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Chair: Mr. Sven Spengemann



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• (1540)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.)): Madam Clerk, if we're all set to go and we have quorum, I would like to call the meeting to order.

[Translation]

Dear colleagues, today is the fifth meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Pursuant to the motion adopted on January 31, 2022, the committee is meeting to study the situation at the Russia-Ukraine border and the implications for peace and security.

[English]

To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline a few rules to follow.

First, please note that screenshots or taking photographs of your screen is not permitted.

[Translation]

Members and witnesses can speak in the official language of their choice, and interpretation is available for this meeting. You can choose between the floor, English and French audio on the bottom of your screen. Please let me know immediately if the interpretation is not working.

[English]

For members participating in person, please keep in mind that the Board of Internal Economy guidelines for mask use and health protocols are in place. As chair, I will be enforcing these measures for the duration of the meeting. I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly, and when you're not speaking, please ensure that your microphone is on mute. I'll also just remind members and witnesses that comments should be addressed through the chair.

Just before we go to our first panel, following on Mr. Morantz's comments earlier, I just want to verify briefly that it's the consensus of members that we extend the witness deadline for the Taiwan and vaccine equity studies, currently slated for this Friday, by two weeks, to February 25.

Do we have unanimous consent from members on that change?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Is there any opposition?

Seeing none, we have approved that change.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses for the first panel.

We have, from DisinfoWatch, Mr. Marcus Kolga, director. From the Ukrainian Canadian Congress we have Ihor Michalchyshyn, executive director and CEO; and from Hermitage Capital Management we have William Browder, who is also head of the Global Magnitsky Justice Campaign.

Each of you will have five minutes for your opening remarks. The way that has worked well in the past to enforce this is to give you a 30-second warning in a very analogue fashion through this yellow card. When you see this come up, you have 30 seconds to wrap up your comments. That also goes for the question and answer period that follows.

Without further ado, I would now like to turn the floor over to Mr. Kolga for five minutes, for his opening remarks.

Mr. Kolga, the floor is yours. Please go ahead.

Mr. Marcus Kolga (Director, DisinfoWatch): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the committee.

I'd like to speak to you today about the threat of Russian influence and information operations, known more broadly as cognitive warfare, and how Canada and our interests are targeted in the context of the crisis in Ukraine.

Mr. Chairman, earlier this week a Toronto bakery owned by a Ukrainian Canadian family was vandalized with graffiti messages that said "F Ukraine and Canada" and "Russia is power".

Police are currently investigating what seems to be a hate-based crime, but the messaging spray painted on the walls of the Future Bakery is consistent with anti-Ukrainian narratives promoted by Russian state media.

Such attacks are the product of the Kremlin's cognitive warfare against Ukraine and more broadly the community of western democracies. Over the past six months the Russian government's escalating tensions against Ukraine and NATO have been accompanied by an intensification of information warfare by Russian state media and the Kremlin supporters and proxies here in Canada.

The same false Russian state narratives that emerged during the Kremlin's 2014 invasion of Crimea and eastern Ukraine have re-emerged in efforts to undermine Canadian and allied support for Ukraine.

Among these toxic narratives is that Canada's foreign policy is controlled by Ukrainian and central and eastern European diaspora groups. Conspiracy theories like this one have been deployed by extremists in the past to marginalize and silence other minority groups. Such conspiracy narratives threaten to delegitimize the status of Canadians of Ukrainian heritage by relegating their voices to a second, lower tier of citizen, one whose voice isn't considered equal to those of other Canadians. The muting of this community in Canadian public discourse is precisely the outcome that Vladimir Putin seeks to achieve.

Bill Browder, who you will hear from in a moment, is a constant target of Russian state disinformation. A recent Russian television segment suggested that he masterminded the recent uprising in Kazakhstan. While he was advocating for Canadian Magnitsky human rights legislation in 2016, Russian state media accused Mr. Browder of being a CIA agent in a twisted documentary dedicated to discrediting him and other Russian anti-corruption activists like Alexei Navalny. The discrediting of critics by smearing them with false labels is a Soviet era tactic that has been resurrected by Vladimir Putin.

During the Cold War, Soviet officials indiscriminately labelled those who resisted Soviet repression and occupation as fascists and Nazi sympathizers, a tactic reactivated by the Kremlin to discredit Ukrainian pro-democracy supporters in the Ukrainian community in Canada.

Last week a member of Canada's Parliament sent out a tweet repeating this claim stating that Canada's recent announcement of a \$120-million loan to Ukraine would go to a government run by "neo-Nazi militia". This is disinformation. Ukraine's government is, of course, democratically elected and its president is a member of the Ukrainian Jewish community.

It's worth noting that the Russian government has directly funded extremist parties like the National Front in France, the League in Italy, Jobbik in Hungary, groups in Austria and other groups.

In the broader geopolitical context, Russian state narratives seek to undermine Canadian confidence in NATO and through that erode cohesion within the transatlantic alliance. These include false claims about a NATO commitment to reject the membership applications of eastern and central European nations in the 1990s. That false claim has been debunked by Mikhail Gorbachev but is being used by Vladimir Putin as a pretext for his current escalation against Ukraine.

Russian government disinformation narratives are often communicated through Russian state media channels that broadcast on Canadian-owned and -controlled cable and satellite television systems. According to a 2017 report, Russia Today, known as RT, pays Canadian cable providers to carry it as part of their cable packages, delivering Russian disinformation into seven million Canadian households.

During the COVID pandemic, RT and Kremlin-aligned proxies operating inside Russia's disinformation ecosystem have promoted narratives that undermine trust in western vaccines. They promote protests against government COVID protocols as righteous acts of civil disobedience. Indeed, even the Russian embassy in Canada directly promoted hesitancy towards western vaccines on its website.

Let me be very clear. The Kremlin's cognitive warfare does not genuinely share any ideology with any Canadian political party or movement. It exploits them. The pandemic has provided an opportunity through which the Russian government can manipulate western societies and the tensions within them through conspiracy theories and anti-government narratives.

The protests in Ottawa are no exception. They are also the targets of Russian state media platforms and their proxies. The concerns and emotions of Canadians who genuinely feel marginalized by COVID mandates are being exploited to further erode their trust in our governments, the media and their fellow Canadians.

According to a 2021 Facebook report, Russia is the largest producer of disinformation on its platform. There are measures we can take to help support Ukrainian sovereignty and protect our democracy at the same time. This includes targeting Vladimir Putin's own wealth and the corrupt oligarchy support, and holding Putin's assets abroad, including the hundreds of millions stashed away in plain sight right here in Canada.

● (1545)

A task force should also be created to develop a national cognitive defence strategy to help all Canadians understand and recognize the threat of foreign influence and information operations and to provide resources to defend our democracy against them.

Thank you very much. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Mr. Kolga, thank you very much, and thank you for sticking very closely to the time limit.

I will now turn the floor over to Mr. Michalchyshyn for five minutes of opening remarks.

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn (Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer, Ukrainian Canadian Congress): Thank you for the invitation to appear here.

As this committee knows, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress is the federation of Ukrainian Canadian organizations here in Canada. We speak on behalf of a community of 1.4 million. We're looking forward to that census number and hoping it'll be even larger.

I am here to talk to you today about the Ukraine and Russia security crisis.

As you know, in February 2014, Russia invaded Ukraine and since then has occupied Crimea and parts of the eastern Ukrainian oblasts of Donetsk and Luhansk; it has also continued to fuel a war in eastern Ukraine, where over 13,000 people have been killed, 30,000 wounded and 1.5 million internally displaced within Ukraine.

In November 2021, Russia once again started to intensify troop movements near Ukraine's borders. A series of diplomatic discussions between the United States, NATO, the EU states, Ukraine and Russia have not yielded any concrete results or commitments from Russia to de-escalate aggression against Ukraine.

The UCC and our community believe strongly that now is the time for Canada to act further to deter Russian invasion, rather than wait for this invasion to happen. The most effective way, we believe, to deter a further Russian invasion is to take proactive rather than reactive steps. We welcome the extension and expansion of Operation Unifier, Canada's military training mission in Ukraine, announced by the government on January 26.

In the long run, the extension and expansion of this mission will critically strengthen Ukraine's defences. However, the threat of a Russian invasion grows every day, and the Ukrainian armed forces need our assistance further today. More than a dozen countries, including NATO allies of Canada, are supplying defensive weapons to Ukraine's armed forces in response to Russia's recent escalation of aggression and threats against Ukraine.

The threat of invasion is severe, and Russia stands ready to invade at any time. Ukrainians are not asking anyone to fight for them, but they do need our help to defend their country against the colonial power seeking to re-establish its dominance. We know the government of Ukraine has requested such assistance from the government of Canada for defensive weapons.

Second, we believe that sanctions will deprive the Russian state of revenue to continue to wage war and will reinforce the message to the Russian government that the west is resolute in countering Russian aggression. The UCC urges the foreign affairs committee to support further provision of defence weapons and stronger sanctioning against Russia and its officials.

We conducted a public opinion poll on January 20 and 21, which we shared with members of Parliament. It shows that three in four Canadians support or are open to supporting Canada's providing defensive weapons to Ukraine. The number of Canadians, 42%, who explicitly support the provision of weapons outnumbers the number of Canadians who oppose it, 23%, by almost two to one.

As you've seen this past weekend across Canada, Canadians from the Ukrainian community in some 30 communities in all 10 provinces came together to demonstrate their support for Ukraine and for Canada to provide defensive weapons. From St. John's to Victoria, Canadians strongly supported this campaign, and it is incomprehensible to us that the Canadian government continues to refuse to join our NATO allies in this important step to support Ukrainian independence.

A survey published on February 9 by the European Council on Foreign Relations also found that the citizens of Europe see NATO as the organization that is best positioned to defend Ukraine. Sixty-

two per cent of respondents stated that NATO should come to the assistance of Ukraine if Russia were to invade.

Just to sum up, I know our next speaker will talk more about sanctions, but we believe that the implementation of stronger sanctions against Russia will have two effects. It will deprive the Russian state of revenue to continue to wage war, and it will reinforce the message to the Russian government that the west is resolute in countering Russian aggression. Personal sanctions must be broadened against Russian officials responsible for egregious human rights violations of Ukrainian citizens, and Canada should target oligarchs who are close to the Russian regime, wealthy business people who serve as the Putin regime's enablers and who have significant assets in the west.

