

**REPORT OF THE CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARY
DELEGATION RESPECTING ITS PARTICIPATION AT THE
PARLIAMENTARY TRANSATLANTIC FORUM**

Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA)

**WASHINGTON, D.C., UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
5–6 DECEMBER 2016**

Report

INTRODUCTION

The Canadian delegation to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA) and European Union member countries gathered in Washington for the annual Transatlantic Parliamentary Forum, held from 5–6 December 2016 in Washington, D.C., with the United States National Defence University (NDU) and the Atlantic Council of the United States (ACUS). The Transatlantic Parliamentary Forum provides NATO parliamentarians with the opportunity to discuss U.S. national security policy issues impacting alliance affairs.

The meeting provided an important opportunity for the Canadian delegation to hear from various experts about the impact of the recent United States presidential election on that country's foreign and defence policy and priorities.

Canada was represented at the Forum by Senator Colin Kenny, Senator Daniel Lang, Senator Vernon White, Mr. Randall Garrison, M.P., Mr. David McGuinty, M.P., the Honourable John McKay, P.C., M.P., Mr. Larry Miller, M.P., Mr. Jean Rioux, M.P., and Mr. Jamie Schmale, M.P.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

A. Countering New and Traditional Threats: A Shared Transatlantic Challenge

Delegates heard from two speakers, Franklin D. Kramer, a Distinguished Fellow at the Atlantic Council's Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security and Rachel Ellehuus, Principal Director for European and NATO Policy in the Office of the United States Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Policy.

Ms. Ellehuus indicated that the extent of the United States' "Asia Pivot" had been reduced and that, through the European Reassurance Initiative, the U.S. was in the process of "righting" previous cuts to reserve forces for Europe. She also noted that, regardless of who won the U.S. presidential election, member states would have heard the same talk of the need for enhanced burden-sharing, due to the sheer scale of demands on the United States.

Mr. Kramer focused on Russia's hybrid threat to NATO, calling it the "hardest" problem the Alliance faces and one to which NATO must respond. He stressed the need to respond to false stories. Also emphasized in Mr. Kramer's presentation was the need for NATO, the European Union and individual member states to more closely integrate their structures so as to ensure a coordinated approach to countering Russia's hybrid warfare and to broader defence capabilities planning and acquisition.

B. U.S. Perspective on U.S. and EU Political and Institutional Changes

Dr. Stephen Szabo, Executive Director of the Transatlantic Academy at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, discussed the shared challenge of economic,

political and foreign policy populism in Europe and the United States. Dr. Jacob Funk Kirkegaard, Senior Fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, examined the impact of Brexit on the future of U.S.–EU relations and security.

Dr. Szabo described himself as “pessimistic” about the direction President-elect Trump was taking U.S.–European relations, saying “the pillars of Pax Americana are crumbling” under his rhetoric. He worried about the rise of right-wing political parties and oligarchies in Europe. Noting what happened to Europe in the 1930s, wondered aloud if liberal democracy is a “fairweather” political construct that only works when the economic situation is good. Still, Dr. Szabo predicted that NATO would not crumble but could instead become a “zombie.” He also noted that President Obama shared President-elect Trump’s seeming acceptance that Ukraine falls within Russia’s rightful “sphere of influence.”

Mr. Kirkegaard said Brexit provides a potential opportunity to look more closely at the national security relationships that currently exist among EU member states. Though there is a possibility that the article 50 negotiations between the EU and United Kingdom could become acrimonious, he believed Britain’s constructive approach to date provides room for optimism. Britain, he said, needs to examine how it can continue to help rather than fight EU security institutions.

When Mr. Larry Miller, M.P., asked Mr. Kirkegaard about the future of the EU and prospects for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the latter said he was “convinced” the EU would survive Brexit but did not think the current U.S. Congress would stand up to President-elect Trump if he chose to abandon the NAFTA.

C. The Russian Challenge and the New Administration

Anna Borshchevskaya, Ira Weiner Fellow at the Washington Institute, spoke on the linkages between Russia’s domestic politics and its foreign policy. She was joined by Dr. Stephen Blank, Senior Fellow for Russia at the American Foreign Policy Council, who discussed what Russia seeks from President-elect Trump.

Ms. Borshchevskaya described Putin’s strategy for holding onto power as informed by both his KGB past and that of Tsarist Russia. She said it is no accident that he exerted control over the Russian Federation’s television stations first because “as a former KGB officer, he knew its power” as a communications medium. Ms. Borshchevskaya highlighted the July 2012 foreign agent law, which requires all non-profit organizations that receive foreign funding to register with the government, and the July 2016 “Yarovaya” law¹, which, among other things, requires telecom operators to store the contents of phone conversations, text messages and users’ Internet traffic for up to six months, as well as metadata for up to three years. Russia and China collaborate on Internet censorship, she said, using total surveillance to suppress dissent. As well, the Yarovaya law criminalizes failure to warn the authorities of reliable information about planned terrorist attacks, armed uprisings and other crimes. While the new law purports to be aimed at countering terrorism, she said, it is being used to suppress dissent.

