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**EVIDENCE**

## Monday, March 3, 2014

## Chair

**Mr. Dean Allison**

# Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

**Monday, March 3, 2014**

● (1535)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)):** Good afternoon.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) we will begin our study on the situation in the Ukraine.

I want to welcome a couple of our guests we have as witnesses today. From the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies we have Taras Kuzio, who is a research associate from the University of Alberta.

Taras, welcome. I'm glad to have you here today.

From the Chair of Ukrainian Studies, we have Dominique Arel, who is the chairholder and an associate professor at the School of Political Studies from the University of Ottawa.

Welcome to you too, sir.

I would just mention that we do have a note available, and it's also available wirelessly through your iPads as well. I'll just keep mentioning that as we move more and more to wireless if that's possible. We'll always provide paper for all those who don't like that technology stuff.

Gary, we'll take good care of you.

I will now turn it over to our witnesses. Both of them have opening statements.

Taras, we'll get you to go first. You have up to 10 minutes for an opening statement. The floor is yours, sir.

**Dr. Taras Kuzio (Research Associate, University of Alberta, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies):** I'll give you some background to the crisis, explain why it happened, and then go into the Crimean question.

Firstly, it's important to know what kind of people were in power in Ukraine. Typically for that region, for the post-Soviet region, the leaders who came to power were usually mainly either nationalists or national democrats, or from the senior levels of the Soviet Communist Party, the *nomenklatura*. There are many.... For example, in Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma was a typical example of that, and so was the first president, Leonid Kravchuk, who was from the *nomenklatura*, the uppermost elites of the Soviet Communist Party.

Where Viktor Yanukovych is very different is that, to my knowledge, he was the only leader from that region who came to power from a criminal background. He was twice in prison, and in the 1990s, Donetsk was second to the Crimea in the large numbers of murders and crimes that took place. What developed in the 1990s—in the late 1990s, he became Donetsk's governor—was a kind of growing nexus among corrupted security forces, the prosecutor's office, crime, and business. That, as I'll explain, is very much his mentality and his background, and why it led to the tragedies we saw.

This means that the culture that a kind of person like Viktor Yanukovych came from was very machismo, very anti-gender. His governments were the first governments with no women in them. He is on the record as saying that women's place is in the kitchen, not in politics. This could explain some of his antipathy toward Yulia Tymoshenko, but certainly, “compromise” was a dirty word for this machismo culture, and round tables.... Yanukovych could have compromised, for example, in early December by changing his prime minister, but didn't. He dragged it out.

Also, to this kind of culture, it's “all economic and political power to me as the victor, all things come to me”. He acted as though he was going to be in power indefinitely, as though he would never be leaving power. How else can you explain the fact of putting your opponents in prison? Because if you're going to leave power down the road, then those opponents could come out of jail. As for his own family that he developed or promoted, which was led by his eldest son, who is a dentist by profession but mysteriously became one of the top wealthy people in Ukraine, they were demanding 50% of your business to be transferred over.

Finally, what this culture also promoted was a very thuggish and violent culture. This is the first president to hire mercenary vigilantes—and we saw many of them in action during the crisis—which led to abductions, murders, and of course, the imprisonment of opposition leaders.

With Viktor Yanukovych, we also have, similar to Vladimir Putin, a very Soviet mindset, which means that we are lost in translation when speaking with them. They simply think in a different manner to us. In December, I met the U.S. ambassador in Kiev. He told me that already then Viktor Yanukovych was convinced that everybody in the Maidan in central Kiev was an extremist and a fascist financed by the U.S., which is the Putin line as well, of course. So there's that inability to comprehend what was actually happening and why so many people were there from across a variety of circles. The world they create, as to what they believe in, is a different world to what we see, and that I think creates a tremendous problem for policy-makers, for being lost in translation, as I say.

Why was there a crisis? There were three big events that led to protests and to horrible violence on a scale that we haven't seen in Ukraine really since the 1960s or 1950s. First, there was the decision to annul the movement toward signing the association agreement with the European Union. This was a shock, because both sides of the political divide had been negotiating for seven years. Second, there was Black Thursday, the destruction of Ukrainian democracy in the shape of 21 minutes by a show of hands, which led to the first round of violence. Then, the continuing refusal to compromise over the constitution and the preterm elections led to the second and more brutal high levels of murders and deaths.

But there were deeper problems at stake, which exploded. In effect, the people in power had destroyed the three main pillars, I would say, upon which the Ukrainian state was being built over the last two decades: some kind of movement toward democracy, some kind of Ukraine national identity, and Ukraine's future in Europe. All those had come under threat. There was nothing else to steal, in effect.

The population felt as though they were treated with contempt, as though they were like a conquered population. The level of corruption had grown so great even as compared with the 1990s. The judiciary and the police no longer were places you could go for protection. Somebody actually said that the safest place in Ukraine during the crisis was on the Maidan, nowhere else.

Then there's the Russian factor. Why has the Russian factor become important? I think there are three issues with regard to why it's come into play.

First, Putin feels personally humiliated. It's two-nil for the Ukrainian people. Ten years ago, during the Orange Revolution, Putin backed the wrong horse, Viktor Yanukovych, and he backed the wrong horse again. I feel that in Putin's case, his heart is ruling his head, and that's why we see what we think of as irrational and lost in translation. There were plans, backed by the Russians, for a full crackdown. It wouldn't have been 100 dead, it would have been thousands. That was the plan that was supposed to have been implemented with full Russian backing. Thankfully that didn't happen.

Second, I think the questions around the Crimea and Sevastopol are very difficult for Russians to accept. It's been the problem for two decades. It's not something new. Russia has been supporting separatism in the Crimea, in Sevastopol, ever since the U.S.S.R. disintegrated. In 2009 two Russian diplomats were expelled from Odessa and from Crimea for providing covert assistance to Russian separatists.

The third factor, which may be one of the most important but hasn't really been dwelt upon, is that this is an attempt to suck Kiev into a military conflict and to institute counter-revolution regime change in Kiev. The new Ukrainian authorities are in a desperate situation; the cupboard is bare. Something like $70 billion was stolen out of the country in the last four years. There is an economic financial tsunami waiting for the country, and I think the last thing this government wants is a war or a conflict. But that's the hope, I think, for Vladimir Putin—to try to suck the new authorities in and prevent the presidential elections from taking place in May, prevent the signing of an association agreement.

I think those are the three main factors. I'll leave it at that.

Thank you very much for your attention.

● (1540)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Arel, we'll now turn it over to you, sir, for 10 minutes.

