annual Session

**Lisbon, Portugal (Hybrid Format)
From October 8 to 11, 2021**

REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association has the honour to present its report on its participation in the 67th Annual Session of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA or PA), which took place from 8-11 October 2021 in a hybrid-format. The following Canadian delegates participated virtually in the Annual Session:

- Ms. Julie Dzerowicz, MP, Chair of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association and Head of the Canadian delegation;
- The Honourable Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu, Senator;
- The Honourable Jane Cordy, Senator;
- The Honourable Pierre Dalphond, Senator;
- The Honourable Vernon White, Senator; and
- Ms. Cheryl Gallant, MP.

Association staff who attended the 67th Annual Session included David Chandonnet, Association Secretary, and James Lee, Association Advisor.

THE NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

Established in 1955, the NATO PA is an inter-parliamentary organization that brings together legislators from the national parliaments of the 30 member countries of NATO.¹ Delegates from 11 associate countries, four regional partners and four Mediterranean associate member countries, the European Parliament and others also take part in its activities². The PA is institutionally separate and independent from the official NATO structure, but serves as a liaison for NATO and member parliaments.³ The NATO PA aims to strengthen parliamentary awareness, understanding and oversight of defence and security issues, while also enhancing the transparency of NATO policies. The Assembly also plays a significant role in deepening the transatlantic relationship that underpins the NATO Alliance.

The NATO PA has five thematic committees:

1. the Committee on Democracy and Security;
2. the Defence and Security Committee;
3. the Economics and Security Committee;
4. the Political Committee; and

¹ The 30 member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (U.S.), Greece, Türkiye, Germany, Spain, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Albania, Croatia, and Montenegro.

² The associate delegations are from: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, and Ukraine.

³ See North Atlantic Treaty Organization Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA), [“Our Mission.”](#)

5. the Science and Technology Committee.

Each of these committees has either one or two sub-committees. The practices of the thematic committees are similar to those of parliamentary committees: NATO PA committee members hear from experts and conduct fact-finding missions throughout the year and, based on their findings, draft reports and resolutions. Committee members consider these draft reports and resolutions during NATO PA Sessions.

THE 67th ANNUAL SESSION

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the cancellation of most in-person NATO PA meetings throughout most of 2020 and in early to mid-2021. However, during that period, the Assembly adapted its practices and its committees were able to conduct their work virtually.

On 8–11 October 2021, the 67th Annual Session was hosted by Portugal in a hybrid format, with some delegates attending in-person and others participating virtually. The session was chaired by the President of the NATO PA, Gerald E. Connolly of the United States, who was elected president at the Assembly's 2020 Annual Session. Parliamentarians, experts, and observers from NATO member countries, as well as representatives from other regions participated in the 2021 Annual Session.

Discussions were guided by several key topics, including the following:

- NATO's Strategic Concept;
- transatlantic cooperation and security;
- disinformation and democratic resilience;
- China's rise and military expansion;
- Iran's nuclear programme; climate change and security;
- climate change and security;
- international arms control and disarmament;
- Russia's aggressive actions and continuing challenge; and
- the development and adoption of emerging and disruptive technologies.

The 2021 Annual Session's program included meetings of the Standing Committee and each of the thematic committees, as well as a Plenary session. A NATO PA coordination meeting involving members of the Bureau (President, five Vice-Presidents, and the Treasurer), Chairpersons of Committees and Sub-committees, and Rapporteurs was also held several days prior to the start of the 67th Annual Session.

A. Standing Committee

The Standing Committee met⁴ in a hybrid session on Sunday, 10 October 2021, to address various administrative matters, receive updates, discuss certain defence and security issues, and plan for upcoming activities in 2022.

⁴ The Standing Committee of the NATO PA comprises Heads of National Delegations, Bureau members (President, Vice Presidents and Treasurer), and the Secretary General. It has various political and administrative duties, including coordinating the overall work of the Assembly.

NATO PA President Gerald E. Connolly presided over the meeting. He acknowledged that the 67th Annual Session was the first in-person session in two years, and welcomed participants, including new and acting heads of delegations.

The Standing Committee first considered the draft agenda, as well as the summary of the last Standing Committee meeting, which was held in May 2021.

President Connolly then invited Benedetta Berti, Head of the NATO Secretary General's Policy Planning Unit, to address the Committee's members on the Alliance's revision of its Strategic Concept. Ms. Berti indicated that the new Strategic Concept would be adopted by the NATO Heads of State and Government at the Alliance's next summit in Madrid in June 2022. She also mentioned that NATO would conduct internal consultations with government representatives from Allied member countries, as well as external consultations with NATO PA and other stakeholders. However, Ms. Berti said that unlike the 2010 Strategic Concept, groups of external experts would not be involved in these consultations. The consultation phase will be followed by drafting and negotiation phases.