● (1550)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Michalchyshyn. Thank you also for sticking closely to the time limit; in fact, you were slightly under five minutes.

I will now turn the floor over to Mr. Browder for five minutes of opening remarks.

Mr. William Browder (CEO, Hermitage Capital Management; Head, Global Magnitsky Justice Campaign): Thank you very much for this opportunity to address you this afternoon on the horrible situation in Ukraine.

I'm here to talk about sanctions specifically.

As some of you know, I am the person behind the Magnitsky act. Sergei Magnitsky was my lawyer in Russia, who was murdered on November 16, 2009. After his murder, I was looking for a way in which to seek justice for him. The idea came about because there were no other ways of finding redress. We came up with this idea of freezing the assets and banning the travel of the people who were responsible for his murder.

I first took this idea to the United States and, in a truly bipartisan way, the Magnitsky act was passed in 2012 with a vote of 92 to 4 in the Senate and 89% in the House of Representatives. It became a law on December 14, 2012.

Vladimir Putin went out of his mind when this law was passed. In retaliation, he banned the adoption of Russian orphans by American families. After that, he put Sergei Magnitsky on trial in the first-ever trial against a dead man in Russian history, and put me on trial as Sergei's co-defendant. We were both found guilty.

They couldn't do anything more to Sergei, but they sentenced me to nine years in absentia and have been chasing me around the world ever since. They've issued eight Interpol arrest warrants for me, and they've gone to the British government on numerous occasions for my extradition. They've made death threats and various other things. It has become a full-time job for a number of people in the Russian government to come after me.

We know, then, that with the Magnitsky act we've hit a nerve. We know we've found something they really care about. In fact, it's a nerve probably greater than any other nerve: Putin declared it his single largest foreign policy priority to repeal the Magnitsky act and prevent it from spreading around the world.

Why does Putin care about this so much? He cares about it because Putin is a kleptocrat who has stolen an enormous amount of money from the Russian people, from the Russian state and from Russian oligarchs. I would estimate that he is worth \$200 billion, but none of this money is kept in his own name. The money is kept in the name of people he trusts. I describe them as “oligarch trustees”.

As we're looking around at this Ukrainian situation, there are so many different conversations going on and asking, what do we do to stop Vladimir Putin from invading Ukraine? The one thing I can say is that we should come up with something that he cares about. We know what he cares about. He cares about his money, and he cares about his money that's held through these trustees.

As we're looking at policies, the one policy that I've been advocating for—I'm advocating for it here right now and I've advocated in the U.K. and in the U.S.—in addition to all the other military strategies and so on, is a policy of going after the individuals who hold his money for him. My voice has gotten through in the U.K. and it's gotten through in the U.S., and both countries have made statements in the last 10 days to say they that would sanction the oligarchs looking after Putin's money.

It's very interesting, because there was a statement made by the British foreign secretary Liz Truss last Sunday, and moments after that statement was made, Vladimir Putin emerged for the first time to publicly discuss the situation in the Ukraine. He had been hiding, effectively, for the previous month, and not saying a word about Ukraine. He finally came out because we finally hit his Achilles heel.

As we look forward to what to do about this situation, my prescription is to make a list of the 50 biggest oligarchs who look after Putin's money. There's no mystery as to who these people are—various people, such as Alexei Navalny, the opposition leader who's in jail, and many others have made this list—and we hit these people with Magnitsky sanctions.

• (1555)

We start with five before any invasion to show Putin we're serious. We then tell him that he has 10 days to pull back from the border or we hit him with another five. If he invades, we go after the rest of the 40. I believe this would stop Putin in his tracks and he wouldn't invade Ukraine.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I thank all our witnesses for their opening statements.

We will now go to questions by members. In the first round, there will be four questioners, with six minutes each.

The floor first goes to Mr. Morantz. Please go ahead, for six minutes.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Through you, Mr. Chair, my first question is

for Mr. Browder, but before I get into my question, I'll say I had the opportunity to read Mr. Browder's book, *Red Notice*. I recommend it to every member of this committee. It is an eye-opening account of the brutality of the Russian regime under Vladimir Putin, and homage to Mr. Browder's friend and lawyer, Sergei Magnitsky.

Mr. Browder, I commend you for writing the book and doing all the work you've done.

• (1600)

Mr. William Browder: Thank you.

Mr. Marty Morantz: First, I just want to get your view or opinion on the current Canadian government's record on the use of the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, or the Magnitsky act. What do you think of the track record of the Canadian government to date?

Mr. William Browder: The Canadian Magnitsky act was passed in November 2017 and I thought it would be a huge uphill struggle to get people actually on the list, but about 10 days after it was passed, the Canadian government sanctioned the people who killed Sergei Magnitsky, the people involved in the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, some Venezuelan bad guys, and some of the officials from Myanmar who were involved in the Rohingya genocide. I thought this was a really good sign and Canada was off to world leadership in this sphere.

There was one more round of sanctions, and then from 2018 until now, the Canadian Magnitsky act has not been used. I look at this and I'm quite frustrated and disturbed by it, because it's inconsistent with how I viewed Canada when I was going through the advocacy process. It's unhelpful in the world if we're in a situation in which sanctions should be done multilaterally; when the United States, the U.K. and other countries do that, Canada should join.

There are a number of instances when other countries have sanctioned very despicable people doing terrible things and Canada doesn't join its allies. I think it should, and I think this needs to be addressed going forward.

Mr. Marty Morantz: I know you've described Magnitsky sanctions as, I'm just paraphrasing, an Exocet missile directed right at the heart of the Russian oligarchs and Mr. Putin. They're very targeted and specific sanctions, which is why I'm so confounded. We've had Global Affairs officials before this committee, and they seem reticent to commit to using this legislation but rather to prefer to fall back on the more general legislation with respect to broad, state-based sanctions.

I wonder if you have any sense of why they might be leaning in that direction as opposed to using your very effective idea.

Mr. William Browder: I can't get inside the heads of the officials and inside the Canadian global affairs department, but what I can say is that there are a lot of people in the world on the bad side of the ledger who don't like Magnitsky sanctions. It's a real black mark for somebody to be put on a Magnitsky list. Perhaps it's an easier, less controversial sanction to use, but I think that question is probably best addressed to the people who have been reticent about using it, to understand what their thinking is.

Mr. Marty Morantz: That's fair enough.

There have also been discussions in the media about the use of what's called the economic nuclear option: cutting Russia off from the SWIFT system, the global economic payment system. I want to get your opinion on that as a potential sanction as well.

Mr. William Browder: The way I look at it, that is truly the nuclear option. When that was used against Iran, it basically pushed Iran back to the Stone Age from an economic perspective. The question we have to ask ourselves is whether we should use such a blunt instrument as a first choice or whether it should be the last possible choice, because it affects everybody in Russia, many of whom are just as much victims of Vladimir Putin as Ukraine is and as we are.

Furthermore, there are all sorts of economic repercussions that will happen in the west. If we don't allow Russia to use the bank payment system, how does Germany pay for its gas?

If we have another tool that avoids all this collateral damage—it goes straight to the heart of the decision-making system; it avoids hitting Russians and it avoids hitting ourselves—that should be used, and it should be used aggressively first.

• (1605)

Mr. Marty Morantz: Thank you, Mr. Browder.

To Mr. Kolga, Ukraine has requested lethal defensive weapons from the Trudeau government. Many of our democratic allies, including the U.S. and the U.K., have granted this request and supplied these weapons.

Why do you think there is this reticence within the Canadian government to provide the lethal aid that Ukraine needs to fend off Russian aggression?

Mr. Marcus Kolga: I believe you'd have to ask the Canadian government why it has decided against sending lethal weapons to Ukraine.

As you mentioned, the United States and the U.K. have. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, which are very close to the border and on the front line with Russia, have decided to send lethal weapons.

It would be good if Canada coordinated with them and did the same.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Morantz.

Ms. Bendayan, you have six minutes.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): I would also like to thank the witnesses.

[*English*]

As I was saying, Mr. Browder, as my colleague does, I have deep respect for your work. I have a number of questions for all of the witnesses. To the extent that you can make your responses brief, I would appreciate it.

Mr. Browder, how many countries have imposed Magnitsky sanctions since Russia increased its troops at the border of Ukraine?

Mr. William Browder: At the moment, Magnitsky sanctions have not been used for this particular issue since Russia has put its troops at the border.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Do you believe that Canada should go out on its own? I understand that the U.K. and the U.S. have indicated that they may one day look to this.

By the way, our foreign affairs minister, Minister Joly, has said that Russia will face severe sanctions if it makes further moves against Ukraine.

Would sanctions have the same bite and the same deterrent effect should Canada impose them on its own at this point?

Mr. William Browder: My recommendation is that Canada join its allies, the United States and the U.K., in proposing sanctions against Russian oligarchs. I've heard this terminology "heavy sanctions" coming from the Canadian foreign minister, which sounds good as a headline, but I think she should add the words "and specifically, we're going to look at sanctioning oligarchs close to Putin." Those are the words that were said by the British foreign secretary and by President Biden.

I think it would have a very strong impact if Putin saw that all the allies were working together and there was no division in the sanctions or the language of the sanctions.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Why haven't the U.K. and the U.S. done so already?

Mr. William Browder: I believe at the moment that they're looking at the threat of sanctions as a deterrent, although, as I said in my opening remarks, I think there should be some small taste of the sanctions, because at the moment Putin doesn't believe that any of us are serious about this. Until he sees that there is some seriousness, his calculation is that this will be like every other thing he's done, for which there have been sanctions but none that affect him personally.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I will address my next question to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. Good afternoon.

I'm looking at a photo published on February 2. It is a photo of Ukrainian MPs holding up flags of different countries in their parliament. I see the Canadian flag front and centre.

Can you give us a bit of background regarding this photo? I understand it represents the countries that have helped Ukraine the most.

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: I've seen the photo published as well. I believe there was a moment in the Ukrainian parliament when some—I don't know exactly which—deputies organized that photo op. I believe they were making reference to the Operation Unifier assistance that had been announced, as well as to other aid from other countries represented there.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: My understanding from our defence minister, Minister Anand, is that Canada currently has 260 troops on the ground in Ukraine conducting training missions under Unifier, which you just referred to.

Is there any country that has more troops on the ground at the moment?