**Dr. Dominique Arel (Chairholder, Associate Professor, University of Ottawa, Chair of Ukrainian Studies):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The unimaginable is now before us. The higher chamber of the Russian parliament has authorized Russia to send troops “on the territory of Ukraine” leaving open the possibility that the Russian army currently occupying Crimea may be dispatched elsewhere on Ukrainian territory. In seeking to legitimize its military operation, Russian invokes political, ethnic, and security arguments. None stand up to analysis.

The political argument is that Ukraine is in the throes of an illegitimate political regime that came to power a week ago as a result of a “fascist” coup. Fascism means something very specific in Russian discourse. Since World War II the invasion by Germany has always been presented as an invasion of fascists, not of Germans. The fascists are the Nazis and their collaborators. In western Ukraine, a violent Ukrainian insurgency against the Soviet Union tactically allied with Germany during the war. Russian discourse labels these insurgents fascists or Banderites, after their leader Stepan Bandera, a term that acquired equivalent meaning.

Since key groups on the Maidan, namely the parliamentary party Svoboda and the popular movement Pravy Sektor, claim lineage from the wartime insurgency, the collapse of the Yanukovych regime is portrayed in Russia as an internal fascist invasion.

This narrative omits three basic points. The first is that the Yanukovych regime collapsed because all police forces withdrew on Friday, February 21, 2014, leaving government buildings unprotected. They withdrew not because they were overcome by armed militants but because they were demoralized either because they had previously used live ammunition against civilians or because they were unwilling to defend a regime perceived as widely corrupt.

The second thing is that it was not the insurgents who attacked civilians, unlike the case with the wartime insurgents, but rather the state. In the end the state security forces gave up.

The third is that the political pillars of the previous regime, the Party of Regions and the Communist Party of Ukraine, have both recognized the legitimacy of the new government. The Communists, who depict wartime insurgents as fascists, have in fact voted en bloc for all constitutional changes in the past week.

The ethnic argument is that the life of Russia's compatriots—and I'm putting "compatriots" in brackets here—is in danger. The resolution of the Russian parliament refers both to citizens, who outside of Sevastopol are in principle not too numerous since dual citizenship is illegal in Ukraine, and to this vague category of compatriots, which has no standing in international law. Compatriots is a code word for ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in the context where most residents of eastern Ukraine prefer to speak Russian. It is this undifferentiated Russian mass that the Russian state now sees as being under threat by the so-called nationalists who have taken power in Kiev. I should add that "nationalists" since Soviet days has been used as a synonym for "fascists".

This narrative assumes that in the defining moment that Ukraine is now experiencing, eastern Ukrainians will choose Russian protection over Ukrainian "nationalist" rule. Russia's power play could actually have the opposite effect of further crystallizing Ukrainian identity in the east. There is no organized Russian community in eastern Ukraine, unlike in Crimea, because many, if not most, Russians are partly of Ukrainian background and many Ukrainians are partly Russian.

● (1545)

This ethnic *mixité* likely explains the ambivalence expressed by eastern Ukrainians towards Russia. Under quasi-war conditions, the ambivalence could lead way to a greater assertion of Ukrainian identity.

The fact that mass demonstrations are now occurring in eastern Ukraine, a traditionally passive society, could be seen as a barometer of a rising attachment to the nation defined in civic terms. Although we have demonstrations going both ways right now, yesterday there were 10,000 people singing the Ukrainian national anthem in Dnipropetrovsk.

The security argument is that the events that have "destabilized" Ukraine are the result of western meddling in a territory that has historically belonged to the Russian sphere of interest. The Russian historical narrative actually places Kiev as the so-called mother of all Russian cities.

Russian President Putin appears to firmly believe that Maidan was instigated by western powers—that includes Canada, by the way—a claim obliquely repeated by former Ukrainian President Yanukovych in his Rostov press conference. The meddling, however, was declarative, with western powers expressing support for the right of Maidan demonstrators to peacefully air their grievances and repeatedly inviting the Ukrainian authorities to find a political solution and avoid the use of violence.

Up until the protests turned into mass killing, the EU and the United States were in fact criticized in the west for how little concrete help they provided to Maidan—the EU resisting, for instance, the imposition of personal sanctions until the very end, after the police began shooting at demonstrators.

The argument of western intervention, however, operates on a higher plane than immediate support on the ground, taking the form of the claim, also often made in western liberal and leftist circles, that the west's ulterior motive is to secure military bases in Russia's backyard and to make the Ukrainian market available for cheap labour to benefit advanced western economies.

While these points merit a rigorous hearing, primarily or exclusively focusing on them evacuates the profoundly civic dimension of the Ukrainian rebellion. Maidan, initially a protest for Europe, became a protest against police brutality, large-scale corruption, and the lack of political accountability. Since all these features are also associated with the current Russian state, opposing them became a symbolic reaffirmation of European values, even if the free trade agreement was no longer talked about. It is easy to be dismissive of the weight of values, but the fact is that insurgents were willing to risk and pay with their lives. It is their stance that ultimately broke the will of the Yanukovych regime.

The meddling, in the end, was of so-called European ideas. They in themselves are seen as an infringement on the security not of Russia but of the Russian political system developed under President Putin. The logical fallacy is that since western powers could benefit from the bottom-up Ukrainian civic uprising, then they must have caused it. They did not.

Thank you.

● (1550)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll start our first round of seven minutes of questions and answers with Madame Laverdière.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank both of our witnesses for their presentations.

[*English*]

I'll begin by apologizing for getting here late. It was certainly not for lack of interest in the issue. We're all very preoccupied by what is happening in Ukraine right now. I was detained by some journalists.

[*Translation*]

My first question is for Mr. Kuzio.

In 2011, you wrote a book entitled *The Crimea: Europe's Next Flashpoint?*. Can you tell us a little more about the central argument of your book?

[*English*]

**Dr. Taras Kuzio:** I remember that when it was published there was a lot of skepticism that I was being too pessimistic. I guess it was one of those very typical Washington think-tank publications where you think about scenarios, but you never expect these scenarios to happen.

There are many talking about how this problem of Russian unwillingness to accept Ukrainian sovereignty in the Crimea and Sevastopol has been long-standing. The majority of Russian public opinion does not accept Ukrainian sovereignty over the Crimea and Sevastopol. I detailed a lot of the covert actions that the Russian intelligence services were undertaking against Ukraine's sovereignty in places like that, in supporting separatists and in supporting extremists, really, in both Odessa and the Crimea. It's really detailing what was taking place under the then president, Viktor Yushchenko, who had just left power.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** Thank you very much.