Before concluding her presentation, Ms. Berti outlined three main priorities for the new Strategic Concept:

- to provide NATO Allies with an opportunity to reaffirm shared values, NATO's Article 5 collective defence commitment⁵, transatlantic unity, and the Alliance's role as a forum for transatlantic consultations on key security issues;
- to codify NATO's adaptation in the last 10 years to new and emerging challenges and risks facing the Alliance; and
- to provide guidance to the Alliance on how to address future defence and security threats.

Ms. Berti also responded to questions and comments from members of the Standing Committee, including from the Head of Canada's delegation, Julie Dzerowicz, MP. Ms. Dzerowicz asked Ms. Berti about the speed of NATO decision making. Ms. Berti responded by noting that although the principle of consensus remains an important method for NATO decision-making, there are certain avenues for NATO Allies "to speed up decision making while respecting this principle."

The Standing Committee held a subsequent discussion on lessons learned from NATO's involvement in Afghanistan. Participating delegates discussed NATO's invocation of Article 5 in 2001 following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, the Alliance's subsequent military involvement in Afghanistan, and the eventual withdrawal of Alliance military personnel from that country in August 2021.

The Standing Committee then considered proposed candidates for the Bureau of the Assembly. Committee members nominated President Connolly, the current treasurer and four incumbent vice-presidents for re-election. Ms. Dzerowicz was also nominated to replace former NATO PA Vice-President Karen McCrimmon, who did not seek re-election

⁵ Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty provides that if a NATO member is attacked, it would be considered an attack against all members; it further provides that, in such a case, NATO would take actions deemed necessary to assist the member attacked, including through the use of armed force. For more information, see NATO, [Collective defence - Article 5](#).

in Canada's 2021 parliamentary elections. All nominated candidates would proceed by acclamation at the plenary sitting (discussed below).

Before concluding with a discussion of future NATO PA activities to be held in 2022, the Standing Committee re-elected Ruxandra Popa to a second two-year term as the Assembly's Secretary General. Its members also listened to the NATO PA Treasurer's presentation on the draft Assembly budget for 2022.

Canadian Participation:

Canada was represented at the Standing Committee meetings by Julie Dzerowicz, MP.

B. Committee Business

NATO PA Committees met simultaneously over the course of two days from 9–10 October 2021. During these meetings, the Committees considered revised reports and resolutions that had been first presented during meetings held in the summer and early fall of 2021. Moreover, participating delegates heard from key officials from the Government of Portugal, as well as NATO officials and academic experts on issues of interest to the Alliance.

1. Committee on Democracy and Security

The Committee on Democracy and Security met on Saturday, 9 October 2021, and on Sunday, 10 October 2021⁶.

Four speakers delivered presentations to the Committee and responded to questions and comments: Portuguese Vice Admiral Henrique Gouveia E. Melo, Science Po's Stéphane Lacroix, NATO Assistant Secretary General David Van Weel and National University of Political Studies and Public Administration's Remus Pricopie.

Portugal's fight against Covid-19

In discussing Portugal's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Vice Admiral Melo explained several measures taken by the Government of Portugal in 2020 and 2021 that contributed to the "success" of the country's vaccination programme. These actions included: implementing a vaccination programme that was "founded on observation, decision-making, and adjustments based on continuous monitoring;" addressing and countering anti-vaccine disinformation and conspiracies; and including military officials in a government task force established to oversee and manage the vaccination programme.

Social movements and prospects for political evolution in the Middle East and North Africa region

Dr. Lacroix spoke about the series of uprisings, armed rebellions and anti-governments protests that occurred in 2011 and subsequent years throughout multiple Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). He argued that these events were "rooted in a loosening of the Arab authoritarian regimes in the 1990s and 2000s caused by outside

⁶ A detailed [summary](#) of the meeting of the Committee on Democracy and Security, prepared by the NATO PA secretariat, is available on the NATO PA website.

democratic pressures.” However, he noted that other factors also contributed to the 2011 uprisings and protests, including high unemployment levels among youth, political corruption, poverty, and economic inequality. Dr. Lacroix then stated that the lack of western support for pro-democracy movements in MENA following the aftermath of the 2011 Arab uprisings allowed Saudi Arabia and other authoritarian regimes to promote their system of government in the region. Prior to concluding his presentation, Dr. Lacroix expressed his concerns about the re-emergence of authoritarian regimes in MENA, and the repressive measures that are carried out by these regimes against political opponents, civil society, and pro-democracy movements.

