

CANADIAN GLOBAL AFFAIRS INSTITUTE
INSTITUT CANADIEN DES AFFAIRES MONDIALES

A Primer to the Brussels NATO Summit

by Colin Robertson

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POLICY UPDATE

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Executive Summary

On May 25-26, NATO leaders will meet in Brussels. This will be the first multilateral forum in which President Donald Trump will be in attendance, and where much of the focus will be following his varied comments on NATO. From its original 12 members, NATO now stands at 28, including many former Warsaw Pact nations, and has operated in Afghanistan, performed anti-piracy missions, and taken part in humanitarian operations as well.

Despite these successes, President Trump, both as a candidate and since, has called on the Alliance members to increase their share of the burden, symbolized to him by the two percent goal. There are six big-ticket items which will be discussed at the summit:

1. *NATO readiness to reinforce collective defence, including investing in capabilities;*
2. *Defence spending;*
3. *Relations with Russia;*
4. *Deepening partnerships and maintaining NATO's open door policy;*
5. *Afghanistan; and*
6. *ISIS and Terrorism.*

It is expected that President Trump will again forcefully push for all members to meet the 2 percent of GDP spending on defence commitment. In return the other leaders will expect a clear commitment to collective defence. As leaders meet, new Pew Foundation survey numbers reveal strong support among the populations of NATO member countries for both the Alliance itself and, more importantly, collective self-defence.

Presidents and prime ministers will meet in Brussels on Wednesday and Thursday (May 24-5, 2017) in a summit meeting of the 28 partner nations. The focus will be on U.S. President Donald Trump, appearing in his first formal multilateral forum. It will also be the first meeting for France's new president, Emmanuel Macron.

The conference takes place against a complicated backdrop; upcoming elections in the United Kingdom and Germany, the recent elections in France and the Netherlands, the Brexit negotiations, the ongoing campaign against ISIS, turmoil in Syria, questions about Afghanistan, the continuing migration from the Middle East and North Africa, the latest Greek bailout, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's authoritarianism in the wake of the recent constitutional referendum, the continuing Russian occupation of parts of Ukraine and improved Russian military capacity, Chinese elbowing in on the South China Seas, North Korean nuclear and missile testing, increasing cyber-attacks, including those that shut down parts of Britain's health services and a new terrorist incident at a concert in Manchester.

NATO leaders will dedicate and then meet in the organization's new, multi-billion euro headquarters. A section of the World Trade Center - *The 9/11 and Article 5 Memorial* - the only time in its history that NATO invoked Article 5, the mutual defense clause, will be unveiled by President Trump. A section of the Berlin Wall, underlining how NATO kept the peace during the Cold War, will be dedicated by Chancellor Angela Merkel. Critics say the new headquarters also reflects the challenges confronting the Alliance: it is behind schedule and over-budget.



What is NATO?

NATO is a military and political alliance constructed around the principles of collective security, democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. It has 28 members including Canada, the United States and most European nations, as well as a host of Euro-Atlantic partner nations. NATO represents half of the world's economic and military power. As Secretary General Stollenberg observes, "no other superpower has ever had such a strategic advantage."

In the wake of the Second World War, the victors set up a series of international institutions. The foremost was the United Nations, with universal membership designed to advance human progress and prevent the "scourge of war". Responding to what Winston Churchill described as the "iron curtain" descending "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic," the western alliance set up a collective security agreement called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

In the words of its first secretary general, Lord Ismay, NATO was to "keep the Russians out, the Germans down, and the Americans in." A collective security agreement, an attack on one would be considered an attack on all, enshrined in Article 5. NATO was also designed, at Canadian insistence, to have an economic dimension to promote trade, investment, and commerce between the members (Article 2).

The agreement was signed in Washington on April 2, 1949. Its original membership included twelve countries - the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. In signing the agreement Canadian External Affairs Minister Lester Pearson said that Canadians "feel deeply and instinctively" that the treaty is "a pledge for peace and progress".