• (1610)

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: I don't have an operational analysis of the American or British operations, but I know that Canada has traditionally been one of the largest contingents there. Our main concern is that, as good as Operation Unifier is, for their own safety, those troops will be evacuated as soon as an invasion begins, and I think that's the proper thing to do.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I believe the U.K. has just over 100 troops and the United States about 150. Do those numbers sound correct to you?

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: I don't have any numbers on the other country missions, so I'm sure they're correct.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I'll turn to Mr. Kolga. I found it very interesting what you had to say about cognitive warfare and the amount of disinformation coming out of Russia, I wonder if you could enlighten us and Canadians as to how Russian disinformation is entering Canada at the moment, through which platforms or mechanisms.

Mr. Marcus Kolga: There are several different ways that Russian disinformation enters into Canada's information space. One of the primary methods is through RT, which is a Russian state-owned news channel that's been broadcasting since 2005. It broadcasts what you could call news, but the vast majority of it is in fact Russian state propaganda aimed at advancing its interests. There are other state media channels that are pushing this same sort of information into Canada.

There's also a system of proxy websites, fake news websites, websites that promote conspiracy theories and such, many of which have been identified in reports that I've produced at DisinfoWatch. The State Department has also produced them. One of them is the platform called Global Research, which was identified by the State Department last year.

All of these platforms have been active over the past two years, promoting COVID conspiracy theories, vaccine hesitancy and such, and they have sometimes been picked up by mainstream media and extremist media in their efforts to push them to Canadians. It's primarily Russian state media that promotes these narratives.

The Chair: Mr. Kolga, thank you very much. We'll have to leave it there in the interest of time.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much, Ms. Bendayan.

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for being with us today.

I will follow on from Ms. Bendayan's question.

Mr. Kolga, I must say that I agree that Russia is conducting operations to spread disinformation around the world, especially in the West. I believe this to be undeniable. Germany has actually banned the channel you mentioned a few moments ago.

But I must admit I was surprised, to say the least, to hear you allege that Russia is behind the occupation of downtown Ottawa. The last time I heard such a dramatic statement was when the committee was pranked by someone pretending to be Leonid Volkov, Alexei Navalny's chief of staff and campaign manager. Mr. Volkov made a list of people on whom we should impose sanctions under the Magnitsky Law. Mr. Volkov's impersonator said that the Kremlin was funding the separatist movement in Quebec. So, I was just as surprised when I heard you say that Russia is behind the occupation of downtown Ottawa.

On what do you base that statement? It's unexpected, to say the least.

• (1615)

[*English*]

Mr. Marcus Kolga: If you'll allow me to clarify, I don't believe Russian state media is behind the protests, but I do believe the Russian state media, and possibly other foreign media, are exploiting the situation. What Russian state media and the Kremlin try to do is identify very divisive issues and exploit them in order to further divide western societies.

We've observed over the past week that RT—Russia Today—has been reporting positively on the protests, and we've seen other proxy platforms doing the exact same, which legitimizes them and could perhaps help fuel them along. However, it would be incorrect to say that Russian state media is behind the protests. They just exploit them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you for that clarification. I believe it's an important one.

I would now like to ask Mr. Michalchyshyn, the representative of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, a question.

Mr. Michalchyshyn, in your opening remarks, you said that you believe that Russia will invade Ukraine again at any time. However, Ukraine's foreign affairs minister, Mr. Kuleba, asked the international community not to engage in any alarmist rhetoric regarding an imminent invasion, adding that this would be detrimental to Ukraine's interests and play right into Russia's hands. Ukraine's president also said that there was no reason to believe that preparations for a large scale attack are under way.

The Ukrainian leadership itself is asking us to tone down the rhetoric, so why are we entertaining the idea? It seems to be based on some factual information, but it also seems to come out of nowhere, given that Russian troops have been massed at the Ukrainian border for several months now.

Why give credence to the theory of a new, imminent invasion of Ukraine by Russia?

[*English*]

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: I base that assessment on the public intelligence data the American government is making known in terms of the total number, which I believe might even be 140,000 Russian troops around Ukraine in Belarus, Russia and occupied Crimea.

We have to understand that the best indicator of future behaviour is past behaviour. In the case of Vladimir Putin, he has said on many occasions that he had no plans to invade Ukraine; he had no plans to invade Crimea; he had no plans to invade Georgia. It would be foolish for us in Canada, in the west and among our NATO allies to assume Putin has 140,000 troops roaming around the borders of Ukraine with no mal-intent.

I would respectfully say that we should be concerned about the numbers. The rhetoric of the Ukrainian government, I think, is meant to calm the fears and economic panic of its citizens.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Of course.

That said, if Ukraine is asking its allies to tone down the rhetoric, why shouldn't Canada do so?

[English]

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: I don't know what calmer language can be used to describe a potential invasion, other than to keep repeating the facts. The Ukrainian government is facing economic pressures, and there are significant preparations in Ukraine in terms of civilian and defence potential scenarios, as well as with the UN on humanitarian and refugee scenarios.

It is only responsible to forecast the possible invasion scenarios and prepare for them. It would be irresponsible to pretend that the threat is minimized. We could be caught off guard, as we have many other times, by Putin.

• (1620)

The Chair: Thank you so much. We'll have to leave it there.

[Translation]

Thank you very much, Mr. Bergeron.

[English]

The final six-minute allocation goes to Ms. McPherson. Please go ahead.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): I would like to thank all of the witnesses who have joined us today. I've learned a great deal. I've learned from all of you before today. Thank you for sharing your expertise with us all. It's very important and a very pressing issue.

I wanted to follow up on some of the questions my colleague from the Bloc has asked about the disinformation the Russian media is using to increase the conflict that's happening in Ottawa and in other areas around Canada with the convoys right now.

I would like to ask this question of Mr. Kolga. This week we saw an MPP from the Ontario legislature, formerly a Conservative, in an interview with Russia Today about the occupation of Ottawa, spreading some very disturbing messages. He said that Russian news provides a platform for objective journalism, whereas Canadian mainstream media creates fabrications. This is an Ontario MPP who is saying that Russian news is objective and Canadian mainstream media is a fabrication.

As parliamentarians, what do we do about this spread of propaganda and misinformation?

Mr. Marcus Kolga: I was also surprised to see that this Ontario MPP appeared on Russia Today. I think it's the first instance of an elected Canadian official appearing on Russian state media.

The fact that the same MPP tweeted that Russian state media was more trustworthy than Canadian media was also quite surprising and disappointing. First of all, tweeting that sort of a comment exposes his followers directly to Russian cognitive warfare. It sends them down a rabbit hole where facts no longer matter. I think those followers are probably having challenges with some of that already, and that tweet doesn't help in that regard.

I've been warning about this problem, quite frankly, since before 2014. We saw the types of narratives we're seeing right now connected with the protests emerging two years ago, when the pandemic began. We were warned by the European External Action Service that Russia would be exploiting COVID and would be using it to divide and polarize us. We've been seeing this all along, and now we're seeing the results of that to a certain degree.

Much of that is organic. There are genuine frustrations in society and these are the types of frustrations and emotions that the Russian government exploits in order to further divide us. That is the primary objective of Russian state media. It is to divide, polarize and undermine democracy.

We can put a stop to this. This means, as I mentioned earlier, setting up a task force to address this and placing sanctions on Russian state media, so that they're not allowed to use our airwaves to broadcast their information. Right now RT and Russian-language state media is available on Canadian cable systems, as is Chinese state media.

We should be looking at all of these, cutting them off and limiting their opportunity to affect Canadian political debate.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I have so many questions for all three of you, but I want to ask some questions of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress.

First of all, I want to just express that I'm so sorry about what happened with the bakery in Canada. I'm so sorry for all the examples we've seen of hate shown towards the Ukrainian community. As somebody who lives in Edmonton, which has a very large Ukrainian population, I will always stand with the Ukrainian Canadian population. You have my deep sympathy for what you and people in Ukraine are going through.

You're talking very much about doing actions right now, before Russia has further invaded Ukraine. You've given us some rationale for why that is the case.

What is the risk there, though? What is the risk of undermining our de-escalation and our diplomacy efforts if we are seen to be ramping up and arming Ukraine? Would you mind sharing a little information on that?

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: Thank you for your sentiments. I know you had a chance to speak with Mr. Wrzesnewskij, and I know that's very much appreciated.

We're seeing a situation where Putin is engaging in bad-faith diplomacy. He's making outrageous demands about what he wants. He wants to rewrite the borders of Europe to his liking. This is not the kind of person with whom you can engage in real negotiations. The negotiations he wants, frankly, would involve Ukrainian sovereignty and independence being negated. It's on his path back to the U.S.S.R. road map.

I don't want to make light of any Canadian military contributions, but I think the U.S. and the U.K. have the most significant militaries in NATO, along with France and Germany. Certainly a Canadian contribution is meaningful, but it needs to be put in perspective. For two weeks now, those other powers have been sending defensive missiles and things. We're very much urging Canada to join our allies in this effort.

I don't think Canadian decisions would put us at more significant risk than we are already.

• (1625)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Again, you're looking for those sanctions to be implemented now, not later. You're looking to not wait until further invasion by Russia, but to have that happen now.

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: As Mr. Browder said, Putin doesn't take these threats of sanctions very seriously. Giving him a show of what this impact would be is significant and different.

We've seen, frankly, that he laughs at the sanctions that are placed on him and his officials in other situations. They haven't made a significant impact in the past.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McPherson.

Members, we will now go into our second round of questions, starting with two rounds of five minutes each. Please keep in mind that we will likely not get through the entire second round, as we have a second panel that is waiting to provide testimony.

We'll start with Mr. Chong, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: A point of order, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: One second, Mr. Chong.

[Translation]

You have the floor, Mr. Bergeron.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I'm trying to understand what you're saying. You're telling us that the government and opposition will each have two rounds of five minutes, but that there won't be the two minutes—

The Chair: I'm hoping to be able to finish with the first four presenters.

Then we will proceed with the second panel of witnesses.

[English]

Mr. Chong, go ahead, sir. The floor is yours for five minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): I'd like to focus on Russia's disinformation warfare. Currently RT, formerly known as Russia Today, the state-controlled broadcaster, is

licensed by the CRTC to broadcast in Canada in both English and French.

Mr. Kolga, do you think they should have their licences revoked or amended by the CRTC?