We are talking about acceptance of Ukrainian sovereignty in the Crimea. Professor Arel, I would like you to tell us a little more about the Budapest agreement and the obligations on Russia, the United States and Great Britain under that agreement.

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** Very well. Thank you, madam.

After the Soviet Union collapse, Ukraine inherited a nuclear arsenal that was probably the third or fourth largest in the world. Of course, that became an extremely worrisome situation. After several years of negotiations, Ukraine agreed to become a non-nuclear state, which led to the famous Budapest Memorandum in 1994. That agreement was signed by the nuclear powers, that is, the United States, Great Britain, Russia and Ukraine. Article 2 talks very specifically about the recognition of Ukraine's territorial integrity, in other words, respect for its borders.

There is the fact that the Crimea became part of Ukraine somewhat accidentally. We know the story of how Mr. Khruchtchev famously gave it away in 1954, and so on. Nonetheless, when it comes to the Soviet Union and also Yugoslavia, this is now international law. The implosion took into account internal boundaries. The Crimea was part of Soviet Ukraine and therefore became part of independent Ukraine.

International law experts may question to what extent that article has the force of law, but the Ukrainian authorities have certainly interpreted and understood it that way.

I am speaking a little bit outside my area of expertise here, but it is abundantly clear that if this violation of international law, that is, state borders, is accepted de facto, there will be considerable repercussions for nuclearization or nuclear proliferation in states that are being asked to actually abandon their arsenals.

● (1555)

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** Thank you.

You said that dual citizenship was not allowed by Ukraine. In the past few days, we have been hearing about official Russian representatives distributing passports in the Crimea.

Do you know how many people have accepted a passport and if that means that those people are prepared to renounce their citizenship? If you could give us more information on that, it would be appreciated.

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** That strategy was first used at the time of the 2008 war in Georgia, if not before, when it became clear that Russia had widely distributed passports to residents in Abkhazia and Ossetia. Those two territories, which subsequently became officially independent, were de facto reannexed by Russia. There were rumours circulating at that time that passports were also being distributed in the Crimea. Taras can certainly speak to that.

In the Crimea, there were obviously Russian personnel present. In Sebastopol, all this was legal. Russia has a sort of extraterritorial base there. With respect to dual citizenship, Ukraine stated its refusal very clearly at the time of independence, which means that our Canadian-Ukrainian colleagues cannot obtain Ukrainian nationality without losing their Canadian nationality. It is important we do not start making distinctions, precisely to prevent the Russian government from someday using the argument that it is using today. As I have already said, this is a two-sided argument, that is, it wants to protect its citizens, who are, in principle, relatively few, and also its compatriots, but who are those compatriots? We get into a legal limbo there. There are no clear numbers on that because it is illegal.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Goldring, sir, you have seven minutes.

**Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC):** Thank you very much for appearing here today in troubling times for Ukraine, and indeed I believe for the entire world, as we wrestle with the fundamental element of international understanding of territorial integrity and the expectation of not being invaded by foreign troops, and how to countenance that, short of all-out war. How do we do it?

One of the issues, when I was at Euromaidan in December, was heartening. It might be a minor issue, given the seriousness of the circumstances in Crimea, but I think it's an important one. It's linguistic inclusivity, and how.... Yes, it was in the Constitution but it was removed from the Constitution, to my understanding. That may have been a harsher way of looking at linguistic inclusivity.

But in terms of Euromaidan, there was representation there from Russian-speaking Ukrainians, Tatars, as well as Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians. I would think, having been to the eastern parts of Ukraine, that some form of inclusivity should be developed. Would that be something the government of Ukraine should be looking at as a way of at least somewhat appeasing those who are concerned about their linguistic rights as we move forward? Perhaps it might be somewhat of a form of appeasing some people, some factions anyway, if they were to make some pronouncement of setting up a committee to travel to parts of Ukraine to develop, from the people there, what the various people would like to see for linguistic inclusivity for the future, at least to show that they're addressing that concern.

As I said, it may not be the most urgent concern at this moment, but I think it's a concern that should be addressed at some time.

Taras, perhaps...?

**Dr. Taras Kuzio:** Specifically on the language issues, my Quebecker friend is going to be a bigger expert.

But certainly I agree with you. When I was there in December, as well, I met Lebanese restauranteurs from east Ukraine who were on the Maidan. This was very different from 2004, where it was east versus west. This was far more the people against the regime, in this particular case. There were non-Ukrainians on the Maidan.

On the specific question of inclusivity, of the last three presidents of Ukraine, I think Leonid Kuchma was the best in terms of this question. He was an east Ukrainian and he promoted what I would call a "soft" Ukrainian national identity, which was acceptable to both east Ukrainians and west Ukrainians.

As for the two more recent presidents, Viktor Yushchenko and Viktor Yanukovych, Viktor Yushchenko was seen in east Ukraine as too hard-nosed on Ukrainian identity, whereas Viktor Yanukovych was too hard-nosed on Russophile-Sovietophile identity so he rubbed up the west Ukrainians. Hence, the national identity question became an issue in the Maidan here.

You need to go back to the more inclusive Kuchma era, which was the decade from 1994 to 2004, where it combined support for Ukrainian identity and language at the same time as having respect for the Russian language. That centrist balance is often the more difficult one, but that's what you need to go back to—

● (1600)

**Mr. Peter Goldring:** But there are also other minorities, the Romanian and Hungarian minorities. There's a complexity there that —

**Dr. Taras Kuzio:** They're very small compared with Russian....

**Mr. Peter Goldring:** Would you comment on that, Dominique?

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** Well, I happen to be from Quebec, but I have also studied language politics in Ukraine for a long time, for 20 to 25 years, perhaps because I'm from Quebec.

**A voice:** Maybe....

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** But inasmuch as the Russian state has been using that argument in the context of actually sending troops, it is not a footnote. It is something that needs to be addressed.

I wouldn't say "chaotic", but in the high-pressure, extremely fast adoption of all these constitutional changes a weekend ago in parliament, the language law was terminated without debate, and that didn't go well, because symbolically...and it was presented as discrimination against Russian speakers. What I can say, having actually studied that language law that was passed two years ago, is that it was very controversial. We know how sensitive and controversial language laws and language politics can be. We have been living it in Quebec and in Canada for many decades, and it's never going away.