The Alliance expanded: Turkey and Greece joined in 1952, West Germany in 1955 and Spain in 1982. France left the military alliance in 1967 but rejoined in 2009. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, NATO membership is now 28 countries - most of the former Warsaw Pact countries, including the Balkan states created with the dissolution of Yugoslavia (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia). Montenegro will join when its membership is ratified by all member countries and Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina are on NATO's membership action plans, a kind of waiting-room for membership. Georgia and Ukraine have declared an interest in joining NATO and at the Bucharest summit (2008) NATO said the door was open although, since 2010, Ukraine has not formally pursued membership.

NATO is headquartered in Brussels, where former Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg leads its Secretariat with Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller, a former U.S. Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security

NATO military operations are headed by two commanders: Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) based in Brussels is currently U.S. General Curtis Scaparrotti; and Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT), based in Norfolk, Virginia, is currently French General Denis Mercier.

Member nations are represented in both the NATO council and military committee and legislators meet annually in the NATO parliamentary assembly. A Canadian has never held the post of Secretary General but Canadian General Ray Henault, a former Chief of Defense Staff, served as Chairman of the Military Committee from 2005-2008.

What has NATO done?

NATO has three core tasks: collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security.

For its first 40 years NATO's purpose was to deter Soviet aggression. Today, arguably, it is to deter Russian aggression. Canadian troops were stationed in Europe, mostly in Germany.

With the end of the Cold War, NATO shifted to help the former Soviet-bloc countries embrace democracy and the market economy.

Since 1989, NATO has also become involved in a series of out-of-theatre missions. Over 150,000 troops served under NATO command in six different operations on three continents, including counter-piracy operation in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean.

NATO forces were involved in bringing peace to the Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo), operations that continues today. NATO forces, under the umbrella of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), have been present in Afghanistan since 2003. There have been operations around Iraq (1990-1) and a training mission (2004-11). In 2005, NATO assisted in the relief efforts following the Pakistan earthquake. In recent years, NATO has also provided support to African Union peacekeeping missions in the Sudan and Somalia. NATO led the U.N.-sanctioned Libyan campaign (Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR in 2011), maintaining a no-fly zone and conducting air strikes against the Gaddafi regime. Canadian Lieutenant-General Charles Bouchard directed that air campaign.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2014 presented NATO with a renewed challenge, while events on its southern flank – in North Africa and the Middle East – require ongoing attention.

President Trump and NATO

All eyes at the summit will be on President Trump, who arrives as part of his first official trip abroad, which also took him to Saudi Arabia, Israel, the Vatican, and finally Brussels.

NATO leaders usually meet in the aftermath of the election of a new American president, as it is the U.S. that provides the muscle for the organization.

During the 2016 presidential election campaign, Mr. Trump called NATO "obsolete", warned the Allies that they would have to carry more of the load, and praised Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Since his election his statements on NATO have reflected a more traditional U.S. stance. During his meeting in April with U.N. Secretary General Jens Stollenberg, President Trump re-affirmed U.S. support for NATO saying the Alliance was "no longer obsolete" but declared that "NATO members meet their financial obligations and pay what they owe."

Vice President Mike Pence and the senior security and defence team all support NATO. National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster, Defence Secretary James Mattis, Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly – all served as generals in the U.S. Forces. His Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, was CEO of Exxon. Former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, his ambassador to the United Nations, has been vocal in her criticism of Russia.

At the Munich Security Conference in February, Vice President Pence said "the United States of America strongly supports NATO and will be unwavering in our commitment to this trans-Atlantic alliance". He also reiterated Mr. Trump's message that the Allies need to pay their "fair share...That pledge has gone unfulfilled for too many for too long and erodes the very foundation of our alliance."

The U.S. effort leading to the Brussels summit was handicapped by the lack of senior personnel in the U.S. Administration. Many posts at the National Security Council, Pentagon, State Department, as well as ambassadors, including to NATO and most of its member nations, have yet to be named, let alone confirmed by the Senate.

Big Ticket Items

1. *NATO readiness to reinforce collective defence, including investing in capabilities*

The Russian invasion of Ukraine and intervention in Syria have underlined the need for NATO readiness, including a rapid, combat-ready expeditionary force with attention to cyber defence and maritime security. As NATO scholar Julian Lindley-French and Admiral (ret'd) James Stavridis, former SACEUR, have argued "Article 5 collective defence must be modernised and re-organised around cyber-defence, missile defence and the advanced deployable forces vital to contemporary defence."