Mr. Marcus Kolga: The Ukrainian Canadian community has collected significant evidence of hate-based messaging and disinformation that's been broadcast by RT. I think that information has been sent to the CRTC. I'm not sure whether the CRTC is actually considering revoking that licence. RT are in a particularly unique situation in that they are paying Canada's satellite and cable companies to carry their channel. They would like nothing more than for cable to freely broadcast their channel to all Canadians.

I would suggest that perhaps the best way of approaching it right now is to place sanctions on RT for broadcasting disinformation and attacking our democracy, because I think the process of having the CRTC remove the licence would be long and perhaps onerous. Sanctions would probably be the quickest—

Hon. Michael Chong: The federal cabinet could issue a directive to the CRTC.

You know, there are parallels, in my view, between the two authoritarian governments, the two largest authoritarian governments in the world, Russia and China. There are parallels between their two state broadcasters, RT and CGTN. CGTN, the Chinese state broadcaster, has also been granted a licence to broadcast here in Canada by the CRTC. There's evidence that they are spreading Beijing's propaganda, and there's evidence that they are committing violations of international law by airing forced confessions, which is against international human rights law.

I'll also add this. In 2017, when a media inquiry went to the CRTC about RT, the CRTC indicated that it had not and was not reviewing RT's presence in Canada, despite the fact that at that time, U.S. intelligence agencies had identified RT as a propaganda tool of the Russian government, and despite the fact that the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, said that RT France was spreading disinformation.

Subsequent to this, the U.S. intelligence community concluded, in the spring of 2020, that Russia had interfered in the 2016 U.S. presidential election through various means, particularly through RT, and also concluded that Russia had interfered in Canadian democracy by targeting Canadian elected officials, in particular the current Deputy Prime Minister, Chrystia Freeland.

Inexplicably—to me—the cabinet allowed the CRTC, in August of 2020, to approve the broadcast of RT France over Canadian airwaves, in its decision 2020-281. Perhaps you could comment on this inexplicable action on the part of the government and the CRTC to allow RT France to be licensed in August of 2020.

• (1630)

Mr. Marcus Kolga: Thank you for enlightening me on that fact. I did not know that this had happened. Quite frankly, I'm shocked. We see that just over the past two weeks, Germany has banned RT DE from German airwaves. They've also removed RT, the German service, from YouTube and banned it from YouTube. The fact that RT France and the French service is now being broadcast in Canada is quite surprising. As I mentioned earlier, that whether it's the government that removes the licence for these broadcasters or whether sanctions are imposed to ensure that they're not able to profit from their broadcasting here in Canada, whether it's on the Internet or otherwise, we need to do something about this broadcaster and others like it—such as, as you mentioned, CGTN and GCTV—foreign state broadcasters that seek to promote disinformation and propaganda on Canadian airwaves. We need to put a stop to it.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Kolga, thanks very much and thank you, Mr. Chong.

We will now go to Mr. Oliphant for five minutes please.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): I begin again by thanking our witnesses for your engagement with us today. All of you are helpful to us. I want to particularly thank the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. You've been persistent, consistent, thoughtful and engaged with the government from the beginning of this crisis. I recognize that this is an extremely difficult time for both your organization and your members, and I want to thank you for continuing to advise the government and being available when we've needed to talk to you.

I'm going to start with a couple of statements and then a couple of questions. Obviously no one in this room is untouched by this, because of the significant Ukrainian diaspora in Canada. We all have friends. This is personal for many of us, and that is a motivating factor. However, the reason this is on the top of the agenda for the Canadian government is not only that; it's also because a threat to Ukraine is a threat to the western world and a threat to Canada. We will continue to see this as a threat to the international rules-based order and a threat to sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Ukraine. No foreign policy or defence issue is more important to Canada at the present time.

It's been a difficult time. I talked to Borys Wrzesnewskyj as well after Future Bakery was vandalized. That was a personal moment for many of us as friends of Borys, but it was more than that. It was an expression of what I believe will probably be determined to be hate, and also probably an expression of disinformation or misinformation that needs to be adjusted.

We have that from members of Parliament as well, though. I will not dignify the remarks of NDP MP Leah Gazan by reiterating them in this room, but I think as Canadians and as parliamentarians, we were all deeply offended.

I want to go to Mr. Kolga about that, because one of my Ukrainian Canadian friends said that that statement was founded in Russian disinformation and could be promoted or propelled into disinformation about the way in which Canada has engaged in terms of that \$120-million sovereign loan, as well as other engagements

such as Unifier and the other many things we are doing to support the situation.

Could I ask Mr. Kolga to dig in a bit on the way Russia could have promoted such disinformation and could take use of it in the future.

• (1635)

Mr. Marcus Kolga: As a child of Estonian refugees who fled the Soviet occupation in September of 1944, I can tell you that my parents, who were infants at the time, would have been considered by the Soviet Union and by its propaganda machine as being—similar to the tweet you're referring to—fascists or neo-Nazis simply for escaping Russian occupation and repression.

That line of propaganda was used throughout the Cold War to smear anyone who was critical of the Soviet Union and the occupation and repression of the republics occupied by the Soviet Union. That narrative has been resuscitated, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, by the Putin regime to label anyone who is critical of his regime.

The problem with that narrative, as you might expect, is that it marginalizes those who are targeted by it. With regard to the Ukrainian community, the entire community is smeared with this paintbrush and it's intended to silence them and stigmatize them so that when the Ukrainian community speaks up, the hope is that these labels will stick to its people and that the Canadian government will not pay attention to this community and its voice. That is the core of the problem.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I'm sorry for interrupting, but is it possible, then, that Russia would use that to show division in the Canadian parliament?

I don't think there's anything we're more united on—perhaps some outliers—than our concern about this issue. Can Russia use that sort of statement to show some sort of lack of consistency?

Mr. Marcus Kolga: Clearly they have. I'm not sure about the intentions of the member of Parliament in repeating that Russian disinformation in her tweet, but the fact that a member of Parliament has tweeted that disinformation demonstrates that the Russian disinformation and propaganda is effective and is connecting with parliamentarians.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: That's a problem.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Kolga and Mr. Oliphant.

Two brief final interventions will take us to a full hour with this panel, and, as I said, we have a second panel waiting to give testimony.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bergeron, the floor is yours for two and a half minutes. Ms. McPherson will then have the same amount of time.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I will be very quick, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Browder, according to an article in *Le Monde*, Russia's financial sector is healthy, robust and very profitable. The article also says that the upturn in oil prices has enabled Russia to build up massive foreign reserves of nearly \$630 billion. This has led some to wonder whether it may be worthwhile to possibly remove Russia from the SWIFT system.

What do you think about the view that Russia has prepared itself for that?

[English]

Mr. William Browder: That's a good question.

There's probably no stronger moment for Vladimir Putin than right now, because of the figures you just cited but also because of the timing. We're in the middle of the winter, and Russia exports gas to Europe. In the case of Germany, 40% of the gas comes from Russia, and in the case of Italy and Austria, it's 100% of their gas. This is the moment when they have maximum possible leverage, and what that means is that the Germans, Italians, Austrians and others are going to do everything possible to break ranks with the Western alliance and not be too tough on Russia.

As far as the SWIFT sanctions go, you're correct that Russia has these enormous reserves, but that doesn't really matter so much if you're in a situation where you're basically cut off from the rest of the world financially. Your reserves will run down very quickly, and life will get bad in very short order.

Nobody should underestimate the pain of SWIFT sanctions, but nobody should underestimate all the collateral damage that it will do either.

• (1640)

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Since we don't have much time left, Mr. Browder, I do not believe it's fair to ask you another question.

So, gentlemen, thank you very much for your insightful testimony.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Bergeron.

[English]

We have Madam McPherson for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Since the tweets by one of the NDP members have come up, I want to make it very clear that her tweet in no way reflected the position of the New Democratic Party. I've spoken to our leader, Jagmeet Singh, many times, and our support for the Ukrainian people and Ukrainian Canadians is unwavering. I believe that Ms. Gazan has retracted that statement. Certainly it is something that I deeply regret, and I can reiterate our support for the Ukrainian Canadian people.

I know I don't have very much time, but I have a last question, for Mr. Browder. Could you talk a bit about the other countries that have been using Magnitsky sanctions in a more appropriate way? They have been using them more frequently. What would you like to see Canada do, and what actions would you like to see this committee move forward on? I know that's a lot to ask in a short time, so good luck.

Mr. William Browder: As I mentioned, Canada used the Magnitsky act very briefly in 2017-2018. The United States has used the Magnitsky act more than 500 times, against all sorts of terrible villains all around the world. Britain has used the Magnitsky act more than the Canadians, even though it's been in effect only since 2020.

I'll make a pitch to this committee, which is that it raises a very important question. We have an excellent tool, and this Magnitsky act can be used not just in this situation with Russian and Ukraine, but with China. It can be used with Iran; it can be used with Myanmar and all sorts of different places, and there are so many victims screaming for justice that this can be used.

If the government hasn't been using it, it raises the very relevant question of why. What can we do to make sure this tool gets used in the future?

To the extent that people in this committee are interested, I think a hearing should be held on the Magnitsky act, to bring in witnesses to discuss the best practices in other countries, how victims have used the Magnitsky act in different countries, and what recommendations could be made to make it a tool that gets implemented and used more properly going forward.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McPherson—

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I do not want to mislead Canadians and I believe this is very important. I raised the issue of Ms. Leah Gazan's tweet in the House of Commons, and that question was responded to by the NDP leader, Jagmeet Singh.

That tweet is still very much live. It has not been retracted, nor has there been an apology.

Ms. Heather McPherson: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, the only reason the tweet is still up is that the member added the retraction to the tweet. This is playing politics. Ms. Bendayan knows that very clearly.

The Chair: Colleagues, we're getting into debate here. As I said, we are waiting for another panel, but thank you both for those points.

On our collective behalf, I'd like to thank our three witnesses for their time this afternoon and for their insights. We will give them an opportunity to disconnect. Please keep safe and thank you again for joining us today.

Madam Clerk, we will briefly sound check the second panel and resume shortly.

We'll be suspending for about two to five minutes, maximum.

• (1645)

(Pause)

• (1645)

The Chair: I'd like to welcome our next panel of witnesses.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, I'm so sorry to interrupt. I know this is very important, but I wonder if it would be possible for me to move a motion before the panel begins, so I don't have to interrupt them towards the end of the meeting?

