

## Canada and NATO - mutually dependant

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The Toronto Star  
March 31, 2010

The mere mention of NATO typically has Canadians reaching for their channel changers. Despite our blasé view, NATO has probably been the most successful alliance of all time. It was the major factor standing in the way of thousands of Soviet and Warsaw Pact tanks and millions of troops racing toward the English Channel to impose yet another dark age on Western Europe.

More importantly, NATO contributed significantly to averting a nuclear holocaust which we could not even imagine in our darkest nightmares.

The question now is: "Where to from here"?

Former U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright is currently addressing that question and her recommendations can have a profound effect on Canada. In order to address our specific needs and goals, the Conference of Defence Associations Institute and the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute have produced a study titled Security in an Uncertain World.

Why is this issue important? Canadians have always felt secure behind two oceans, with an impenetrable northern ice cap and a relatively benign neighbour to the south. We're okay – or are we?

Threats to Canada and to all of the world's liberal democracies are now vastly different in their complexity, range and potential impact. For example:

Canada's northern, resource-rich Arctic is now opening up. We no longer have an ice wall and undisputed title to lands, waterways and resources traditionally thought of as Canadian.

Cyber warfare is just beginning to poke its head up as an aggressive and destructive weapon. This surreptitious tactic has recently been employed, allegedly by Russia and China.

Failed states have destabilized whole regions and brought suffering and death to millions. We, in the Western democracies, have experienced the results of their providing safe havens for terrorists. Rebuilding failed states requires military security (peacemaking as well as peacekeeping) along with civilian reconstruction efforts. NATO is well placed to provide timely and meaningful assistance in both man-made and natural disasters.

Jihadist elements are always working to penetrate security in order to wreak havoc and destruction. This ongoing threat shows little sign of abating.

Nuclear proliferation, hostile nuclear countries and the potential of terrorists obtaining weapons of mass destruction also round out this partial threat list.

Within the last century, approximately 135 million individuals were murdered by their own governments. Western democracies have a responsibility to humanity and history to act in these matters. This brings us to the United Nations. Despite its bright promise and successes, the UN has continually failed in those crucial areas that demand quick and decisive action. Rwanda is only one such example.

NATO brings together like-minded countries. Common values and goals simply do not exist at the UN. For example, having Moammar Gadhafi's Libya head the UN Human Rights Commission is the stuff of a Groucho Marx comedy, were it not so painful.

Indecision, multiple interests and goals, layers of bureaucracy and lethargy have all been undermining the great purposes of the UN in recent years.

Canada's security needs are best met in a broad alliance with countries of like mind, not restricted to a specific region, but based upon shared values, as many of the conflicts we now face concern values and ideals.

Yes, we could just tie up with the U.S. instead of pursuing a broader collective defence. This, however, would not fit with our national desire not to be America's lap dog and, further, we too can have differences, for example, in the Arctic.

Hence the scope, functioning and cost sharing of a new broader "NATO" will be very important to Canada in the future. As a middle power, we have had an influence in the past when we insisted that NATO not simply be a military alliance but "encourage democratic principles, strengthen free institutions and cooperate for the general welfare of all." This "Canadian Article," Article 2 of the NATO Charter, is a good starting point.

Clearly, we need a new and broader collective security framework. Canada's input and influence in this matter are important to our future and the weight of that input will be in direct proportion to our contribution to world security. This clearly speaks to maintaining and even building upon the current superlative level of proficiency of our Canadian Forces.