2. *Defence spending*

The United States shoulders three quarters of the alliance's operating budget. U.S. presidents and cabinet secretaries have consistently encouraged NATO members to spend more.

The American argument is expressed well in the valedictory remarks to NATO (June 10, 2011), of former U.S. defense secretary Robert Gates, who warned, "The blunt reality is that there will be dwindling appetite and patience in the U.S. Congress — and in the American body politic writ large — to expend increasingly precious funds on behalf of nations that are apparently unwilling

to devote the necessary resources or make the necessary changes to be serious and capable partners in their own defense."

Speaking in February to his fellow defence ministers Defence Secretary James Mattis said "America will meet its responsibilities, but if your nations do not want to see America moderate its commitment to this alliance, each of your capitals needs to show support for our common defence."

Defence spending in 2000 for most NATO members was 2 percent of GDP but it then steadily declined. According to NATO figures released in March, 2017, only five of the 28 members meet NATO's target of spending at least 2 percent of GDP on defence: the U.S., the U.K., Poland, Greece and Estonia. The U.S. spends 3.61 percent on defence and the U.K. 2.17 percent, based on NATO figures for 2016, while Germany spends 1.2 percent, France 1.7, Italy 1.11 and Spain 0.9. By NATO's estimates for this year, Canada will spend 1.02 percent of its GDP on defence.

3. Relations with Russia

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and illegal annexation of Crimea violates the U.N. charter, the Helsinki Final Act, and Russia's 20-year old commitment "to respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine".

With the end of the Cold War there was hope that Russia would eventually become a NATO partner and in 2009 NATO and Russia signed an accord to "build together a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area on the principles of democracy and cooperative security." Like the Obama 'reset' it has not worked out as planned. The NATO-Russia Council, created in 2002, meets in the belief that "in times of tension, dialogue is more important than ever." NATO has responded to the changed security environment by enhancing its deterrence and defence posture.

President Putin wants to create a sphere of influence on his frontiers and, through the creation of his Eurasian Union (a free-trade customs union between Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus), a counter-weight to NATO (and the European Union). Ukraine is not his first incursion into a neighbour's territory. In 2008, at his instruction, Russian forces invaded Georgia and occupied the South Ossetia region.

4. Deepening partnerships and maintaining NATO's open door policy

NATO's partnerships, born out of its 1990 London summit focused first on the former Soviet bloc nations (many of whom are now full members), then on crisis management in the Balkans, and, since 9-11 on wider partnerships now including more than forty nations around the world – including Afghanistan, Australia, Colombia, Iraq, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand and Pakistan. At its peak, the ISAF mission in Afghanistan included 22 partner nations. Partnership does not include the security guarantee of Article 5. Ukraine and Georgia want membership in NATO and at the Bucharest summit in 2008 NATO encouraged this, but NATO

enlargement is controversial and there is discussion of different architecture to guarantee security.

A wise persons report (2016) commissioned by the Finnish government concluded that Finland and Sweden should stick together, whatever the decision, but that membership would provoke Russia. It described Russia as an "unsatisfied power" that "has made unpredictability a strategic and tactical virtue, underpinned by an impressive degree of political and military agility."

5. Afghanistan

NATO has been involved in Afghanistan since the U.N. Security Council authorized the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) that operated from August 2003 to December 2014. ISAF was NATO's longest mission employing more than 130,000 troops from 51 NATO and partner nations, including Canada. A new NATO-led mission (Resolute Support) was launched in January 2015 to train, advise and assist the Afghan security forces and institutions.

In his meeting with Secretary General Stollenberg in April, President Trump said he would like more NATO members to re-involve themselves in Afghanistan.

While Canadian Forces left Afghanistan in March 2014 after a twelve-year campaign and the loss of 161 men and women, Canada continues to support a number of programs and activities.

NATO's current mission in Afghanistan, RESOLUTE SUPPORT, was launched to train, advise and assist the Afghan security forces and institutions in January 2015. A total of 39 countries (and all NATO members with the exception of Canada and France) have contributed a total of 13,459 troops at last official count.