¹ The name of the law refers to its author, United Russia party member, Irina Yarovaya.

Dr. Blank said that, unlike President-elect Trump, Russia's objectives are well known. He listed these objectives as the termination of ballistic missile defence; ending of sanctions; recognition of Russian primacy in Syria and creation of a "new Yalta" for the Middle East; abandonment of U.S. support for democracy, not just in Russia, but in Central and Eastern Europe; and acquisition of a "free hand" in Europe and Asia. To achieve these objectives, Russia subsidizes elites throughout the world; threatens to cut off energy supplies to European states; engages in information warfare and leverages its intelligence services and organized crime groups, he said. Thus far, Dr. Blank noted, Russia has successfully installed compliant regimes in Serbia, Bulgaria and Hungary. In his opinion, organized crime groups in Spain are being used to further Russian interests and the hand of Russian intelligence agencies was present in efforts to foment a coup in Montenegro and to help the right wing gain power in Hungary. In the end, Russia does not just want to have a free hand in what was the Former Soviet Union but, rather, it also wants to exercise influence over the nations that comprised the former Warsaw Treaty. The West must not make the mistake of making concessions to Putin, argued Dr. Blank, otherwise he, like Stalin, will simply demand more.

The Honourable John MacKay, M.P., initiated a discussion around the EU's views on Canada's Magnitsky Act and on sanctioning Russia. There are a range of viewpoints in the EU on sanctions, Ms. Borshchevskaya said. She went on to note that NATO needs to recognize that Putin is much more than a skilled tactician and therefore needs to develop a strategy to counter the challenge Russia poses to the Western system of values. Sanctions alone are not enough, she said.

Noting how climate change is making the Arctic region more accessible to Russia, the head of the Canadian delegation, Mr. Jean Rioux, M.P., asked the presenters whether they thought the United States would maintain its interest in the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD). Dr. Blank responded by saying that the current U.S. administration does not seem to have much interest in climate change, the Arctic, or Russia's militarization of this region. Nonetheless, he said that he expected Secretary of Defense Mattis to eventually turn his attention to NORAD.

Senator Daniel Lang asked how Russia uses "troll factories" to deliver its social media messaging and what NATO is doing about this problem. Noting that Russia uses individuals located in Russia and abroad to fabricate news stories and attack those who write accurate but negative reports about Russia, Dr. Blank said NATO uses centres of excellence based in Tallinn and Helsinki to counter what he characterized as information warfare. He said it was difficult to convince Congress to fund such efforts because U.S. lawmakers mistakenly see such centres as disseminating propaganda, rather than making an effort to counter fake news with truth. Ms. Borshchevskaya said there are an increasing number of U.S. voices saying Russian information warfare is ineffective and expensive, which she views as a dangerous trend. Ignoring rather than responding to Russian information warfare, she argued, concedes too much ground to Russia. The West is not doing a good job of addressing the half-truths that appear in news outlets such as Russia Today (RT) and Sputnik News and which are overwhelming search engines, she said, beating legitimate news agencies to establishing that all-important first impression of events.

D. Coping With Instability in the Middle East: A Challenge for the New Administration

Dr. Stephen Grand, Executive Director of the Atlantic Council's Middle East Strategy Task Force, spoke on the future of the United States' Middle East Strategy, while Ms. Nancy Izzo Jackson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration for the U.S. Department of State, provided the United States' perspective on the migration crisis in the Middle East and Europe.

Dr. Grand highlighted his task force's [recent study on the Middle East](#) and said the Arab Spring demonstrates the desire in the region to create its own destiny. Outsiders like the U.S. and Europe, he added, need to support this vision and do what they can to help.

Dr. Grand described two different narratives at play in the Middle East. The first is one of violent sectarianism, where states are losing legitimacy and descending into civil war. The second is of young, educated and connected entrepreneurs who are dedicated to the future of their region and merit the West's support. Echoing the findings of the Middle East Strategy Task Force, Dr. Grand called for efforts to wind down violence in the Middle East and efforts by Western states to provide economic support to those leaders who embrace reform. Such economic support should prioritize investment in human capital through education.

Ms. Izzo Jackson's branch of the State Department focuses on the human dimension of regional conflicts. She said the current migrant crisis has seen the displacement of some 21 million people, the largest number since the Second World War and of which half are children.

In the face of protracted conflicts, Ms. Izzo Jackson said, finding solutions is becoming increasingly difficult.

Fiscal Year 2016 saw the United States direct over \$7 billion in humanitarian aid to displaced persons. The "staggeringly high" number of migrants tends to dehumanize the problem, she said, adding that strategic relocation and resettlement must be supported by longer-term planning for integration into host countries. NATO's effort in the Aegean Sea, between Greece and Turkey, under Operation Sea Guardian² has done a lot to stabilize the migrant crisis, she said, but it is not a long-term solution.