But there is one core principle. It's that you have to be respectful of the linguistic rights of the minority, but you have to create incentives for that minority to speak the majority language. In other words, it's not just about protecting the rights of Russian speakers. It's about Russian speakers in certain conditions, such as making a career, and certainly a career in politics or in business, having incentives and going to school to speak Ukrainian in a certain context, so that you have a truly bilingual situation. The last law did not provide that.

I can't go into the details, but basically it was all declarative. Russian speakers would never have to use Ukrainian, which is why it didn't go well, but of course abolishing it without debate in the context of some kind of revolution or rebellion was not the way to go. Actually, Acting President Turchynov vetoed the termination of the law and said, "We need a new law, but we need to do it right." Of course, it doesn't matter to Russian discourse, but this is what's happening on the ground.

On the issue of inclusivity—and I would submit that perhaps this is something that Canada can contribute in closed-door negotiations, informally—it would seem to me to be imperative that the government in Ukraine be a government of national unity, with representatives of eastern Ukraine. The current government, with the exception of the minister of the interior, is exclusively from central or western Ukraine. But in the last few days, very important what I will call "businessmen"—I will not use the word "oligarch", because the connotation is not good. Very important businessmen in eastern Ukraine, Russian speakers, have come out publicly in favour of the unity—

**Dr. Taras Kuzio:** And Jewish as well.

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** And Jewish—I didn't even know about the Jewish part. That adds to the inclusivity.

They have accepted to take over the governorship of Donetsk, for Mr. Taruta, and of Dnipropetrovsk, for Mr. Kolomoisky. In addition, if a few ministers, particularly on economic matters, could be integrated into the government, that would certainly go a long way towards inclusivity.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

That's all the time we have. We're going to finish off the first round with Ms. Duncan.

Welcome to the committee. You have seven minutes.

● (1605)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to both of you for the historical perspectives. We're grateful for your expertise.

In your opinion, what recommendations do you have for the Canadian government here? What do you suggest we do, aside from what's already been done?

**Dr. Taras Kuzio:** Certainly if the hostilities get worse in the next day or two, as the news reports today do indicate, that obviously means that Vladimir Putin is not listening to western condemnations, and you at the very least need to throw Russia out of the G-8; at the very least.

But I think the best way to kind of help Ukraine at this moment, if that's the right way of putting it, is to try to ensure that the new government, the new leadership in the country, is a success story, because that sends a signal that there isn't just the Putin model of autocracy with its lack of the rule of law for the state. There is another model for the population.

I think this particular government is in very dire straits. They inherited a country where everything has been totally stolen from the cupboard. I mean, Canada is not a member of the European Union, but certainly it would be tremendously important to get the association agreement signed, and Canada can give moral, diplomatic support on that.

Certainly Canada I think can help on questions that Dominique has talked about, the post-crisis rebuilding of the country. You have tremendous expertise on the nationality question, for example, and on language questions.

The Soviet-inherited culture unfortunately is not very good at compromise. That culture of compromise is one that Canada can help to promote. To give one concrete example, one of the problems of the Ukrainian presidential election was always that in the second round, it was a candidate from the west and a candidate from the east. When one candidate won, it was winner-takes-all, which created resentment in the other parts of the country. Let's have a system where if the president is elected by western central Ukraine, he or she appoints the prime minister from east Ukraine, and vice versa.

The questions of national integration, which are very closely linked to democracy in Ukraine, are crucial questions, as are those of the rule of law. There are so many other areas that need helping out in Ukraine. I think one area where Canada as a NATO member can help out is in the area of security reform. The military on this occasion, as in the Orange Revolution, refused to come out and shoot protesters. The reason that was the case was thanks to NATO's partnership for peace program.

The Ukrainian military has changed. It's no longer a Soviet institution. It refused to shoot people 10 years ago and it refuses to shoot people today. The other institutions—the police, the security service, and the prosecutor's office—are still Soviet, and they need heavy-duty reform.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Thank you.

Professor Arel, do you want to add to that?

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** Yes.

Taras has made excellent points. The army actually last week made a critical intervention—that is, a verbal and non-physical intervention—saying that they were not intervening in what was a political crisis or a political conflict.

That also was very significant—

**Dr. Taras Kuzio:** A game-changer.

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** —yes, a game-changer, in the eventual collapse of the regime.

But Taras is talking as though we're close to a post-conflict situation, whereas there's a possibility that the military may actually invade eastern Ukraine, the way we're going.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** What would you like to see right now?

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** The question is what will hurt, what will cause pain in people who are actually making these decisions that are breaking international law and international conventions? That's a....

The economic sanctions that are being discussed using the Iran model apparently can hardly work regarding Russia, just because of the structure of its exports—unless Europe decides to live without Russian gas, which would have an enormous economic cost for Europe.

But inasmuch as we, meaning the international community, have talked about the issue of personal sanctions.... That was on the agenda for three months in Maidan, and was finally used at the end. Why are we not using it against Russia, at least? Because the same contradictions, which others would call hypocrisy, apply. That is, the discourse is all aggressively anti-western. It's all about western conspiracies. But their money, their children, their houses, and their vacations are all in the west, not in Russia. That was the reality in Ukraine. Actually, we have reports that in Switzerland and Austria, post-Maidan or not, they're freezing and really going after the assets.

So doing that is certainly a first step.

● (1610)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Personal sanctions—

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** Yes, beginning with the president.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** —against Yanukovych and his political backers?

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** No, against Putin and his political....

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Yes, sorry.

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** Because the sanctions with Ukraine, even if Yanukovych is gone—not in his mind but he's gone from political reality—are still going on actually, but personal sanctions against Russian elites....

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Can I get in one other question? I apologize for the slip of the tongue there.

What other kinds of assistance could Canada and its allies be providing at this time?

**The Chair:** You have about 30 seconds left, so just a quick response.

**Dr. Taras Kuzio:** Pretty much everything.

The U.S. has the Magnitsky bill. Surely, it's high time for Canada and western Europe to have the same kind of bill. This bill is highly detailed in its sanctions against Russian leaders.

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** We're facing an unprecedented situation. I'm here and I'm sitting in a parliamentary hearing, and I don't want to say things that are completely phantasmagoric, but basically, we're facing a scenario where Russia may be intent on destroying the Ukrainian state by invading eastern Ukraine. That's the Czechoslovakia scenario in 1938. I'm just pinching myself and looking at developments. This is essentially what could be in the works.

What could western states, including Canada, possibly do? Certainly, the measures have to be out of the ordinary, so extraordinary. I don't have a ready answer to it, but this is an extremely grave situation, a situation where there is only one decision-maker in Russia. We have a president who has absolute power.