6. ISIS and Terrorism

President Trump told Secretary General Stollenberg during their April meeting in Washington that he hopes that "NATO will take on an increased role in supporting our Iraqi partners in their battle against ISIS." In his first major foreign policy address abroad (May 21), President Trump told Arab leaders in Riyadh that the fight against terrorism "is not a battle between different faiths, different sects, or different civilizations. This is a battle between those who seek to obliterate human life and those who seek to protect it."

What results can we expect from the Brussels summit?

NATO Leaders will want to hear President Trump explicitly confirm his commitment to Article 5.

President Trump's pronouncements aside, reinvigoration of the Alliance begins with political will, and this is a hard commodity to coalesce.

President Trump will reiterate his demand that the Allies spend 2 percent of GDP on national defence, the target originally set by NATO in 2002. Without an agreed strategy on what the

spending is to support, binding commitments before 2020, the date set at the 2014 Wales summit, are unlikely.

Commitments would have to include actual capability requirements as well as agreement to make those resources available for combat. The Afghan and Libyan missions were handicapped by the caveats imposed by some NATO members on use of their personnel and equipment.

President Trump will likely push for NATO to formally join the anti-ISIS coalition. Germany is reportedly pushing back against the idea but some form of NATO commitment may be forthcoming. In meeting with reporters last week Secretary General Stollenberg said ""Allies who are arguing in favour are pointing to the fact that by joining the coalition NATO could send a clear message of political support."

Canadian involvement at the summit?

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will be pressed about Canada's financial commitment to NATO. During his address to Parliament in June 2015, President Obama also pushed Trudeau for more spending, saying not once, but three times that "NATO needs more Canada."



Mr. Trudeau is likely to respond to President Trump as he did during his meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in February when he said that "there are many ways of evaluating one's contribution to NATO" noting that Canada has "always been amongst the strongest actors in NATO."

Trudeau will likely cite Canada's leadership of a multinational NATO mission in Latvia (a commitment he made at the Warsaw summit in 2016), as part of broader Canadian support to

Operation REASSURANCE, and note the "significant procurement projects" — especially the ongoing construction of new warships and the purchase of fighter jets – and Canada's renewed activist internationalism.



Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan told Parliament that the Defence Policy Review – which may include new spending for defence - is scheduled to be announced on June 7.

In practical terms under Operation REASSURANCE, Canadian fighter jets patrol the Baltic skies, and since April 2014 Canada has deployed five *Halifax*-class frigates in support of NATO reassurance measures. Canada is providing humanitarian and Special Forces support to a U.S.-led multinational effort to support pro-Iraq forces battling the Islamic State.

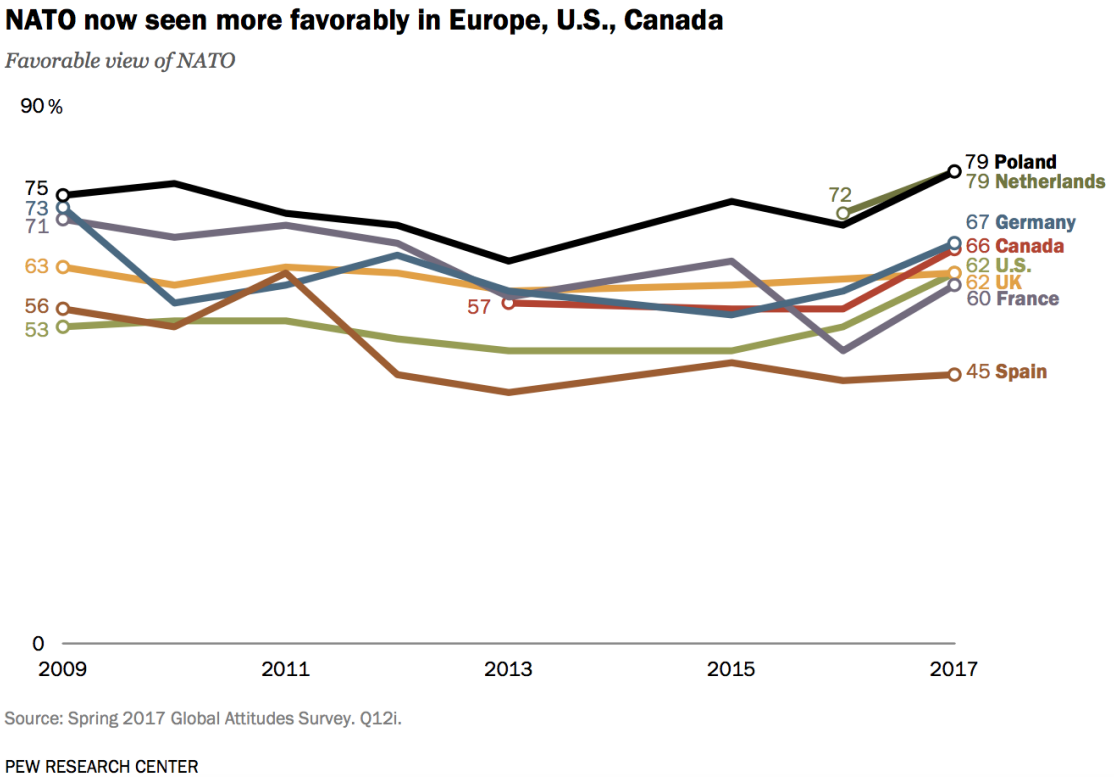
In terms of readiness, Canadian forces already have achieved significant interoperability on land, air and sea with the U.S. through NORAD, our binational aerospace and maritime surveillance agreement, and through both joint exercises and active operations in theatres like Afghanistan and Libya, and now in Latvia.