The impact of climate change on the security and resilience of the alliance

NATO Assistant Secretary General Van Weel provided an overview of NATO’s recently adopted Climate Change and Security Action Plan, which focuses on four objectives: adaptation, mitigation, outreach and awareness. He also said that NATO is planning to conduct a Climate Security Impact Assessment that will assess climate change considerations in relation to disaster relief, defence planning, and civil emergency planning. NATO Assistant Secretary General Van Weel then concluded his presentation by identifying three main climate security-related priorities for the Alliance:

- strengthening NATO’s resilience to address security and defence associated threats with respect to climate change;
- carrying out a reflection process on the effects of climate change on NATO’s future military activities; and
- reducing green house gas emissions associated with the military activities and installations of NATO members’ armed forces.

Public Awareness on Security Issues and the Role of Education.

Dr. Pricopie remarked that, overall, approximately 65% of Romanians have a positive view of the European Union (EU) and NATO, although levels of support vary across different age groups. In his opinion, young Romanians view the EU and NATO in a less positive light than older Romanians because they are more susceptible to misinformation through social media platforms, or Russian state-owned media outlets, such as Sputnik. With the aim of addressing a decrease in public trust towards governments institutions and their policies, he also argued that NATO Allies and their partners should carry out “strategic efforts on various levels” to counter the dissemination of disinformation, particularly among young people.

Reports, resolutions and elections of committee and sub-committee members

During the Committee’s meetings, its rapporteurs also presented draft reports and a resolution for consideration and amendment. Four reports and one resolution were adopted during the meetings⁷. Lastly, the Committee discussed its future studies and activities and elected committee and sub-committee officers.

⁷ The reports adopted by the Committee on Democracy and Security were the following: [Resilience and Civil Security on Ten Years after the Arab Uprisings: Democratic Expectations and Disillusions](#); [Enhancing the Resilience of Allied Societies through Civil Preparedness](#); and [Bolstering the Democratic Resilience of the Alliance against Disinformation and Propaganda](#). The resolution adopted was entitled *Developing a Pan-Societal, Integrated and Coordinated Approach to Resilience for Allied Democracies*.

Canadian Participation:

Canadians who participated in the Committee's deliberations included: Senator Jane Cordy; Senator Vernon White; and Julie Dzerowicz, MP.

2. Defence and Security Committee

The Defence and Security Committee met on Saturday, 9 October 2021, and on Sunday, 10 October 2021⁸.

Eight speakers addressed the Committee and responded to questions and comments: Portuguese Defence Minister João Gomes Cravinho, Portuguese Lieutenant General Marco Serronha, the International Institute for Strategic Studies' Meia Nouwens, the French Institute of International Relations' Marc Julienne, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Operations John Manza, NATO Naval Striking and Support Forces' Brigadier General Marcus Annibale, Brigadier General Bogdan Cernat and Chatham House's Mathieu Boulègue.

Of note, Meia Nouwens and Marc Julienne participated in a panel on the implications of China's rise and increased assertiveness.

Portugal's defence priorities

Minister Gomes Cravinho asserted that the importance of NATO's role in ensuring transatlantic security will continue to grow with the emergence of new security and political challenges, including emerging and disruptive technologies, climate change, and the renewal of great power competition. He expressed his support for closer cooperation among NATO Allies to address these challenges. However, Minister Gomes Cravinho shared his concerns about the rise of populist and authoritarian regimes that seek to undermine democratic principles across the Alliance.

In discussing EU and NATO cooperation on defence and security, Minister Cravinho called for NATO to strengthen its partnership with the EU on issues such as military mobility, maritime security and cyber-defence.

The implications of the new security paradigm in Africa in Euro-Atlantic security: reasons to review the Alliance's range of action

In discussing NATO's southern flank, Lieutenant General Serronha highlighted several traditional and non-traditional security threats emanating from Africa, and the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans. These security threats include terrorism, piracy, pandemics, hunger, civil war, and Russian mercenary activities. He also discussed several peace keeping and counter-terrorism missions that United Nations (UN) and NATO Allies including France have carried out in the region. Lieutenant General Serronha then remarked that NATO members should assess the Alliance's role in the region and decide whether NATO should increase its regional presence. Prior to concluding his

⁸ A detailed [summary](#) of the meeting of the Defence and Security Committee, prepared by the NATO PA secretariat, is available on the NATO PA website.

presentation, Lieutenant General Serronha expressed his support for expanding NATO's role in the region, but cautioned that this expansion should be approved by regional African partners.

Panel on China's rise: the implications for NATO

Ms. Nouwens drew attention to China's emergence as a strategic competitor to the West, particularly because of the country's growing economic, political and military influence on the world stage. Among other points raised, she maintained that closer trade and economic ties between China and the EU have created new security challenges for NATO. In that regard, Ms. Nouwens explained that these trade and economic ties have granted China increased leverage to "coerce" certain European countries, take advantage of economic divisions within the EU, and extract European technologies.