Chancellor Merkel from Germany talked to Mr. Putin yesterday and reported that she feels he is disconnected from reality and lives in another world. It's one chancellor talking to a president who is sending an army to a state that is recognized by the international community. That is extremely preoccupying.

**The Chair:** That's all the time we have.

We're going to start our second round of five minutes with questions and answers.

Ms. Brown.

**Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC):** Thank you, Chair. Thank you, gentlemen.

It's almost strange sitting here in a parliamentary committee when we know that things are changing in Ukraine by the minute. Even as we sit here and have this discussion, we know that things may be taking place there that we are unaware of at the moment and will find out when we finish this committee. It is exceedingly concerning.

Canada has been present in Ukraine for quite some time from a development perspective. Ukraine is the only country of focus that Canada has in Europe for development dollars. We've been there helping with judicial reform. We've helped with youth justice issues. We've helped with capacity-building in the civil service.

How do you see those investments helping on a path forward for Ukraine? Do you think there is merit in the things that we've already done in helping Ukraine after this is over? I'm being positive that Ukraine is going to retain the integrity of its borders.

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** But of course that kind of assistance is not measurable. What we could observe during Maidan, 10 years after the Orange Revolution, is the rise of a civic community. This was a truly civic uprising. What does it mean? Initially it was a civic mobilization and then it turned into an uprising as a reaction to violence. But essentially the main claim was “we want to live in a normal state”. For normality they would say Europe, but essentially it also means Canada and the United States in how they understand it, and that's without illusion that Europe or Canada are perfect states by all means. But in terms of “we want a government that's accountable; we want a government that doesn't steal”, they also want that here. They want to have a commission like in Quebec to try to clean up the mess. There is a normative understanding that this is what needs to be done.

You had that kind of mobilization that went so far that it provoked the government to reveal its ugliest face to the point of resorting to live ammunition, which in terms of reacting to a civic uprising hadn't been seen in Europe since Solidarity in the early 1980s. It was quite exceptional.

I think Canadian assistance, European assistance, the educational exchanges and so forth, have certainly cumulatively played a positive role. We hear now that we have three graduates from Mohyla university, which is in partnership with so many Canadian and European institutions including my own, who are now in the cabinet of ministers.

So in that sense it's immeasurable. We've seen the growth of, clearly, a civil society that could stand up to autocracy, but there is a long way ahead.

Perhaps regionalism.... We shouldn't use the word “federalism” because words are associated with a particular, very lasting perception. If you say federalism in Ukraine, they think Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union. It will never work. But without saying the word just in terms of regional representations, autonomy, and so forth, Canada can certainly contribute because that's our history, and not just a Quebec perspective, but western Canada and so forth. That would certainly be a particular contribution.

● (1615)

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Do you see a role for the diaspora in Canada to be of assistance in this process going forward?

**Dr. Taras Kuzio:** One of the best investigative journalists in Ukraine, who is currently based in Washington, D.C., on a grant, named Sergii Leshchenko is talking about the need to, like I think with the Italian and Polish diasporas, give them the right to vote and to participate, because he thinks they would have a different approach to politics and a cleaner approach, a good governance approach. They have grown up and socialized in a different environment. I think that's certainly one.

Beyond that, I think going back to your previous question—and I agree completely with Dominique—the people who are on the streets in many ways, like in the Arab Spring, are looking for dignity. They felt their leaders treated them with contempt, so there has to be the rebuilding of a new contract between elites who are accountable, who are not above the law....

Ukrainian elites like Soviet elites were above the law. I think the key institution from which everything flows is the rule of law. There was a little bit of rule of law prior to Yanukovych. He destroyed it completely.

I know colleagues in America who are doing similar things like judicial reform in Ukraine. I'm wondering whether it's time to move from putting plasters on the old system to dismantling the old system and starting again. The prosecutor's office, is it reformable? I don't think so. It's 18,000 people who are useless. They are useless, corrupt, and bloated. I think you are better just to start completely anew.

I think if you are going to put money in—because money's limited for every government—I would say just start again. Don't keep putting little plasters on this old Soviet institution.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** I would say that—

**The Chair:** Sorry. That's all the time we have. Maybe we can get you in as a follow-up.

Madame Laverdière, and Madame Latendresse.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** I have a quick question. After that, my colleague, Ms. Latendresse, would like to ask a question.

We have all heard the reports about the ultimatum from the Russian authorities calling for all weapons to be handed over by 5 o'clock tomorrow morning. In your opinion, how will that play out?

● (1620)

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** I don't think that the government will order the troops to fire on the Russian troops, but I honestly don't know the answer. Ukraine's strategy is not to react to these provocations and avoid giving Russia any reason to say suddenly that the situation has turned into war or violence.

I really can't answer your question. I don't know what will happen at 5 o'clock tomorrow morning. Things are at an extremely critical point. I am sorry, but I cannot see the future.

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP):** I would first like to thank you for your presentation here today. These events are of great concern to all of us, and it is good to have a little more information. One can never have too much information when situations such as this one occur.

My questions are somewhat along the same lines. They are about the elections planned for May.

How likely do you think it is, given the immediate situation, that the proposed elections will take place?

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** If Russia were to intervene militarily in eastern Ukraine, that timetable would be out the window. Everything would shift.

Let us suppose that Russian intervention stops with the Crimea. In passing, that is already a huge international problem, because it is still a violation of Ukraine's borders. But given that scenario, it might still be possible to hold elections. If so, the impact of a Russian military presence in the Crimea on the rest of Ukraine might surprise Mr. Putin. He clearly does not understand election dynamics, since he said at the time of the last elections that he hoped that there would be no second round. In any case, there weren't really any strong candidates, because they were all out of the running. A second round is destabilizing for Russian society; competition is destabilizing in itself. That said, the result might still be surprising.

We know that Ms. Timochenko and Mr. Klitschko have already announced their intentions. This is new territory. But I have the impression that Mr. Klitschko could, for the first time, unite eastern and western Ukraine, since he is a Russian-speaker himself and he has a strong reputation outside politics around the country. Moreover, rather shockingly, the last polls on voting intentions before the Maidan killings two weeks ago indicated that Mr. Klitschko would garner 60% to 65 % support against Mr. Yanukovych in the second round. That means that he could get nearly half of the votes in eastern Ukraine. That is very positive. No candidate has ever been able to obtain a majority in both parts of the country. Generally speaking, if a candidate received a huge majority in one part and a few votes in the other part, he would end up with a majority, but a very slim one.

[*English*]

Do you want to add something?