The Chair: Ms. McPherson, we have very little time as it is. This is a compressed panel. We've agreed to take the panel on this afternoon and listen to their testimony.

Is it a point of order you're raising?

Ms. Heather McPherson: It is the motion that I've brought forward that I would like to read into the record, so I can ask for unanimous consent on it.

It will take only a moment to read it into the record, if that's okay.

The Chair: From our exchange earlier with the clerk, I believe the motion is already formally moved. Therefore, procedurally, reading it into the record would not have an additional effect.

You're welcome to use your allocated time to read the motion into the record, if that's procedurally correct, but I believe you could speak to it at the next meeting, because it's already been submitted.

I'd like to ask the clerk to verify. I'm mindful of the clock, Ms. McPherson. We have invited this panel and we want to move forward.

Madam Clerk, what's the procedural status of Ms. McPherson's motion, if it's the same motion we're even talking about? I want to make sure it is. It may be a new motion, in which case—

Ms. Heather McPherson: It's the motion to invite the Ambassador of the United States to come to the committee.

The Chair: Madam Clerk, can we circle back and get the procedural effect of reading that into the record? Does that add anything at this point?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Erica Pereira): Notice has been given to members of Parliament. At this point, it has not been read into the record. All that would do is make the motion available to be seen publicly, but it would not be able to be debated.

The Chair: Ms. McPherson is procedurally free to do so in her allocated time, I would assume.

I'm getting a nod.

Ms. McPherson, I would invite you to use your allocated speaking time if you wish to put that statement on the record.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Briefly, to go back to the process, I will let witnesses know that simultaneous interpretation is available at the bottom of your screen by clicking the globe icon. You have the floor feed, French or English audio.

Each of you will have five minutes to make opening statements. I'll be very strict on time, especially given that we are under compressed time frames this afternoon.

What I will do once you are approaching 30 seconds in your opening remarks is hold up this yellow card as a cue. That will also serve as a guide in subsequent questions and answers with members of the committee. Keep an eye out. It's a very manual way, but it seems to work at some level. Be conscious of the fact that time is allocated very tightly.

I would like to introduce our witnesses and then turn it over to our first speaker. We have Anessa Kimball, who is an associate professor of political science and director at the Centre for International Security, École supérieure d'études internationales, Université Laval. We have Fen Osler Hampson, chancellor's professor at Carleton University and president of the World Refugee & Migration Council. We have Dr. Olga Oliker, program director, Europe and Central Asia, of the International Crisis Group.

Professor Kimball, I will give you the floor for your opening remarks, for five minutes. Please go ahead.

Anessa Kimball (Associate Professor of Political Science, Directorate, Centre for International Security, École supérieure d'études internationales, Université Laval, As an Individual): Thank you for the privilege to share reflections on the situation at the Russia-Ukraine border. These remarks examine the role of international organizations, the nature of stakeholder commitments and whether institutions can return regional peace and stability. Then I'll close with some recommendations.

On international organizations, it's fair to say that Russia with China will prevent action from the United Nations Security Council, and there would be a probable veto of the use of any sort of peacekeeping forces on the border area. The European Union right now appears to be working through Macron as its legitimate speaker, but it is struggling to maintain a common position. You've just heard testimony about the pipeline politics, more or less. This essentially divides the U.S. from Germany and France, and is also creating internal frictions.

When it comes to NATO, Russia does not want it to be formally involved in what it sees classically as an internal historical issue. Of course, though the U.S. would prefer NATO's involvement for strategic reasons, Russia has called for a shift to the OSCE.

In terms of stakeholder commitments, there are both risks and externalities but also opportunities. When it comes to sunk costs, Canada has its training mission in the Ukraine, and Royal Canadian Air Force personnel based in Romania. Allied troops are in the east, serving as a trip wire and a risk for accidents, hybrid wars, including cyber-attacks, information wars and so on.

The institution and other actors, such as NATO, have tied hands by giving an open-door policy to Ukraine. Right now we have a migration and human rights crisis. While we're trying to prevent porous borders, territorial integrity is symbolically and functionally key, given multiple risks working at the same time.

At the same time, NATO has committed to not repositioning assets of mobile land-based strategic defence. Patriot and THADD systems are absent, despite Russia's placing Iskander missiles in the area. Their use by Russia would be a public gamble to up the ante and escalate. Russia prefers modifications without violence. For it, the threat of future strategic uncertainty being perceived today as prohibitively costly can force actors to negotiate.

We talked a bit about targeted sanctions. I see these mostly as a short-term punishment that Russia can mitigate by adjusting market size or price rather easily. Again, spring is arriving in Europe in the next few months, so its energy leverage will be reduced.

What we have seen is that Russia has hardened the Ukrainian border, with parts of at least 11 of its 13 armies deployed. Shifting so many forces far to the west means it is comfortable with this much exposure to China in the east.

How is this possible? Russia and China have a functional non-aggression act, which is permitting them to split western partner attention between securing the eastern border of NATO, which Canada, the U.S. and partners have highly invested in both defensively, economically and politically, and attempting to deter Chinese irregular territorial expansion in Southeast Asia.

Naval and air dominance are at risk in Southeast Asia. What we see now are large joint military and naval operations between the Chinese and Russians, indicating growing functioning defence and security co-operation. Together, these countries are hedging against the U.S. and the democratic order. They have resolved multiple territorial disputes over the last 20 years and deepened technical co-operation, creating what they themselves have called a "strategic alliance partnership", risking bilateral strategic vulnerability to each other to counter the U.S. and the west.

Russia benefits from Chinese economic investments and intellectual and human capital, while both advance their defence and security industrial sectors jointly. Importantly, they disagreed on aspects of the belt and road initiative, but it was a key security and economic integrator for both countries that resulted in regional and global defence security implications, and it was accomplished using informal means of co-operation.

Right now, they have a short-term resolution to their joint commitment problem. The commitment is to not fight each other and to refrain from being involved in each other's respective regional issues while focusing on the independent but linked economic development and national security agendas. Russia sees China as helping prevent its decline by not meddling in Europe, while China appreciates Russia's tacit non-intervention in the Far East, both benefiting from a shared blindness to human rights abuses of ethnic and religious minorities.

What could the OSCE do? It is the only institution right now that Russia is a member of. It can do conflict prevention, border crisis management, post-conflict rehab, as well as confidence and security building, but it's more of an exchange. It doesn't really have any meat.

• (1650)

If we accept that Russia is an entrenched revisionist power facing a comparative decline and Ukraine is its chess piece on the board, the Minsk agreements are insufficient. Russia is excluded entirely from Minsk II.

The structure and process could be rebooted, but that requires re-demarcation of non-militarized zones. Parties must commit to stabilizing Ukraine's borders. While they offer direction, they're not implementable. They require clarifications on obligations, as well as both increased commitments to monitoring by third parties and implementation by all parties.

Canada could leverage bilateral agreements and informal agreements with Ukraine and regional partners, and could collaborate on regional security, international stability, civil-military relations, democratic stability, human rights monitoring, and increasing education in exchanges like Global Affairs' own emerging leaders in the Americas program and other military training programs.

Also, Poland and Turkey are increasingly key in the NATO/Russia-European relationship in the near to mid term, and Canada should care about that.

In closing, the decision of the U.S. to send troops to Denmark will not reduce Russia's perception of encirclement in the region. The Danes historically refuse to host any NATO assets, recalling that among the original partners, Copenhagen was closest to Moscow. This is a shift from their seven-decades-old position and a signal of contemporary insecurities. I can discuss the Americas in questions.

Thank you for your time, honourable members

• (1655)

The Chair: Professor Kimball, thank you very much for your opening remarks.

I will now turn the floor over to Professor Hampson for five minutes.

Dr. Fen Osler Hampson (Chancellor's Professor, Carleton University, President, World Refugee & Migration Council, As an Individual): Thank you very much.

I'd like to pose four questions to your committee.

Is Canada doing enough to deter a Russian invasion of Ukraine? What do we do if deterrence fails? What additional measures should be taken to strengthen Ukraine's resilience to reduce the risks of state and societal collapse as the crisis evolves? Finally, what should Canada's role be in strengthening arms control and in terms of confidence-building measures to de-escalate the crisis and reduce the risks of military confrontation?

We're currently in the preattack phase. Is there more that Canada can do to help Ukraine? Some argue that we should provide small arms and anti-tank weapons, which are sitting in warehouses and were originally destined for Kurdish forces in Iraq. Maybe.

Cybersecurity assistance, in co-operation with Estonia and the European Union, is an option, but time is running out.

As noted by your previous panel, we should also be ready for cyber-attacks and social media disinformation campaigns that will be directed at us.

What should we be planning for now if deterrence fails and there is some form of Russian incursion? NATO allies on the front lines will be asking for a lot more direct military support and assistance, especially the Baltic states. Are we ready for that?

Europe, NATO and Canada should be ready to handle a major refugee crisis, which in the worst-case scenario could mean five million or more forcibly displaced persons.

How will NATO respond to Russian attacks against Ukraine's civilian populations, which could kill tens of thousands of people? In previous crises—Bosnia, Kosovo and Libya—NATO used its military assets to impose no-fly zones. That's not really an option here.

When it comes to economic sanctions, there are financial sanctions against Russian banks and financial institutions, high-tech export bans and comprehensive trade and investment sanctions, but I would draw your committee's attention to FARA, the frozen assets repurposing act legislation, which is currently before the Senate of Canada. It is a form of "Magnitsky plus". Don't just freeze, but seize Putin's and his henchmen's monies and foreign holdings, and repurpose them to help his victims. Maybe that's an option that should be considered if he attacks Ukraine.

Energy prices have skyrocketed. A Russian invasion of Ukraine will almost certainly lead to a further spike in prices, not just because of the cancellation of the Nord Stream 2, but because major Russian gas exports to Europe currently transit through Ukraine.

Canadian consumers will be affected at a time when central Canada is also vulnerable to supply disruptions if Line 5 is shut down by the governor of the state of Michigan. It's a perfect storm scenario.

A Russian attack will be extremely damaging to Ukraine's economy. There's likely to be a run on the hryvnya and a balance of payments and fiscal crisis. Ukraine is also going to lose major sources of revenue from the transit fees it gets from transporting Russian gas to Europe. Its health care and social service systems could also be overwhelmed.