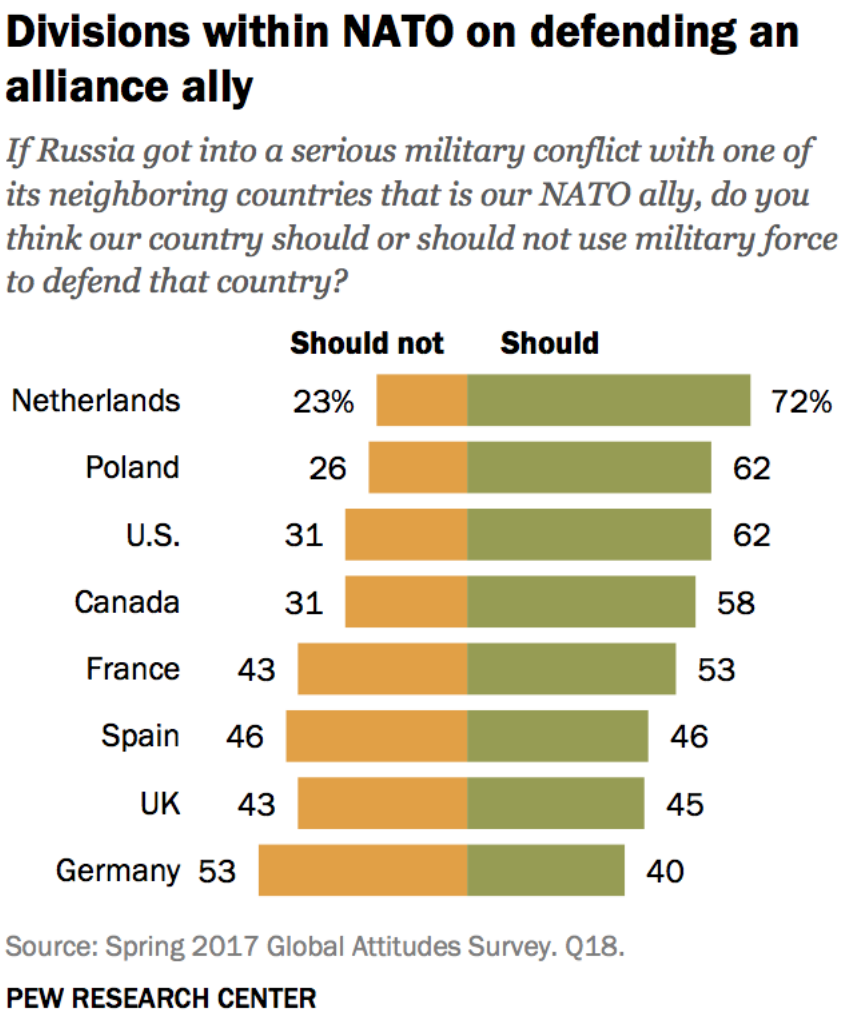
Public Opinion and NATO

Public opinion continues to support NATO.