**Dr. Taras Kuzio:** No. There may be other questions.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** The OECD announced today that it would be sending 900 short-term observers and 100 long-term observers.

What do you think Canada could do to help if elections are held? To what extent could Canada take part as an observer on the ground?

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** I think that there were already some quite remarkable precedents during the orange revolution. Canada sent 500 official observers and the Canadian Ukrainian Congress sent another contingent of 500 observers. A very large contingent would be needed.

That said, if elections were organized by the current government, I would be much less concerned about possible fraud. For the purposes of international legitimacy, however, a very large number of observers would be a good idea.

I would like to mention something for just 10 seconds in answer to the member's question. I am continually being interviewed on television these days and I am often asked what Canada can do. My answer is that Canada, thanks to its Ukrainian community, has acquired expertise that is unique in the world. The Ukrainian community here has a strong voice because of its historic role and its voting influence, which is significant at this point. There are members of the Ukrainian community working for NGOs, for the public service and the government, to mention just a few areas. Moreover, Canadians who are not of Ukrainian background have also acquired expertise because of that privileged relationship between Canada and Ukraine. I am not talking just about myself and the academic world, but in other sectors as well. Expertise has been developed that is unique in the world outside Ukraine. So Canada should make use of that expertise and that critical mass.

● (1625)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We're going to finish off with Mr. Anderson.

You have five minutes, sir.

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank our guests for being here today.

I have a couple of questions, so if I cut you off I don't want you to think I'm rude. It's because we have very limited time here.

We've been involved in this issue from the beginning, as a country, and it's important that we are. I'm wondering if you can give us a little bit of information and your feelings on what role the United States has to play in order for this to be effectively dealt with.

**Dr. Taras Kuzio:** I think the U.S. is key because in the mentality of the people from that region of the world, including ex-president Yanukovych, they never respected—and I don't think Putin does either—the European Union as a foreign policy actor. It's too diverse with too many countries trying to make a decision. Whereas, they did always fear the U.S.

I said to the U.S. ambassador in December in Kiev that the U.S. needs to lead on sanctions, and in the end they did. The U.S. is also obviously a key actor in NATO and in the IMF. I think from all of those points and in terms also of providing assistance through a variety of pro-democracy foundations, the U.S. in that sense is key.

When there have been sanctions, for example against Belarus, it's always the U.S and Canada first, then it's always the EU following on afterwards, very reluctantly and very slowly. I think the U.S. has to take the lead and this is what it did on this occasion.

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** I would second that.

**Mr. David Anderson:** The second question I have is about the makeup of the Ukrainian government. You have a mixture of political leaders and a mixture of people who are from outside the government.

I wonder if you can talk a little bit about the political strength that's actually there, if they have to face the kinds of things that you're talking about over the next few weeks. Tell me a bit about your perception of the strength of the government of Ukraine itself.

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** My understanding is that obviously it's a very young government, but looking at the makeup you have people with government experience—the prime minister, the foreign minister, and speaker of parliament, to give one of several examples. Then you have an infusion of new blood, particularly in the economic sphere. I mentioned the folks coming out of the Mohyla university. That's important because of course Ukraine, in terms of economic reforms, has not exactly been a success story. This may actually mean now that there is a new generation to do the difficult reforms. They find themselves in very dire straits, as we know. Then there is a third category, which is, I would say, almost unprecedented for an advanced industrialized country. You have, literally, activists straight out of Maidan who are either officially in the cabinet or in the government with an important role.

You have a muckraking journalist who is in charge of the anti-corruption bureau, and another journalist—both from Maidan—who is in charge of what they call the lustration policy. Lustration means that people who committed crimes before, either literally crimes of being involved in shooting civilians or economic crimes and corruption, should no longer be allowed to have government functions.

There are a number of other activists. The fellow who was captured and tortured, Bulatov, who led the automobile resistance out of Maidan, is also a minister.

It may sound a bit far-fetched to us, but there is a clear sense from the Maidan demonstrators that this is not business as usual. I'm not talking about the Russian invasion here, just the change of regime. It's not changing a government. It's changing the way they conduct politics, and the demonstrators mean it and they will be watching. The government is accountable to them. Almost symbolically, the government had to first submit the list of cabinet ministers to Maidan for popular approval. There was one change apparently; one fellow was added.

That kind of civic engagement, which I think is very important—

**Dr. Taras Kuzio:** Accountability.

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** Yes, accountability. There could be all kinds of grey areas, such as what lustration will actually mean.

● (1630)

**Mr. David Anderson:** What strength does that give in a time like this?

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** Popular support that this is really a government that speaks to the people, without any illusion. As I said, some people have experience, which might be a good thing, but from the point of view of the demonstrators it may be a bad thing, because they don't want experienced people to repeat what they've done before, even if they are on their side. There is that kind of civic engagement, which is actually something that in western democracies and Canada often seems to be lacking. That's what we hear in public debates, that we need a more engaged democracy and not just elections every four years.

It's very positive, I think, but unusual. We'll see how the experiment goes. Of course, now we're dealing with a war situation.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Wayne, you had one quick question.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** As quick as I can make it.... The Russians have just signed recently an agreement in Crimea to have their military and navy bases there until 2042, and you made the statement a few minutes ago, and this is troubling me, about Putin being embarrassed, and also the second statement of not being in the real world. My concern is that if this isn't resolved quickly, we could very well wind up with that area partitioned.

What are your thoughts on that?

**Dr. Dominique Arel:** I'm very worried because.... Again, I'm not here to speak in hyperboles, but we may be reliving some kind of 1930s here. We have an absolutely unaccountable, absolute power president who lives in his own world and has the means and the media to somehow raise an entire class to do things that we never thought would be possible, such as attempting to destroy a country.

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** We thought we were past that. The relationships with Russia have been such, for a reasonable amount of time, so that certain reason seemed to be present, but now it's a step back many years.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Gentlemen, thank you very much for taking the time to be here. We appreciate it.

We'll suspend just for one second so we can get our next group of witnesses up and we'll come back.

● (1630)

(Pause)

● (1635)

**The Chair:** Good afternoon, and thanks to our witnesses for being here for the second hour.

From the Ukrainian World Congress, we have Eugene Czolij, the president. Thank you very much for being here.

We also have, as an individual, Father Ihor. Is that okay? We'll call you Father. How's that sound?

**Father Ihor Okhrimtchouk (Parish Priest, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, As an Individual):** That's perfect.

**The Chair:** Unless someone else wants to attempt your last name....

Why don't we just start, Eugene, with your opening remarks, and then we'll move over to Father Ihor?