If they're not already doing so, the IMF, EU, World Bank and other international institutions will need to develop contingency plans to help Ukraine deal with a severe economic crisis. What's Canada going to contribute in this scenario, beyond what we're already doing? What contingency plans are in place for a major humanitarian emergency?

If Russia stands down, there's probably going to be a discussion about a new security architecture. There will have to be a major

commitment to new arms control and confidence-building measures.

Efforts to reinvigorate the NATO-Russia Council as a key forum for consultation and co-operation should be looked at. Canada played a key role in its origins and development.

Many arms control and confidence-building measures for Europe have gone into the paper shredder. Open Skies and the INF Treaty will need to be resuscitated, along with other confidence and security-building measures that would disallow military exercises near another country's borders.

Historically, as you all know, Canada has played a critical role in building Europe's arms control and confidence-building architecture. We will need to step up to the plate again.

• (1700)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Professor Hampson. Thank you for being spot on with respect to timing.

I'd now like to turn the floor over to you, Dr. Oliker, with special thanks from the committee. You're connecting from Brussels, and we know it's late evening your time. This is much appreciated.

Please go ahead with your opening remarks. You have five minutes.

Ms. Olga Oliker (Program Director, Europe and Central Asia, International Crisis Group): Thank you to the committee for having me, and thank you to the chair, vice-chairs and honourable members for being here.

As I think you heard quite clearly in the last session, escalated war is and remains very possible. There is a huge troop buildup and wide flexibility for Moscow in choosing what sort of operation it could pursue. This has been supplemented by substantial naval presence in the Black and Azov sea areas, though we have heard reports in the last hour that at least the missile exercise in the Sea of Azov has been cancelled. That does not change the fact, even without the missile exercise, that Russia pretty much has Ukraine surrounded.

If escalated war happens, Russia will win. They have more people and more weapons. They are more capable and have more ability to send more stuff in. No amount of lethal or non-lethal aid that Ukraine's friends can send is going to change that equation. There are weapons that can make it possible for Ukraine to inflict more damage. There are systems and tools that could help more Ukrainians survive. Those are the options, but they're not going to deliver victory. Once war begins, supply from abroad is going to become difficult if Russia continues to block access via water and flying becomes unsafe.

There are two ways to prevent war that could actually work and are pretty likely to work. One is to give the Russians what they want. The other is for NATO member states, including Canada and the United States, to pledge to fight for Ukraine. Neither of those is going to happen. With regard to the former, it's because what they want, with regard to Ukraine and with regard to European security more broadly, is not acceptable to NATO or to Ukraine. For the latter, it's because while the threat of a larger war with more participants and a real risk of escalation, including to nuclear use, could well deter Moscow, those risks are also so high that NATO member states don't want to take them.

We've had these last three months of diplomacy in an effort to find a formula that creates enough incentives for Moscow to back down without undermining western Ukrainian security or sovereignty. These aren't all carrots, of course. I think we've talked about this. You have this paired offer of talks about the fundamentals of European security, which Professor Hampson just talked about, with the threat of substantial sanctions and troop buildups in Europe, which have already begun. It's the right approach, but it might not work, in which case Ukraine will suffer first and most, but all of the rest of us, as Professor Hampson just said, will be suffering too.

I want to talk briefly about why Russia is doing this, despite the fact that they say they are not and that the buildup is western hype. The diplomacy, which is focused on European security, underlines the reality that the challenge in Ukraine is part of the broader European security challenge of incompatible views of security on the part of Russia on the one hand and western states on the other. For Russia, 30 years of NATO enlargement and engagement near its borders are an effort, and often a successful one, to limit Moscow's capabilities and influence, and to coerce it. Moscow has never seen NATO or the EU as independent actors. It views both as subsidiaries of the United States.

Ukraine has long been a red line for Moscow in this context. While the 2014 war was spurred at the start by EU association, not NATO enlargement—and indeed NATO enlargement to the Ukraine has not been and remains not in the cards in the foreseeable future—Russia has since grown even more concerned by Ukraine's growing ties with the alliance, which ironically, of course, were driven largely by the war.

Russia had hoped that President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, elected in 2019 on a peace platform, would implement the Minsk agreements—the ceasefire deals signed in 2014 and 2015 to end the worst of the fighting—the way Russia wants them implemented, such that it could cement its influence in Ukraine's east and give that east veto over foreign policy steps. That has not happened. Instead, Zelenskyy is pretty much in the same place as his predecessor was, with fighting at a simmer and negotiations at a standstill.

COVID has now led to an almost complete halt of human and commercial traffic between government-controlled territories and those that are not. Russia may well have been thinking that force, or its threat, could force Zelenskyy to back down, or that he could be forced from office and replaced by somebody more palatable, although the election of somebody friendly to Russia seems unlikely without a full occupation.

In principle, a real deal on European security, and indeed on Ukraine, is in everyone's interests. It's a good thing even without the current escalation. Limits on deployments, activities and exercises and perhaps, yes, even some affirmation of the reality that Ukraine is not joining NATO in the foreseeable future could very well make everybody better off. The efforts by NATO and Russia to deter one another over the last eight years have led to increasing rates of incidents as forces exercise and operate in close proximity.

A deal to end the war in Ukraine would save lives and livelihoods, but Russia may be waiting to see what it can get. It might get greedy, particularly if it believes that sanctions can be weathered, Ukraine won't put up much of a fight, and western buildups and sanctions will happen anyway. If it does agree to negotiate, it's vital that these negotiations continue, or more crises will recur.

• (1705)

If we instead have more war, we are going to see more of these buildups in activities. We're going to see increasing tension and more crises, with each one more likely to lead to the escalation we all fear. We should be prepared for this potential future as well.

The Chair: Dr. Olikier, thank you very much for your testimony.

The remaining time will allow us to go through four allocations of six-minute interventions by members.

The first goes to Mr. Aboultaif.

You have the floor for six minutes. Please go ahead.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Thanks to the panellists. I think we had three wonderful testimonies this afternoon.

The situation out there is obviously very complicated and one of probably the toughest.... It's a perfect storm on its own, where so many factors can play.

At the edge of it is security, whether it's energy or territorial security. It seems like this situation escalated so quickly at the establishment of the second line of Nord Stream, which is Nord Stream 2. For some reason it's just become an issue at all levels. Now the Russians want security and to protect borders. They don't want Ukraine to join NATO. Furthermore, they want to divide the western world and NATO by talking to the Americans and not talking to the French, or talking to the French alone.

With this grim situation we're facing, the question is on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. If that stops, it is not good for Russia, Germany or Ukraine.

I would love to see other statistics on that from Dr. Hampson or Dr. Oliker. Would you both be able to give us some feedback on that?

Ms. Olga Oliker: I don't have statistics at my fingertips. I could probably find some and provide them.

Here are a couple of things about Nord Stream 2. It doesn't exist yet, which means Russia is doing a fine job of supplying energy to Europe without it. It's part of Russia's plan for long-term energy supply to Europe. That's why it's important, but not starting it doesn't actually change anything. It preserves the status quo.

The other thing that's really important to remember is that when Nord Stream 2 was first thought up, the idea was that it was a way to avoid transit through Ukraine, so that German energy supplies would be protected from fights between Russia and Ukraine. The fact is, at this point most of Germany's energy from Russia does not transit through Ukraine. Over the time that Nord Stream 2 was in the works, lots of other routes have developed. For Germany, at least, that's not an issue. It's more of an issue for some other countries.

It's really become much more of a political issue than not. That isn't to say it's meaningless for Russia; it's quite important for Russia and Germany. There are sunk costs. People have put a lot of money into this pipeline. For Russia, it is a big part of their model for how to supply Europe, but it has also become, I would say, more politically important than it is economically important.

• (1710)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Thank you.

Dr. Hampson.

Dr. Fen Osler Hampson: Russia currently provides Germany with about 40% of its hydrocarbon energy sources—oil and gas. The Nord Stream pipeline was originally intended to provide something like 55 billion cubic metres of gas to Germany. If you're an energy expert, you'll know what that means. I wouldn't consider myself an energy expert, so I can't tell you what that means, but it sounds like an awful lot of gas.

The pipeline can always be turned on in the future. You can suspend exports and say you're not going to take them. That's always an option, if things change. That does give you, I think, important leverage vis-à-vis Putin's regime. It does mean that in the short term, he won't get paid for anything.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: President Biden and the American administration have been looking for other sources of energy to basically replace...if anything happened with the pipeline or the gas supply from Russia.

How much do you think this is going to change the strategy of Vladimir Putin? He seems to be playing all of his cards at the same time, without any indication of which one will come first. We're going to keep in mind for sure that the war is not to anybody's benefit, now or in the future.

Dr. Fen Osler Hampson: Right now the Biden administration is looking for LNG contracts in the Middle East, which is the nearest source of supply, but I can bet you that those countries are also coming under pressure from Russia not to enter into potential con-

tracts, so there's going to be a lot of pressure put on the Saudis and others not to play ball.

I think we can all agree that they will get some gas, but it's going to be a lot more expensive, and a lot more expensive for everybody.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Do you believe it's too late, or it's running a bit late, to try to find energy source replacement at this stage?

Dr. Fen Osler Hampson: No, I do not, but I don't think it's going to be part of the bargaining equation with Putin if he is planning to go in at the end of February.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Aboultaif.

The next slot goes to Mr. Ehsassi. Please go ahead for six minutes.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Allow me to start off by thanking all the witnesses for their incredibly helpful testimony.

I will start with Professor Kimball.

You alluded to the fact that there are fissures among Europeans and North Americans as to the best means to assist Ukraine. I think Canadians, by and large, fully appreciate how incredibly important it is that there be multilateral cohesion to stop a Russian invasion.

As you know, our Minister of Foreign Affairs has been to Ukraine and subsequently went to Europe to brief our counterparts, as has our Minister of National Defence. Do you think Canada is doing a good job liaising between the Europeans and the U.S. to make sure we're sticking together insofar as the defence of Ukraine is concerned?

Anessa Kimball: I would say that in general one of the issues is that it benefits Russia to try to engage as many different stakeholders as possible to try to divide what would be different preferences over outcomes. Of course, the fact that there is the internal division within the EU regarding the gas pipeline itself complicates the situation.

One other thing we would notice—at least for people who use formal models to study behaviour—is that Biden's rhetoric, for a Democrat who generally would be viewed as a pacifist, has been pretty firm on this issue. I think that signals quite a bit that at least in his mind....