E. Reception at Canadian Embassy

At the close of proceedings on the first day, members of the Canadian delegation attended a reception at the Canadian embassy in Washington, D.C.

F. Congressional Perspectives

Congressmen Michael Turner (Republican-Ohio), Tom Marino (Republican-Pennsylvania), Rob Bishop (Republican-Utah), Bill Johnson (Republican-Ohio) and Paul

² NATO launched Operation Sea Guardian on 9 November 2016 to support the EU's Operation Sophia, a maritime mission to disrupt the activities of migrant smugglers and human traffickers in the region. See North Atlantic Treaty Organization, [NATO launches new Operation Sea Guardian](#).

Cook (Republican-California) each provided their perspective on where the incoming Trump administration would likely stand on NATO and the key issues Congress will focus on going forward.

Mr. David McGuinty, M.P., asked where President-elect Trump stands on climate change and security. One of the congressmen said that Republicans are not climate change deniers and that they are also concerned about air and water quality but they believe that a “market-driven approach” to the environment makes the most sense. More than one of the congressmen expressed interest in doing more to develop natural resources found on U.S. federal lands.

G. The Foreign Policy and Domestic Political Implication of the November Elections

Dr. Michael Mandelbaum, Professor Emeritus of American Foreign Policy at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, and Dr. Michael Bailey, Colonel William J. Walsh Professor of American Government at Georgetown University, discussed the domestic and foreign policy implications of the U.S. presidential and congressional elections, respectively.

Among the observations that Dr. Mandelbaum made was that the election of President-elect Trump may mark the first time since the Second World War where an election has resulted in a radical change in U.S. foreign policy. “Usually, it’s events that change policy,” he said, adding that “elections are normally about marginal changes.” Dr. Mandelbaum commented that President-elect Trump appears to be opposed to all the mainstays of the international political order, including free trade and participation in alliances.

Since the Second World War, he said, the United States has provided a “quasi-world government.” However, Dr. Mandelbaum asserted that the U.S. public has never ratified this policy. If you took a poll, he said, the U.S. public would not support continuation of its traditional leadership role because it is the result of the United States having to defend itself against the Soviet Union. Once the Soviet Union disappeared, Mandelbaum said, only inertia and lack of associated costs kept the United States in this role. This is no longer the case, he said, and so public support for internationalism has dwindled. He later pointed out that he had spoken out against the expansion of NATO in the 1990s and that expansion was a “grave mistake.” The Clinton administration, said Mandelbaum, assured the American public that they would never have to put their lives on the line to defend the Alliance but “now with the Baltics, this is a possibility.”

Nonetheless, Dr. Mandelbaum argued, it would not be easy for the incoming Trump administration to alter a status quo that has had 75 years to become entrenched. Many U.S. institutions are staffed by people who are committed to security alliances, he said, and many members of the Republican Party have the same commitment. Dr. Mandelbaum also reminded delegates that enhanced burden-sharing is a theme that precedes the incoming Trump administration and that where this issue is concerned “the ball is in your court.”

For his part, Dr. Bailey emphasized the short-term nature of President-elect Trump's thinking with respect to the United States' "eye-watering debt." He floated the possibility that President-elect Trump could support short-term investment in infrastructure and the military, while cutting entitlements, but noted that Mr. Trump had already made public comments to the contrary. Like his Republican predecessors, President-elect Trump could decide to accept higher debt, said Dr. Bailey, but this carries with it an inflationary risk.

H. Conclusion

The annual Transatlantic Parliamentary forum in Washington, D.C. offers Canada's delegates the opportunity to hear from leading U.S. academics and defence officials, as well as engage members of Congress on Alliance issues. This year's forum was particularly important, as it provided a unique perspective on U.S. foreign and defence policy in a time of transition.

Three main themes emerged from this event that are of relevance to Canadian parliamentarians and our NATO allies:

1. Enhanced burden-sharing is an ongoing and bi-partisan issue that influences the United States electorate's perception of NATO and of the traditional U.S. leadership role in global security affairs;
2. NATO should mount a determined response to Russia's broad-ranging, cyber-enabled efforts to undermine the Alliance's coherence and democratic institutions; and,
3. There is a risk that the European Union may emerge significantly weakened by the series of challenges it faces, including the departure of the United Kingdom.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Joseph Day, Senator
for Ms. Leona Alleslev, M.P.
Chair of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA)

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA)
ACTIVITY	PARLIAMENTARY TRANSATLANTIC FORUM
DESTINATION	Washington, D.C., United States of America
DATES	December 5-6, 2016
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Colin Kenny, Hon. Daniel Lang, Hon. Vernon White
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Jean Rioux, Randall Garrison, David McGuinty, Hon. John McKay, Larry Miller, Jamie Schmale
STAFF	Jean-François Pagé, Holly Porteous
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 8493.26
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 7318.39
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0
PER DIEMS	\$ 3372.50
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 2093.80
TOTAL	\$ 21 277.95