**Mr. Eugene Czolij (President, Ukrainian World Congress):** Thank you.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Eugene Czolij, and I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address today the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs on the situation in Ukraine.

For the record, I'm the president of the Ukrainian World Congress, the international coordinating body for Ukrainian communities that was founded in 1967 and represents the interests of over 20 million Ukrainians living outside of Ukraine. The Ukrainian World Congress has member organizations in 33 countries, including the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, and ties with Ukrainians in 14 additional countries.

On behalf of the Ukrainian World Congress, I would like first to express our gratitude to the Government of Canada for its unequivocal support of the citizens of Ukraine and their aspirations for freedom, democracy, and fundamental values.

On November 21, 2013, Viktor Yanukovych turned his back on the European Union, in total disregard of the will of the Ukrainian people, by refusing to sign the EU-Ukraine association agreement. Since then, the world has witnessed an unprecedented chain of events that has demonstrated the strength, courage, determination, and unwavering resolve of the Ukrainian people. Ukrainians in Ukraine and around the world, including here in Canada, peacefully protested in Euromaidans, urging Ukraine's governing authorities to move forward towards Europe and not backward to a neo-Soviet Union.

The response from Ukraine's authorities was a crackdown. Protesters were detained, kidnapped, beaten, and killed. Even journalists and medical volunteers became targets. Amazingly, Ukrainians stood their ground.

On February 18, 2014, when Ukraine's governing authorities sent snipers to shoot at their own people using live ammunition, they forever lost any remaining legitimacy. This was the turning point that ultimately brought down a highly corrupt and authoritarian regime in Ukraine. Sadly, in this struggle for democracy, almost 100 Ukrainians made the ultimate sacrifice, and a substantial number sustained severe and life-changing injuries.

As Canadians who cherish democracy, we can honour the memory of these modern-day heroes by supporting the new government in Ukraine in its daunting challenge of restoring stability and implementing the necessary reforms to re-establish Ukraine as a fully democratic modern European state.

Having barely buried its heroes, Ukraine is facing another crisis orchestrated by a blatantly imperialistic Russian president, who described the collapse of the Soviet Union as the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century, and who desperately tried to recreate it under the guise of a Euro-Asian union of former Soviet republics, including Ukraine, only to see the Euromaidan put an end to his geopolitical plans.

On February 28, 2014, two days after the Crimean parliament refused to consider any proposed separatist initiatives, Russia invaded Crimea. Pro-Russian groups backed by Moscow have been deliberately trying to provoke violent confrontation in several major centres in southern and eastern Ukraine to broaden their military invasion.

The very next day, the Russian Federation Council unanimously ratified the following appeal by the President of Russia, so as to provide a legal justification for a Soviet-style military intervention in Ukraine. I quote:

> Due to the extraordinary situation that has taken shape in Ukraine and the threat to the lives of citizens of the Russian Federation, our compatriots, and the personnel of our Armed Forces of the Russian Federation who are deployed on the territory of Ukraine...I hereby introduce...an appeal for the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine pending the normalization of the social and political situation in that country.

In stark contrast, a petition created on Friday, February 28, was already endorsed by over 130,000 ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking nationals of Ukraine.

● (1640)

Addressed to President Putin, it reads as follows:

> We ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainian nationals do not need other countries to defend our interests. We are grateful to you for support however would like to inform you that nobody has ever infringed our rights on Ukrainian territory. We have always lived freely and happily, speaking in the language we are accustomed to. In school we have also learned Ukraine's state language and know it well enough to feel comfortable in a Ukrainian-speaking milieu.
>
> With all due respect for your concern, therefore, we would ask you to not raise an internal question for our country which is not a burning issue for us at Russian Federation state level. Not to mention bringing troops in to regulate a conflict which you may see, but which is not visible to us. Thank you for your understanding.

The Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine violates Russia's international obligations under the UN charter, the Helsinki Final Act, the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and the legal framework regulating the presence of the Russian Black Sea fleet in Ukraine. It needs to be condemned, and the international community must pressure Russia's president to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Should the international community not act decisively in respect of Russia's invasion of the Crimea, Russia will be emboldened, as was Nazi Germany following the Munich Agreement, to continue to fuel its imperialistic ambitions under the guise of protecting the lives of citizens of the Russian Federation, with possible expansion into eastern Ukraine and eventually other parts of Europe.

Ultimately, the best way to prevent the Kremlin from continuing to destabilize Ukraine, and in the process posing a serious threat to global security, would be for Russia to relocate its Black Sea fleet away from its current base in Ukraine to a naval base on Russian territory.

From the onset of the crisis in Ukraine, the Government of Canada has been responsive and reactive to ensure Canada's most effective engagement. Last week's visit by the Canadian delegation to Ukraine, led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable John Baird, the second over the course of the last three months, was an important gesture of Canadian solidarity with the people of Ukraine and Canada's clear recognition of Ukraine's new parliamentary government. Your continued leadership will be critical in supporting Ukraine to withstand the pressures being exerted from internal and external forces in their attempt to quell Ukraine's aspirations for a dignified life in a free society.

What must be the next steps? The Ukrainian World Congress urges Canada to actively cooperate with the international community to, one, support the new government of Ukraine; and two, send an international observer mission, under the auspices of the UN or the OSCE, to eastern and southern Ukraine, primarily to the Crimea, to monitor the situation on the ground and provide accurate information on developments. Three, Canada should cooperate with the international community to send UN peacekeeping forces to Ukraine; four, support international mediation to de-escalate the crisis in the Crimea; and five, impose sanctions, including visa bans, active money-laundering investigations, freezing of assets, and trade penalties, on Russia if it does not respond to the numerous legitimate calls to comply with its international obligations.

Six, the international community should follow Canada's lead and not attend the next G-8 summit in Sochi. Seven, Canada and the international community should suspend Russia's membership in the G-8; eight, organize an emergency G-7 meeting in Ukraine to address the economic, social, and security impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine; and nine, offer Ukraine a financial assistance package to avert its economic collapse, help the new government launch necessary reforms of the Ukrainian economy, and offset the undue economic pressure being exerted by Russia to punish Ukraine for its political choice to integrate with the European community.