This also harkens back a bit to the intergenerational divide. We have Biden and Putin, who are essentially the old guard from the Cold War, and then we have Canada and Macron coming at it, very much representing the next-generation viewpoint, which is not necessarily couched in a rigid, bipolar structure.

What we're seeing is a shared confusion about to what extent this is finishing up things—the Cold War—versus to what extent Europe, as an independent actor alone, needs to come in and do something here. The fact that the Europeans have not managed to create a solid, independent defence means that NATO has stepped in.

• (1715)

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Thank you.

Professor Hampson, since we are focused on Canada's role, do you think our government has been doing an adequate job of making sure that all the members of NATO and other countries that are critical of this effort are speaking to each other and coming up with a cohesive plan among themselves?

Dr. Fen Osler Hampson: Well, there's no question that in Brussels there is lots of consultation going on, and we're part of it. My concern right now is that The Normandy Group, led by France and its president, are conducting negotiations in an effort to revive some form, as we've heard, of the Minsk I and Minsk II agreements, which were negotiated under duress. They were ambiguous—sloppy, some would say—but it was a very tough negotiation.

I would hope that our Prime Minister is speaking to the French President and sending a strong message not to sell Ukraine out in those discussions, because I think Ukraine and its leadership are going to come under enormous pressure to go back to Minsk, and we've already heard how destabilizing that would be. It's not a pill that the leadership of Ukraine wants to swallow, so we shouldn't be giving away too much. The message should be, "Don't sell Ukraine out, Monsieur le Président."

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Professor Hampson, your testimony was truly chock full of information about various things we should be mindful of. You talked about the possibility of cyberwarfare directed by Russia. Are we prepared? Are we doing a good job on that particular front?

Dr. Fen Osler Hampson: Well, when you say "we", Ukraine is getting—

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: I'm talking about Canada, as Canadians.

Dr. Fen Osler Hampson: As you heard in the earlier panel, social media and other kinds of disinformation campaigns are already in full swing. They're directed at us, at dividing us as a country on this issue, and there are Russian fingers there. They've been doing that for a long time. My advice would be to speak to our folks in CSE and have them call them out and do so publicly.

The Chair: Mr. Ehsassi, thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

I will give Mr. Bergeron the floor once more for six minutes.

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank all our witnesses sincerely for their very detailed, relevant and interesting presentations. I would like to specifically commend Ms. Oliner, who was kind enough to give us her perspective from Europe, where it is a little later for her than for us.

Professor Kimball, I'd like to start with you. I must say that I was quite captivated by your opening remarks when you talked about the relationship between Russia and China. France's former prime minister, Dominique de Villepin, recently said that the Western powers' diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Games has given Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin free rein to advertise their co-operation on the world stage.

Would you say that China is paying close attention to how the West could react to a potential invasion of Ukraine in order to assess the possibility of potential action in Taiwan?

• (1720)

Anessa Kimball: Thank you for your question.

I will answer in English because I don't want to confuse the interpreters.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: No, please, answer in French. We so seldom have the opportunity to hear from French-speaking witnesses.

Anessa Kimball: All right. I'll answer in French; it's no problem for me.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Not at all, on the contrary—

Anessa Kimball: According to the information we have gathered on international and regional conflicts, we can see that China is increasingly shifting its attention to the world stage. Conversely, Russia seems to be more and more interested in Europe only. I will say that, if China sees a lack of concerted efforts among Western allies, it could certainly attempt bolder action in Hong Kong or Taiwan.

We must take into account that the USA's allies in the region, including Japan and South Korea, do not have the same commitment as the one in article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. However, European countries are more committed to one another, given the myriad of defence and security situations at play.

In comparison, China is in a part of the world where there are fewer global powers. For example, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations doesn't really have a strong defence identity. In Europe, NATO does, which makes all the difference. It also has the ability and the willingness to take action.

Even if other countries want to foster a defence identity, they lack the will. I have observed that no countries in Asia really want to stand out and coordinate a defence, or something better organized, in the face of China. What I'm saying is that it ends up being all about risk assessment. Those countries calculate the risks of each of their actions and weigh them against the necessity of maintaining their trade relationships.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you very much, Professor Kimball.

Canada has said time and time again that the alliance is united and that, when it comes to Ukraine, NATO allies form a strong, unified front.

However, as you are surely aware, France, Germany and other countries have a slightly different opinion when it comes to bringing Ukraine into NATO. When President Macron met with President Putin a few days ago, he said that the "Finlandization" of Ukraine was on the table.

Do you believe that this is truly a possible outcome, and, if so, is it an acceptable one for Ukraine?

Anessa Kimball: “Finlandization” is a kind of jargon or code word whose meaning even Finns might wonder about.

Essentially, the idea is to see whether neutrality as a foreign policy can guarantee homeland security, even when you live next to a country that poses a serious threat and a challenge.

Finland has very stable borders, whereas Ukraine does not. This somewhat changes the stakes.

The goal is to create stability not only with Russia, but also with Belarus, where the Russian presence has proven to be problematic. Defending natural borders is less of an issue.

In addition, Ukraine is located in a geostrategic region, between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, that is very important for trade. Finland does not have that trade corridor, so relations are easier to maintain.

Personally, I'm keeping a close eye on Moldova, which is a tiny, neutral country in the region. It's interesting to see how that country is staying out of trouble despite being in a region where tensions are high.

I believe that there are lessons to learn from other countries in the region, but I don't think that the “Finlandization” of Ukraine is an acceptable solution, least of all for Russia.

As I said, Russia believes that Ukraine is part of Russia and that it is an infant democracy where the last 30 years of independence are merely an obstacle or a test. Its claim to Crimea goes back 430 years. According to Russia, we are somewhat foolish. Russia perceives Ukraine as Russian, so it will be difficult to convince it otherwise.

• (1725)

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Kimball.

Thank you very much, Mr. Bergeron.

Ms. McPherson, you have the floor for six minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you to all of the witnesses. This has been extremely informative and very fascinating to me.

I apologize, but I just have to use a bit of my time before I get back to questions to say that given the urgency of the situation currently faced by Canada and the reports of significant amounts of American money being used right now going toward organizers whose stated purpose has been to create their own government and dissolve the current one, I'm asking for unanimous consent from my colleagues to move and debate at the end of this committee my motion to invite the U.S. ambassador before the committee to address concerns regarding foreign interference.

I want to get that out there and ask for that unanimous consent, if I could.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent, not to eat up too much of Madam McPherson's time, colleagues?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: No.

The Chair: We don't have consent.

It's back to you, Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

I will bring that forward at the next committee and we can debate it then.

What I'm thinking about as I listen to all this testimony—and I will start with Dr. Oliker—is that we've heard all about the potential outcomes and the potential discussions that are happening. In your opinion, is there a diplomatic outcome to this crisis that you can envision that would be acceptable to Ukraine, to Russia and to NATO countries?

Ms. Olga Oliker: Yes, absolutely. I think there is a diplomatic solution to this crisis that would leave us better off than we were before the Russian buildup began.

The situation in Europe has not been stable. The European security border and the treaties that govern it were out of date and had started falling apart. We have had buildups and dangerous incidents even without this most recent one.

Rebuilding a security order and having these negotiations is crucial. We've had a war in Ukraine for eight years. Ending that war and finding a way forward is also crucial.

A diplomatic solution is the right way forward and is necessary. Yes, it is possible if everybody is willing to make some compromises. The challenge is that, at least from what we've seen on paper, there isn't that much room for compromise.

The question for me, looking from the outside, is whether there are things we're not seeing that show more movement. For instance, the negotiators through the Normandy format have just walked out of the negotiating room after nine hours together in Berlin.

Before we get too excited, they spent eight hours together two weeks ago in Paris and came out affirming their support for the Minsk agreements and the need for a ceasefire. We'll see if there's anything there this time.

There is absolutely a way forward and a solution that is based on arms control. It is based on guarantees of Ukrainian sovereignty that might in the end look something like a form of neutrality, for all the many problems that has, one of which is that Ukraine was neutral in 2014 when the war began. It had non-bloc status in its constitution. As Professor Kimball said, Russia would like a vassal, not a neutral state.

Negotiations mean that everybody has to give. If everyone is willing to give, there is a way forward.

• (1730)

Ms. Heather McPherson: There is potential there.

I've been trying to get my head around this. I asked people in our previous panel about the idea of imposing sanctions, putting in defensive weapons and all the things.... Would that escalate instead of de-escalate the situation versus waiting too long, until a potential further incursion into Ukraine? How do we find that balance in making sure we still are giving as much room as we possibly can for diplomacy, for de-escalation and for a peaceful resolution?

I've said it in the House of Commons. The people who will suffer if there is war are the Ukrainian people. It is the women and children in Ukraine.

How do we find that balance, Dr. Oliker?

Ms. Olga Oliker: Defensive weapons are not going to escalate the situation, particularly if they are in fact things that help more Ukrainians survive. Why would that escalate the situation?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Wouldn't it be seen by Russia as being a provocation?

Ms. Olga Oliker: They'll make noise and they'll complain, but no, I don't think that makes the situation worse. Moreover, the Russians are still going to win the war, and they know it.

I think a challenge with the weapons provisions is that afterwards, if we do get a deal, we have a much more heavily armed Ukraine. We'll have to see what that means. Let's burn that bridge when we get there.

In terms of sanctions and buildups, sanctions work best as a deterrent instrument when you don't have to impose them. If you start imposing them, you're imposing them as a punishment instrument. That tends to work great at sending signals that you're unhappy, but as we've seen over the last eight years with Russia, it works less well in actually changing behaviour. There is very little reason to think that punishing them now with more incremental sanctions is going to change their behaviour.

The one thing that is different from that is sanctions that are actually meant to stop a particular thing that you don't want to happen. These are sanctions that physically change the equation, like anti-corruption measures in one's own country. Those can be useful because they have an effect.

The buildup is continuing. That's going on even now, with new forces being sent to Europe and around Europe. I think that is a taste of things to come.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McPherson.

Colleagues, we are at just after 5:30. I'm mindful of a potential interest to extend for no more than 15 minutes, but I'd like to do that by consensus because I realize that some members may have to travel. It's Thursday evening.

I'm also very mindful that at least one of our witnesses is in the Brussels time zone. If everybody is okay to go to 5:45 EST, we could get in the first four segments of round two.

Is there any opposition to that? I'd like to do this by consensus.