A spring 2017 Pew Research Center survey of six EU nations (France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom), the U.S. and Canada finds positive views of the military alliance.

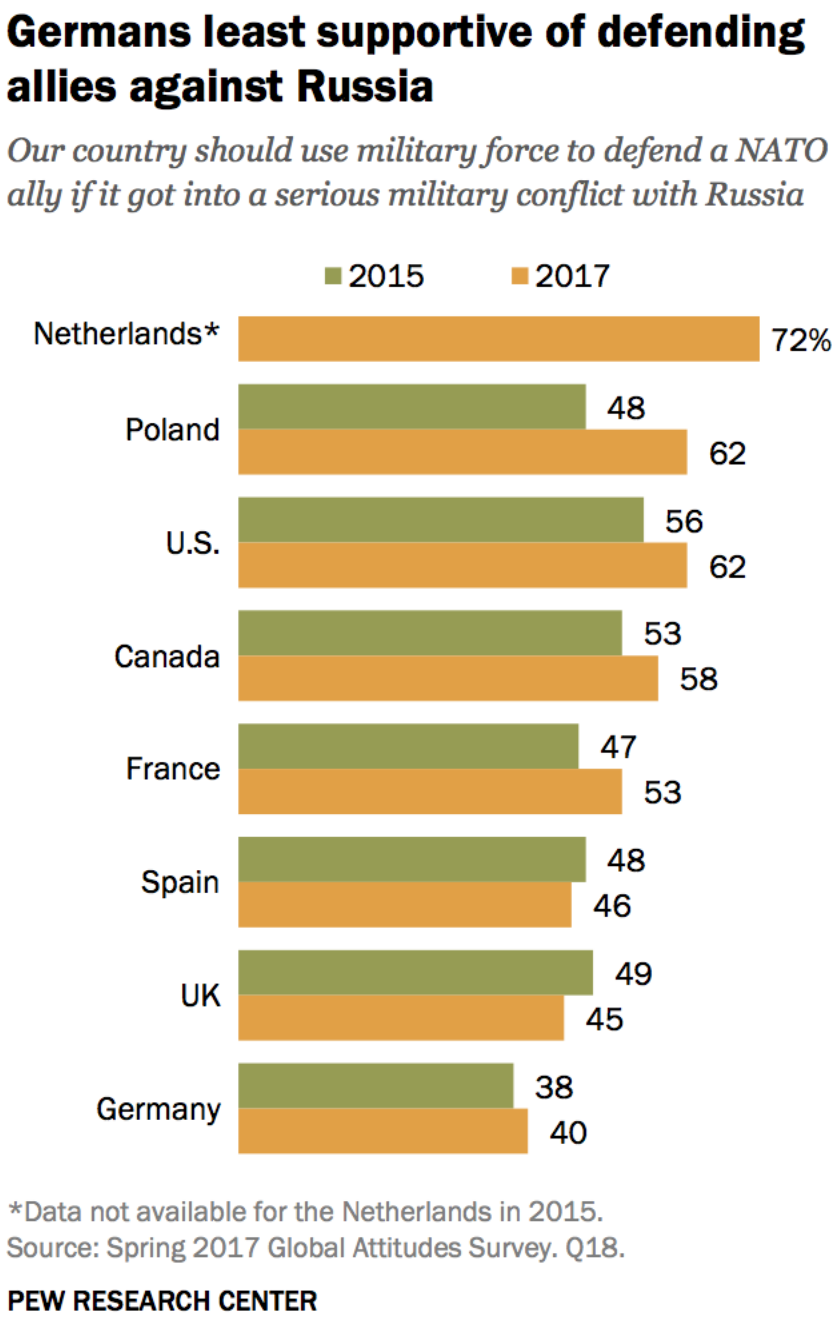
Asked about their own country should militarily defend a NATO ally (i.e. Article 5) if embroiled in an armed conflict with Russia, there is strong support in the Netherlands (72 percent), Poland (62 percent), United States (62 percent), Canada (58 percent) and France (53 percent), to living up to their mutual defense commitment as a member of NATO.





Two-thirds of Canadians hold NATO in high esteem, a rise of 10 percent since 2015, with rising support across demographic groups and with strong support amongst the major parties: Liberal Party (75 percent), Conservative Party (74 percent) New Democratic Party (65 percent).