In commenting on China's military capabilities, Ms. Nouwens said the country has been developing new weapons systems, and that it has continued to increase its military exports to Central Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. She then called for increased Euro-Atlantic cohesion and policy consensus on addressing China's rise and its impact on the rules based international order.

For his part, Dr. Julianne elaborated on several military and political challenges related to China. He spoke about how China's expansion and modernization of its nuclear arsenal raises questions about the country's nuclear ambitions. In his subsequent remarks on China's cyber and space capabilities, Dr. Julianne expressed concerns about China's use of hybrid warfare against certain jurisdictions, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.

Dr. Julianne then mentioned that NATO should seek to strengthen its partnership with Indo-Pacific jurisdictions like Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea, but warned against the Alliance expanding its presence beyond the Euro-Atlantic region. He characterized China's behaviour in the Indo-Pacific region as unpredictable, and argued that NATO's presence in that region could further escalate regional tensions with China.

Afghanistan: new realities

NATO Assistant Secretary General Manza recognized that although NATO Allies were able to evacuate hundreds of Afghans and their families before the Taliban captured Kabul, many Afghans who are eligible for evacuation remain trapped in Afghanistan or neighbouring countries.

Mr. Manza then discussed NATO's Afghanistan lessons learned process and some of its initial findings. He mentioned that NATO Allies invested and spent significant resources in a country that "was not a vital interest for the Alliance." In that regard, Assistant Secretary General Manza argued that "as allies sacrificed lives and treasure in Afghanistan," it became more difficult for NATO Allies to withdraw from the region.

Naval Striking and Support Forces at NATO

Brigadier General Annibale, Chief of Staff of the Naval Striking and Support Forces at NATO (STRIKFORNATO), discussed STRIKFORNATO's role within the Alliance's defence and deterrence posture. According to Brigadier General Annibale, STRIKFORNATO was created to integrate U.S. nuclear and maritime capabilities into the Alliance's crisis response force. Since the Cold War, STRIKFORNATO has operated and

participated in naval exercises in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Baltic Sea region. Brigadier General Annibale added that in recent decades, STRIKFORNATO has taken on NATO's principle Anti-Submarine Warfare mission in the North Atlantic, the Alliance's Ballistic Missile Defence mission, and the responsibilities of the Joint Headquarters Maritime Expeditionary Task Force.

Joint Analysis & Lessons Learned Centre's contribution to NATO's efforts in Afghanistan

Brigadier General Cernat, Commander at NATO Joint Analysis & Lessons Learned Centre (JALLC), spoke to the Committee about JALLC's mandate, capabilities and responsibilities. These responsibilities include conducting in-depth research and analysis for identifying lessons learned during NATO operations. Throughout NATO's involvement in Afghanistan, the JALLC collected data and information on behalf of the International Security Assistance Force to identify new lessons learned by the Alliance.

Assessing Russia's view of NATO's defence, deterrence and dialogue posture

Mr. Boulègue underlined that Russia's approach to defence is different from that of NATO Allies. He remarked that the Russian leadership perceives Russia to be in a state of continuous conflict with the West. He also said that Russia is willing to use its range of capabilities, including hybrid warfare, against the West in response to the threat it alleges that NATO poses to the country's security. Bouleque then concluded his presentation by proposing that NATO Allies:

- conduct a "realistic assessment" of Russian military capabilities;
- increase the Alliance's air defence and precision guided munitions capabilities; and
- further invest in NATO's enhanced Forward Presence and the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force.

Reports and resolutions

The Committee adopted three draft reports, and two draft resolutions before discussing future activities and studies⁹. As well, Committee members elected committee and sub-committee officers.

Canadian Participation:

Canadians who participated in the Committee's deliberations included: Senator Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu; Senator Vernon White; Julie Dzerowicz, MP; and Cheryl Gallant, MP.

3. Economics and Security Committee

The Economics and Security Committee met on Saturday, 9 October 2021.¹⁰

⁹ The reports adopted by the Defence and Security Committee were the following: [International Arms Control: Challenges Ahead](#); [China's Defence Posture: Implications for NATO](#); and [Security Challenges in the High North](#). The two resolutions adopted were entitled Supporting NATO's Commitment to Stronger Defence and Deterrence Towards 2030; and *Learning the Lessons of NATO's Engagement in Afghanistan*.

¹⁰ A detailed [summary](#) of the meeting of the Economics and Security Committee, prepared by the NATO PA secretariat, is available on the NATO PA website.