Seeing none, I will give the floor to Mr. Chong for five minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong: I'd like to explore the architecture and tools available to uphold the rules-based international order to contain threats coming from wayward states, so I'd like to ask Professor Hampson about the idea of an international anti-corruption court.

I believe last fall you penned an op-ed suggesting that Canada should take the lead in the establishment of such a court. I have two questions I would like you to answer. First, what role does corruption play in Russia's foreign policy? Second, what role could an international anti-corruption court play in countering Russia's threats?

Dr. Fen Osler Hampson: First of all, what role does corruption play? Corruption props up the regime and its leaders through their various offshore accounts and monies that they've hidden in various bank accounts in different parts of the world and different assets.

To come back to the issue of sanctions, we should put them on notice that we have tools. If FARA were to be passed—that's the frozen assets repurposing act—we could use it against them to confiscate those assets. That would be sending a much stronger threat than just freezing. It's called freeze and seize, and I would say that you tell them, "You cross that line, it's going hit you in the pocket-book."

When it comes to the international anti-corruption court, it's putting foreign leaders on notice, if they're prosecuted before the court, that if they step outside of their country, they will be brought before the court and tried.

It's often said that such an instrument might be opposed, for example, by Canadian companies, Mr. Chong, but in fact, I think you'd find, if you started canvassing them, that they would see this as a great way to level the playing field when they do business abroad, because it's going to put foreign leaders on notice that they can't play these kinds of games.

Again, without getting into too many of the details, they're two potential instruments to use against corrupt regimes like the leadership of Russia. It's going to take a long time to establish an international anti-corruption court, but we can do FARA right now if there's political will to do it, and I would suggest that there are strong reasons to do it. Other countries might well follow our lead if we were to pass such legislation sooner rather than later.

• (1735)

Hon. Michael Chong: It was stated by our previous panel today that President Putin is worth \$200 billion. Do you think that's an accurate assessment?

Dr. Fen Osler Hampson: Yes, and it may be a rather conservative assessment, to be quite honest, because we don't really know how much he has stashed away. He's worth a lot, and it obviously matters a lot to him. We should put him and his henchmen on notice that we're not only going to freeze, but we're going to seize.

Hon. Michael Chong: Bill Browder on the previous panel suggested that the government consider the following course of action: Identify the 50 oligarchs who hold President Putin's \$200 billion in wealth, sanction an initial five right off the bat and impose a deadline for Russian troops to pull back from the Ukraine border. Then, if that deadline is not met, sanction an additional five oligarchs and hold the sanction of 40 oligarchs in reserve if Russia were to further invade Ukraine. What do you think of that strategy?

Dr. Fen Osler Hampson: I think it's potentially a useful one, but you have to be careful about making threats that you're not prepared to carry through on, and as you noted, we as a country have not been particularly active on the Magnitsky front.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chong.

Thank you very much, Professor Hampson.

The next round goes to Mr. Sarai and Dr. Fry, who will split the time of five minutes.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Thank you to all the witnesses. This has been actually a very informative panel. Since I'm a little short on time, I'm going to try to be quick.

Dr. Oliker, what's the level of Ukraine's preparedness on their own? Do they stand a chance, or is it a really overwhelming situation for them?

Ms. Olga Oliker: They will lose a war against Russia. They are better prepared than they were in 2014, but so is Russia, and Russia just has more.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: You think that without NATO, the Americans and others, they will not stand a fighting chance.

Ms. Olga Oliker: They will lose a war, and no amount of supplies that we can give them in the short term is going to change that.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: What's your assessment of the EU's commitment? What are the chances that they will be stronger in their support of Ukraine?

• (1740)

Ms. Olga Oliker: If Russia escalates and mounts an attack in any form, the EU will impose sanctions. I don't have any doubts that they will take steps. I have no doubt that Nord Stream won't be turned on. I also think the Russians expect all of that.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: They don't expect any military intervention from NATO or others. They're expecting sanctions. Is that your assessment of the situation?

Ms. Olga Oliker: They're expecting exactly what we told them, sanctions and a big buildup in other countries in Europe.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Thank you, Dr. Oliker.

My next question is for Professor Kimball. What do you think the European Union and NATO—it's a similar question—will end

up doing if Russia actually invades? Do you have the same assessment as Dr. Oliker?

Anessa Kimball: Well, of course the European Union doesn't have very many other choices, aside from putting sanctions up as its first response.

Now, NATO could do one of several things. There are a lot of risks in the sense that already NATO has deployed troops forward, close to the border, and of course there's a risk that if Russia gets into Ukraine, it might start to get greedy, and that greediness could obviously go to places like Georgia, where it also has other instabilities, or Kazakhstan. That would be another risk.

One issue is that they have prospectively concentrated a lot of their military forces in the west, and, in the way that they used Sochi to move down into Crimea after the Olympics, as a springboard, they might decide to pivot and go somewhere else. Their goal, more or less, is to keep the irritation high and to keep NATO in a situation where it prefers not to respond with violence because it doesn't want to look like it's escalating. This gives Russia a large amount of room to manoeuvre, particularly because it can use civilians. It doesn't necessarily need to have soldiers who are identified as soldiers doing the activities. That's something, of course, that NATO and other states are not doing, because they have to wear the identification, so that's another thing that benefits Russia.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Over to you, Dr. Fry.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Thanks very much, Randeep, for sharing your time. It's very generous of you, as I know you to be.

I just want to say that I've listened to all the questions over the last while since we've been doing this whole thing. I am very involved at the OSCE parliamentary assembly level, and I just want to ask about Minsk at the OSCE table. Minsk has not worked really well since 2014. It's been kind of toothless as far as I'm concerned.

Are we going to depend on Minsk, and if we decide to impose sanctions, is Germany going to join? Germany has shown a bit of ambivalence, and I am hoping they're going to join with us, but what about the OSCE nations other than the European Union?

That's for Ms. Oliker and Professor Kimball.

Ms. Olga Oliker: The Minsk deals are the deals that are in place, and a lot of the sanctions already on Russia are tied to their implementation. Getting rid of Minsk opens a pretty big can of worms. Figuring out a way to implement it and find a middle ground is the better path.

I am very confident that if Russia attacks Ukraine, Germany will implement a sanctions regime. I don't have any doubts about that.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you.

Answer very quickly, please, Professor Kimball.

Anessa Kimball: I would say that because it exists, Minsk is something we're going to that we want to try to rely on. However, like I said, it's definitely not sufficient and it needs more teeth to it.

One of the other issues is that the OSCE also has a lot of the other ex-Soviet states in there that are PFP partners but not looking to join NATO. This could tend to make the OSCE position a bit closer to Russia's position than it would be if it were NATO negotiating or at the table. That's also important to keep in mind.

• (1745)

The Chair: Thank you for that.

I'm sorry. I have to cut you off. We literally have only seconds left.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In any case, I wanted to put my question to Professor Kimball, who will be able to add to her previous answer.

I would like to talk about another imminent Russian invasion of Ukraine. I was fortunate enough to attend briefings by Global Affairs Canada and National Defence in April 2021 and January 2022. I must admit that I have not been convinced that the situation on the ground today is much different than it was in April. Nevertheless, the talk is always of an imminent invasion. I presume it is based on information gathered by American intelligence.

My question is very straightforward: is that American intelligence reliable? If not, is it the same kind of situation that the previous group of witnesses was talking about, that is, a propaganda exercise on the part of the United States? We know that American intelligence provided the apparently reliable information that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

How reliable is this information from American intelligence?

Anessa Kimball: You are talking about things that are not really related, but I will try to answer your question.

First of all, American intelligence is gathered in a number of ways. The intelligence from 2003 was not gathered in the same way. There have been advances in American intelligence technology, organization and communication. We hope that the information is good—fingers crossed.

Troop movements are monitored by third parties using satellites.

There is also the issue of perception. Russia wants us to believe that it is conducting exercises and that it has the right to act independently and autonomously to secure its borders against instability. This is true. However, the military exercises being conducted are on a large scale. One might wonder whether those exercises are proportional to the current problem.

We can also look at what neighbouring countries are doing. As I already stated, Denmark is starting to worry, and that is something Canada should follow closely. Historically, Denmark has not wanted to become involved in conflicts or to accept American troops. It is one of the rare NATO countries that has no allied country on its

territory. The fact that Denmark is asking the U.S. to sign a bilateral agreement sends a relatively strong signal that there may be divisions within NATO.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Kimball.

Ms. McPherson, the floor is now yours for two and a half minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: That was fascinating testimony. Dr. Kimball, I would like to carry on with some of things that my colleague from the Bloc has asked.

We heard today that Georgia, Kazakhstan and now Denmark are other areas that are potentially at risk if Ukraine is not able to maintain its territorial integrity should there be an invasion. Russia may have other goals and other places that they're looking at.

Dr. Kimball, could you talk about that a bit more please? Could you talk about what the implications could be?

Anessa Kimball: Already it's a region in which we find a lot of instability. Some of it is historic, but some of it was also brought about by the actions of the Americans and other partners in the region. One of the reasons Turkey is not very content as a NATO member is that obviously it has had a lot of regional disruption, with what's gone on in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Already we have a general area where it's more militarized than it probably has been in a long time, so we're creating a situation in which there's a lot of risk. The question also comes back to countries like Georgia and Kazakhstan and whether they have the domestic political resiliency to push back any sort of... I think that's also where there are weaknesses. Those countries also face challenges in what we call the control of the monopoly of violence inside the country and stabilizing their borders.

If we could be setting up such a state that is fragile for potential failure, this is something we should care about. Knowing that there are Canadians in Ukraine, this is a risk for Canada particularly, because there are actually Canadian citizens there, but also through NATO in some senses. If NATO calls, it is rare that Canada does not respond. This is one of the things that is central to Canadian foreign policy. It goes multilateral, and NATO is one of the partners that it's going with most frequently these days.

By implication there's an interest for Canada, and the interest is not just whether or not our colleagues, our peers, in Europe have big economic issues or face energy crunches or something like that. It's the threat of multiple instabilities converging that could lead to something we don't want to see.

• (1750)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you so much, Professor Kimball and Ms. McPherson.

Colleagues, on our collective behalf, I'd like to thank our witnesses on the second panel for their testimony and for their appearance.

Everybody, please keep safe.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank the witnesses for giving us their points of view.

With that, we stand adjourned until our next meeting.

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