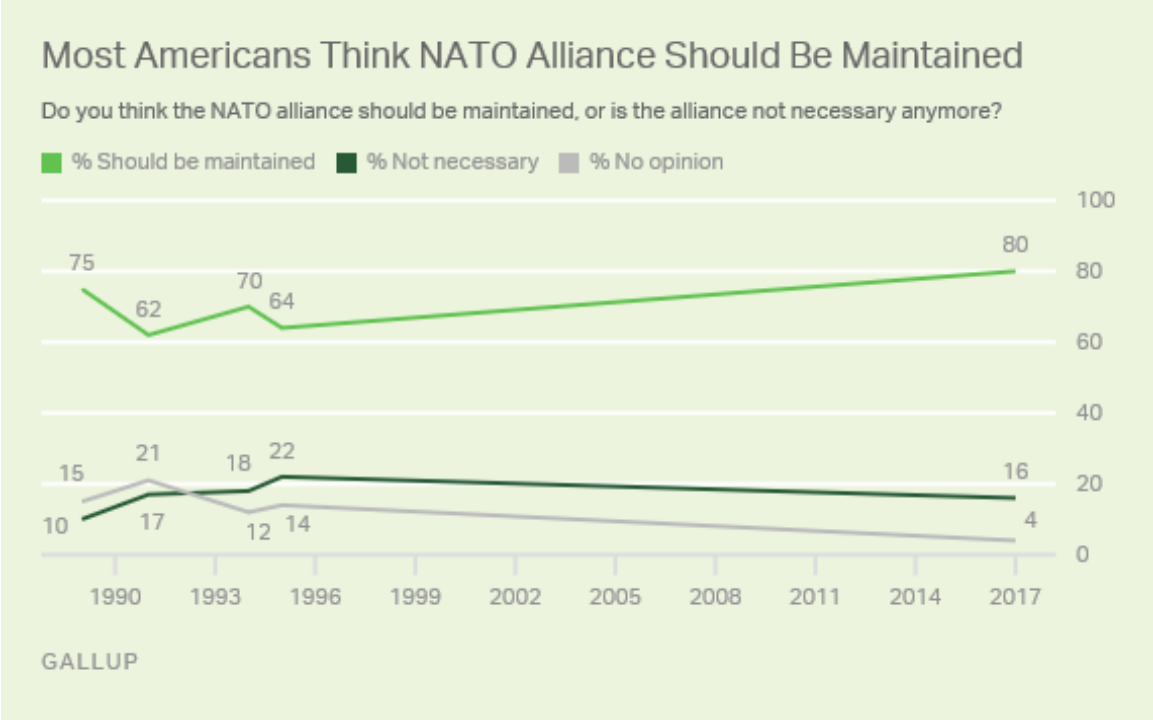
Germany has the fourth-largest defense budget in NATO, but only 40 percent of Germans believe they should come to the aid of an ally with. More than half (53 percent) do not support such aid.



In a 2015 survey a third of those surveyed said their country should increase its national defense spending, while nearly half (median of 47 percent) want to keep spending the same and 14 percent favor decreasing defense spending. The figures for Canada were 31 percent increase spending, 52 percent stay the same and 13 percent saying decrease spending.

A Gallup survey in February, 2017 revealed 80 percent of Americans support the Alliance. When Gallup first asked Americans about their views on NATO in July 1989, 75 percent thought the

alliance should be maintained. This percentage dropped to 62 percent in 1991, months before the Soviet Union's formal collapse, staying at that level during NATO 1995 intervention in the Bosnian War.



About the Author

A former Canadian diplomat, Colin Robertson is Vice President and Fellow at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute and Executive Fellow at the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy. He is Senior Advisor to Dentons LLP working with the Business Council of Canada. He is a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University. He is a member of the advisory councils of the Conference of Defence Associations Institute and the North American Research Partnership and participant in the North American Forum. He is a past president of the National Capital Branch of the Canadian International Council. He is an Honorary Captain (Royal Canadian Navy) assigned to the Strategic Communications Directorate. He writes on international affairs for the Globe and Mail and he is a regular contributor to other media.

Canadian Global Affairs Institute

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