Three speakers addressed the Committee and responded to questions and comments: Nova School of Business and Economics' Susana Peralta, Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance (GAVI) Board Chairperson Jose Manuel Barroso, and Russian opposition politician Vladimir Kara-Murza.

Portugal and the pandemic crisis: what next?

Dr. Peralta began her presentation by outlining a number of economic and development indicators that demonstrated Portugal's "economic fragility" even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, she remarked that Portugal, with a poverty rate of 17.2%, is among the poorest countries in the European Union (EU). She also pointed out that Portugal's labour market pays relatively lower wages and salaries when compared to the labour markets of some other EU countries.

In discussing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Portugal's economy, Dr. Peralta indicated that the country's tourism, transportation and restaurant sectors, among others, have been negatively affected. However, she noted that Portugal's economy began to recover in 2021, and that the country has experienced a growth in the export of services by approximately 37.0% when compared to 2020.

Preliminary lessons learned since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic

Dr. Barroso told the Committee that infectious diseases belong on the global security agenda. He characterized the COVID-19 pandemic as a "new form of globalised crisis" that could only be solved through multilateralism and global strategic cooperation. He then focused his presentation on COVAX and GAVI, which are two vaccination initiatives aimed at increasing access to immunization in poor countries.

Dr. Barroso informed the Committee that – as of 9 October 2021 – both COVAX and GAVI have helped to deliver more than 341.0 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine in over 140 jurisdictions worldwide. He stressed, however, that global access to vaccines needed to combat viruses like COVID-19 is still not equitable. He also expressed concerns about a range of challenges that continue to affect COVAX's ability to increase global access to COVID-19 immunization. These challenges include export restrictions and supply issues involving medical goods and vaccines, and the decision of certain developed countries to "[hoard] five to six times more vaccines than [are] needed in their [jurisdictions]."

Russia: politics, economics, and corruption

Mr. Kara-Murza spoke to the Committee about political corruption in Russia, and the country's current economic situation. He attributed Russia's systemic corruption to President Vladimir Putin and the Russian political elite, who have become richer while the average Russian citizen has become poorer. Kara-Murza stated that Russia's economic growth has been stagnating for years, and that the disposable income of Russian citizens has decreased by 10-13% in the past decade. He then added that Russia ranked 129th in Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perception Index.

Mr. Kara-Murza referred to Russia's 2021 parliamentary elections as fraudulent and called on western countries to deny any formal recognition of President Putin should he stay in power beyond 2024, when his term in office expires. As well, he stated that President Putin perceives democratic movements in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia as direct threats to his "regime," and that of his close ally, Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko.

Reports, resolutions and elections of committee and sub-committee members

The Committee's rapporteurs presented draft reports and a resolution for consideration and amendments. Three reports and one resolution were adopted during the meeting.¹¹ Lastly, the Committee discussed its future studies and activities and elected committee and sub-committee officers.

Canadian participation:

Canadians who participated in the Committee's deliberations included: Cheryl Gallant, MP.

4. Political Committee

The Political Committee met on Saturday, 9 October 2021, and on Sunday, 10 October 2021¹².

Three speakers addressed the Committee and responded to questions and comments: Portuguese Foreign Affairs Minister Augusto Santos, University of Exeter's Jamie Shea and Russian opposition politician Vladimir Kara-Murza.

The Portuguese perspective on key political and security challenges facing the Alliance

Minister Santos Silva discussed Portugal's perspective on a number of security and political challenges facing the Alliance. He also outlined several key priorities for the Assembly and NATO, including the following:

- ensuring that NATO remains both a military and political alliance;
- strengthening the Alliance's security cooperation with the EU;
- adapting and enhancing NATO's capabilities to address new and emerging defence and security challenges, such as climate change and China's rise;
- developing a clear approach to define current threats and risks to the Alliance;
- promoting and "nurturing" NATO's technological edge and political advantage as an alliance of democracies; and

¹¹ The reports adopted by the Economics and Security Committee were the following: [Allied Defend Spending: Enduring Threats and New Constraints](#); [The Global Economic Crisis: Implications and Prospects](#); and [Belarus: Political, Economic, and Diplomatic Challenges](#). The resolution adopted was entitled Allied Defence Spending and Capabilities Development.

¹² A detailed [summary](#) of the meeting of the Political Committee, prepared by the NATO PA secretariat, is available on the NATO PA website.

- strengthening NATO's political foundations, through diplomacy, and citizen engagement and outreach.

