



THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

The future of NATO and Canada's role. New School of Public Policy report

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Calgary – The future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has rather suddenly become considerably less certain. Today, it is internal threats, as much or more than external ones, causing anxiety in an alliance that was originally designed as a defence in the Cold War. U.S. President Donald Trump confirmed in 2018 that he had threatened to NATO leaders that he might pull the United States out of the alliance because he felt his country was paying too much while other members were getting away with a largely free ride. While Canada in particular has faced those very accusations about its allegedly weak contribution to NATO, the reality is that, over the past 20 years, Canada has actually increased its contributions, as a percentage of NATO's budget, by a full third.

Today, The School of Public Policy with CGAI and author Anessa L. Kimball released a report examining the institutional and bargaining aspects of NATO. The report shows that with its rational institutional design and the absence of bargaining alternatives, NATO's continued role is ensured. The report also offers solid policy recommendations for Canada given NATO's essential place in its foreign and defence policy.

According to Kimball "The Trump administration is not the only potential challenge facing NATO from within. Britain's plan to withdraw from the European Union is causing stresses among European allies. As France and Germany will likely have to take on a larger role in the EU after Britain's departure, they may in turn reduce their emphasis on NATO priorities, contributing fewer political, financial and defence resources to the transatlantic alliance. However, those in the U.K. who favour Brexit have also shown that they value and favour NATO, and so it is likely that Britain will take on an even larger role in the alliance and NATO could become even more valuable as a vital link not just between the U.S. and Canada and Europe, but between Britain and Brussels, as well."

The risk of NATO falling apart persists, but the likelihood is that even a sceptical and unconventional U.S. president will not spell the end of the seven-decade-old alliance. NATO's structure was designed to accommodate differences of policy and endowments between members and it shows many signs not just of surviving, but of thriving.

It is notable that NATO has had success in expanding the club to add 14 new members over two decades, and there is a waiting list of candidates who want in. Canada is not the only member to have signalled its ongoing and robust commitment to NATO, even as doubters knock the staying power of the alliance, and Canada will play a vital role in future NATO missions due to its role as a broker of compromise and its willingness to make its commitments credible. Canada understands, as do other NATO members, that it is stronger inside the alliance than outside it, and that there is no other club in existence that serves its national interests as well as NATO does.

The paper can be downloaded at <https://www.policyschool.ca/publications/>

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