NATO's new Strategic Concept

Dr. Shea addressed the Committee on NATO's ongoing efforts to update its Strategic Concept, which was last reviewed in 2011. He presented five reasons an update is required, including the following:

- the need to reaffirm the Alliance's core objective and values in an era of "fragmentation and acceleration;"
- the challenges posed by China's rise and global objectives, and Russia's aggressive stance towards the West;
- the need to ensure that NATO's agenda on defence and security is aligned with those of its member countries; and
- the continued use of the Strategic Concept as a document that "convinces external audiences of NATO's continuing relevance."

Dr. Shea also said that, among other objectives, the new Strategic Concept should be designed to help NATO further strengthen its transatlantic security and regional cooperation, as well as its defence and deterrence capabilities to address new and emerging challenges. Moreover, he emphasized the importance of the Alliance continuing its work on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, and maintaining its open-door policy for potential new NATO members.

Russia between Parliamentary and Presidential "Elections": Putin, Protests, and Prospects for Change

Mr. Kara-Murza drew attention to the lack of "free and fair" elections in Russia. He criticized the country's 2021 parliamentary elections for excluding all the main opposition party candidates. Mr. Kara-Murza added that the Russian government used the COVID-19 pandemic as a pretext to impose limitations on the election observation missions of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and other international organizations. He also expressed doubts about the credibility of the results of Russia's recent parliamentary elections, indicating that "digital ballot stuffing" might have occurred in favour of the ruling party, United Russia.

Before concluding his presentation, Mr. Kara Murza raised concerns about the hundreds of Russian people who have been arbitrarily detained as political prisoners in Russia. Furthermore, he observed that the Russian government under the leadership of President Putin has transitioned from an imperfect democracy to an authoritarian regime.

Reports, resolutions and elections of committee and sub-committee members

During the Committee meetings, the rapporteurs presented draft reports and resolutions for debate, amendment, and adoption. Three reports and two resolutions were adopted.¹³

¹³ The reports adopted by the Political Committee were the following: [Confronting Russia's Continuing Geopolitical and Ideological Challenge](#); [NATO and the Mediterranean security agenda](#); and [The Transatlantic Link and Burden Sharing in the changing Strategic Environment](#). The two resolutions

Finally, the Committee elected committee and sub-committee officers, and discussed upcoming activities and studies.

Canadian participation:

Canadians who participated in the Committee's deliberations included: Cheryl Gallant, MP.

5. Science and Technology Committee

The Science and Technology Committee met on Sunday, 10 October 2021.¹⁴

Two panels of two presenters each addressed the Science and Technology Committee and responded to questions and comments.

NATO Assistant Secretary General David van Weel and Yale University's Wendell Wallach participated in a panel on artificial intelligence and ethics, while the second panel on Iranian nuclear and missile programs comprised NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General and German Major General Jürgen Brötz, and Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Nuno Cabral.

Panel on Artificial Intelligence & Ethics

NATO Assistant Secretary General Van Weel underlined that in the coming years, Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (EDT) "will revolutionise the security landscape." He remarked that the speed at which NATO Allies will adopt EDTs will determine the Alliance's technological edge over its competitors. In that regard, Assistant Secretary General Van Weel focused his presentation on two new NATO-led initiatives aimed at facilitating innovation and technology adoption among NATO Allies over the coming decades. These two initiatives are: the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) and the NATO Innovation Fund.

Assistant Secretary General Van Weel noted that NATO Heads of State and Government had agreed at the 2021 NATO Brussels Summit to launch DIANA. He added that this initiative aims to strengthen ties and cooperation among national governments, the private sector and academics on the development and application of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI).

Discussing the NATO Innovation Fund, Assistant Secretary General Van Weel remarked that such fund will provide funding to firms involved in the development and production of "cutting-edge dual-use technologies." As well, he said that the Alliance has been focused on setting a "global example for the ethical use and development of EDTs" through the development of NATO Principles for the Responsible Use of AI in Defence.

Dr. Wallach pointed out that AI systems are often misunderstood and viewed in overly simplistic terms: on the one hand, "optimists" view AI as foreshadowing the establishment of a "techno-utopia;" while on the other hand, "pessimists" believe that AI will turn society

adopted were entitled *Maintaining NATO's Focus on the Russian Challenge; and Reaffirming Transatlantic Cohesion and Implementing 2021 Brussels Summit Decisions*.

¹⁴ A detailed [summary](#) of the meeting of the Science and Technology Committee, prepared by the NATO PA secretariat, is available on the NATO PA website.

into a “techno-dystopia.” He also warned that AI should not be considered as a human form of intelligence even though it “increasingly touches every aspect of daily life.” Unlike humans, Dr. Wallach claimed that AI lacks semantic understanding, common sense, high-level reasoning capabilities, empathy, consciousness, and moral and emotional intelligence. However, he cautioned that AI programmes can learn and adapt on their own, and that humans may not be able to control fully advanced AI systems.

Concerning the deployment of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWs) and “joint-cognitive” systems, Dr. Wallach stated that some human operators could lack a clear understanding about how these AI-powered defence systems operate when deployed. He also raised concerns about some AI systems being programmed with new information that could “exacerbate already negative outcomes” linked to the use of LAWs and other AI-powered defence systems in military operations.

Panel on Iranian nuclear and missile programmes

Major General Brötz began his presentation by providing an overview of the current status of Iran’s nuclear programme. He observed that since 2018, when the Trump administration unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA)¹⁵, Iran has expanded its nuclear programme by installing additional centrifuges and increasing the production of enriched uranium. He then commented that NATO is working alongside the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to ensure that Iran re-commits itself to achieving denuclearisation.

Major General Brötz noted that Iran’s new president – Ebrahim Raisi – has expressed an interest in having his country engage in diplomatic talks with the other signatories to the JCPoA. However, he added that increased cooperation between the West and Iran over the latter’s nuclear programme remains unlikely while Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei remains in power. Furthermore, Major General Brötz described Iran’s alleged efforts to destabilize the Middle East, including through the country’s support of non-state groups in Syria, Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq.

Before concluding his presentation, Major General Brötz outlined a series of three steps that NATO Allies should take to respond to the threats that Iran’s nuclear programme, missile arsenal, and support of non-state groups pose to Allied security. These three steps are:

- upholding and preserving the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty;
- enhancing and modernizing arms control measures and initiatives; and
- ensuring Allied unity vis-à-vis the violation of international treaties such as the JCPoA.

Mr. Cabral’s presentation focused on the history of Iran’s nuclear programme, which was established during the Cold War when Shah Reza Pahlavi was the country’s ruler. He spoke about how the West initially supported the country’s development of its own nuclear

¹⁵ In 2015, the JCPoA was signed by Iran, Germany, the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council – China, France, Russia, the UK and the U.S. – and the EU with the aim of dismantling most of Iran’s nuclear programme.

capabilities before the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Following the overthrow of Shah Pahlavi, western countries withdrew their technical support for Iran's nuclear programme, which resulted in Iran seeking assistance from Russia to further develop its nuclear capabilities.

Mr. Cabral then said that a series of events that occurred in the early 2000s – including the discovery a heavy water facility in Iran and the Iranian government's refusal to grant IAEA inspectors access to the country's nuclear facilities – contributed to the imposition of sanctions on Iran. He also indicated that between 2003 and 2015, Iran and other actors engaged in a cycle of “diplomatic engagement and disengagement, sanctions relief and reimposition” over the country's nuclear programme.

In discussing the impact that the JCPoA had on Iran's nuclear programme, Mr. Cabral made comments about the agreement reducing the country's number of heavy water facilities and centrifuges, as well as Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium. The agreement also resulted in Iran granting IAEA inspectors access to its nuclear facilities, and the removal of certain sanctions imposed by some western countries on Iran's nuclear programme. However, according to Mr. Cabral, the U.S. withdrawal from the agreement in 2018, and the Trump administration's subsequent decision to reimpose sanctions on Iran, resulted in Iran resuming its nuclear programme.

Reports, resolutions and elections of committee and sub-committee members

The Committee's rapporteurs then presented draft reports and a resolution for consideration and amendments. Three reports and one resolution were adopted during the meeting¹⁶. Lastly, the Committee discussed its future studies and activities and elected committee and sub-committee officers.

Canadian participation:

Canadians who participated in the Committee's deliberations included: Cheryl Gallant, MP.

C. Plenary Sitting

The Plenary Sitting of the 67th Annual Session was held on Monday, 11 October 2021. NATO PA President Connolly presided.¹⁷

Several speakers addressed the plenary sitting, including the following:

- Gerald E. Connolly, NATO PA President.
- Eduardo Ferro Rodrigues, President of the Assembly of the Portuguese Republic.
- António Costa, Prime Minister of Portugal.
- Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and recipient of the NATO PA Women for Peace and Security Award 2021.

¹⁶ The reports adopted by the Science and Technology Committee were the following: [Enhancing NATO S&T Cooperation with Asian Partners](#); [Biological Threats: Technological progress and the spectre of Bioterrorism in the Post-Covid-19 era](#); and [Space and Security - NATO's role](#). The resolution adopted was entitled *Reviving Arms Control in a Dynamic Strategic Environment*.

¹⁷ The [minutes](#) of the meeting of the NATO PA Plenary Sitting, prepared by the NATO PA secretariat, is available on the NATO PA website.

- Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General and Chairperson of the North Atlantic Council.
- Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of Portugal.
- Jean-Pierre Lacroix, UN Under-Secretary General for Peace Operations.
- Karen Donfried, Assistant Secretary of State at U.S. State Department's Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs.

The plenary sitting began with an address by President Connolly. He highlighted a number of security and defence challenges facing the Alliance, as well as NATO's going efforts to update its Strategic Concept.

President Connolly reiterated his support for the proposed establishment of a Democratic Resilience Centre at NATO headquarters while making comments about the need to "rededicate NATO to its democratic foundations." Moreover, he made a reference to the 6 January 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol to argue that no Allied country is immune from "internal threats to democracy."¹⁸

Portuguese Assembly President Ferro Rodrigues underlined the importance of strengthening defence and security cooperation between NATO and the EU, particularly in the Alliance's southern flanks. He also called for increased security and stability in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel.¹⁹

Portuguese Prime Minister Costa urged NATO Allies to work in unity to address cyber security threats, rising regional tensions in the Indo-Pacific region, maritime security, and instability in the Alliance's southern flanks. He remarked that "NATO is constantly evolving and adapting, this is one of the secrets of our success as a political and military alliance."²⁰

U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Pelosi was then awarded the first-ever Women for Peace and Security Award by the Assembly.²¹ During her acceptance speech, Speaker Pelosi reiterated U.S. commitment to global peace and security, discussed the role of women in "security matters," and spoke about the challenge that the rise of autocracies worldwide poses to existing democracies.

Speaker Pelosi was followed by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who touched on the Alliance's development of its new Strategic Concept. He also outlined a number of new and emerging security and defence challenges, such as terrorism, climate change, cyber-attacks, China's rise and coercion of other countries, and Russia's military build-up.²²

¹⁸ For the full text of NATO PA President Gerald E. Connolly's address at the Plenary Sitting of the 2021 Annual Session, see NATO PA, "2021 - [SPEECH BY GERALD CONNOLLY AT THE 67TH ANNUAL SESSION PLENARY SITTING IN LISBON](#)," 14 October 2021.

¹⁹ NATO PA, "[NATO PA wraps up Annual Session with focus on update of Alliance Strategic Concept](#)," News release, 12 October 2021.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ NATO PA, "[Winner of the Women in Peace & Security Award 2021](#)."

²² For the full text of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg's address at the Plenary Sitting of the 2021 Annual Session, see NATO, "[Speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the 67th Annual Session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly](#)," News release, 11 October 2021.

Portuguese President Rebelo de Sousa welcomed NATO PA's efforts to strengthen and promote democratic values among NATO Allies and partners. He then stated that "[d]efending those values in the current NATO modernisation process is crucial."²³

UN Under-Secretary General Lacroix observed that there is a need for NATO and the UN to identify and assess the drivers of conflict. As well, he commented that similarly to NATO, the UN has been carrying out a reflection process on peacekeeping operations.²⁴

With a focus on NATO's ongoing work to develop a new Strategic Concept, Dr. Donfried reinforced the need for the new Concept to address new and emerging challenges and threats. Moreover, she recommended that the new Concept "needs to offer a clear, concise, and most importantly, honest assessment about the world in which we live."²⁵

Participating delegates then adopted seven resolutions on topics and issues, such as the Strategic Concept, arms control and Russia, among others.

NATO PA delegates also voted to adopt several financial documents presented by the Assembly's Treasurer. These included a draft budget for the financial year 2022.

Delegates then turned to the election of the NATO PA's Bureau of the Assembly: the president and five vice-presidents. NATO PA President Connolly and four vice-presidents – Mimi Kodheli of Albania, Joëlle Garriaud-Maylam of France, Marietta Giannakou of Greece, and Attila Mesterhazy of Hungary – were re-elected by acclamation. The Head of the Canadian delegation to the NATO PA, Julie Dzerowicz, MP, was elected vice-president by acclamation.

Prior to the conclusion of the Plenary Sitting, NATO PA President Connolly thanked the NATO PA secretariat, as well as the Portuguese delegation and government, for their work in facilitating the 2021 Annual Session.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Dzerowicz, MP
Chair of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association

²³ NATO PA, ["NATO PA wraps up Annual Session with focus on update of Alliance Strategic Concept,"](#) News release, 12 October 2021.

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	67th Annual Session
DESTINATION	Hybrid Format
DATES	October 8 to 11, 2021
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu Hon. Jane Cordy Hon. Pierre Dalphond Hon. Vernon White
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Ms. Julie Dzerowicz Ms. Cheryl Gallant
STAFF	David Chandonnet, Association Secretary James Lee, Association Advisor
TRANSPORTATION	\$0.00
ACCOMMODATION	\$0.00
HOSPITALITY	\$0.00
PER DIEMS	\$0.00
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$0.00
MISCELLANEOUS	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$0.00