● (1645)

Ten, Canada and the international community should organize an international donors conference in Ukraine; eleven, provide quick medical and humanitarian assistance for the victims of the Euromaidan; twelve, send substantial monitoring missions for the May 25, 2014, presidential elections in Ukraine; thirteen, engage and support civil society in Ukraine; and fourteen, provide technical assistance for small and medium businesses that will enhance the development of a much needed middle class in Ukraine.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, the Ukrainian people have paid an extraordinarily high price for the right to live in a democratic European state. The international community has an obligation to ensure that this choice of the Ukrainian people is fully respected.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Czolij.

We're now going to move over to Father Ihor.

**Father Ihor Okhrimtchouk:** I totally agree with what Eugene has said.

Honourable Senators, thank you very much for inviting me here today. As I said before, I totally agree with what Mr. Czolij has mentioned. But I'd like to have my presentation approach it from a little bit different standpoint.

I have gratefully been a Canadian citizen since 1999. Before that, I came to Canada in 1990, before the breakup of the Soviet Union. I bought this hat and I brought it here and I wear it all the time to support the Canadian team in the Olympics.

What I wanted to say is not as much a political statement as personal experience. I believe in democracy. I love a democracy, and this is the only way for people to live. I fluently speak Russian. I check the media and I wanted to bring to your attention a couple of things. Before I came to Canada, Ukraine was a part of the Soviet Union and most of us young men at the age of 18 were drafted into the military forces. I was in the Soviet Army as well. I served in eastern Germany. I was a topographer-cartographer. I remember that for the year I served in there, every morning, day after day we had a political preparation. Even though the Soviet Union was breaking up and people saw it, we had to learn the works of Lenin, of the Communist Party, and we had to affirm every morning that we believed in the Soviet Union and that we would fight to the death for that country. Thank God, that empire has fallen.

It has fallen at a very expensive price. Many of my co-villagers—I was born in a village—gave up their lives for the Soviet cause in Afghanistan and I remember mothers crying at the graves of those people who died without understanding why. The reason I said I believe in democracy is because this is the only way for a human being to live. As a priest I believe it's in Genesis, the first book of the bible, which says we are created in the image of God. We are free and that freedom has to be honoured and given to everybody.

I'm not here to preach. The reason I pointed out that I served in the Soviet Army is that Putin is a KGB product. As one of the political commentators from Russia said, being part of the KGB is not a profession, it's a calling, a genotype. The sadist has to be there, the one who does not question the authority, the one who does not have any regrets about the action that happens. The only way to win is to win by force, by power, by any means.

The reason why I'm bringing this up is not because I'm a psychoanalyst or something like that, I'm not here to analyze this. But from that perspective I know it will take a very strong effort on behalf of NATO and the entire world community to stop this man. You look at news releases and you see Mr. Putin riding the horse, flying the plane, and stuff like that. It's almost like déjà vu going back to Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi. That's a man who has unlimited power and unlimited financial resources. He is the grand thief of the world. There is speculation that his wealth is between $130 billion to $150 billion. He's surrounded himself with like-minded people. The KGB and now Federal Security Service, the security bureau in Russia, became de facto embezzlers, the people who take the funds that come from those illegal options. They act in a very determined way.

I may be wrong, but I believe Russia has over 100 channels that are televised across that great country and each and every one of those channels is censored. Whatever you say, there's a three- to five-second delay. They interviewed a member of the parliament from Crimea who said there's really no chaos here or anything like that. It was live streaming on Russian television. He was talking on the phone. He said there's nothing really happening; the only crooks we have in Crimea are members of the regional parties who steal the money. He kept going on, but then right away his phone would hang up and they would say there's a terrible situation in Ukraine right now and we are experiencing technical difficulties.

● (1650)

It's not only censoring in the media. There's also the big political machine the KGB developed over the 70 years of its existence, which exists now too, to brainwash people. Even though it works so hard with that many channels, there are people who wake up and say they can't go against their brothers. They're our neighbours. It's suicide.

So there are reports.... Before I came here, I read that Russian troops gave Ukrainian troops—I'm not sure if it's in Crimea or across Ukraine—until 5 a.m. to give up their weapons. Five a.m. is about 10 p.m. our time, so we have about five hours.

I wanted to believe—because I never prayed as hard as I prayed today—that the military intervention would not happen, but I'm also a realistic person. A man who is in power who is not capable of remorse and going back, I'm not quite sure if he'll go back.

That's why if we're talking here.... I'm not sure if we're too late, but it has to be heard that the man in charge is truly a maniac, if you want to say it, no different than Stalin was. Thank God for all the media there, so at least we have an opportunity to see rounded coverage of the events versus what happened in 1932-33. 1932-33 is the only one we know of so far of what happened in Ukraine, or for that matter in the entire Soviet Union.

I have a small church here in Ottawa. My parishioners are Russians as well as Ukrainians and Belarusians and stuff like that. We are a church and we welcome everybody. Rather than sitting here, I'd rather go with my friend who sits—if you know where Bronson Avenue is, there's a drive off from the bridge there.... I have a friend there, Benny, who's a money beggar, but once a week we go to McDonald's and we talk. I'd rather be there. I respect all your work, but it's not my job to make political statements. Unfortunately, I'm here to plead, to say that we are, at the very least, on the brink of another humanitarian catastrophe.

If we were to take the pessimistic observation and see Putin for the maniac he is, who was given full authority to command the forces and to do whatever he deems necessary by his senate, I believe, the council of the federation.... I don't want to believe it, but realistically I expect that a military conflict will unfold.

I also want to ask for two more things. One of the people who was here before me, the young lady Lada Roslycky, analyzed the Black Sea fleet. She said to coordinate the efforts, not only of the larger members of NATO but also Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, at that point in time, to help support, prevent, and show the unity of the world community in condemning any type of violence.

Honestly, I don't want a repetition of the scenario that happened in Georgia. When that happened in Georgia, we also prayed for them. Our church prays for all catastrophes that happen in the world, whether it is in Quebec when so many innocent people died because of the catastrophe with the derailing of the train, or in Georgia or anywhere else. Human life is so precious.

The second thing, continuing on the topic that human life is so precious—and it's my own statement—I also would like, if that were to happen, God forbid, that Canada, as it always has, opened a simplified process for the refugees to be able to come to Canada.

I thank you all for your attention.

● (1655)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. We're going to start our first round, which will be seven minutes of questions and answers, with Madame Laverdière.

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank both of you for your very moving presentations.

[*English*]

We are all very preoccupied by this situation in Ukraine, of course, and following matters, as you were saying. We're talking five hours from now for the famous or infamous deadline that was given.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Czolij, what specific role could Canada play? How could it show leadership concerning the situation in the Crimea?

You have really given us a list that is very detailed and interesting. Would it be possible to send that list to the committee for our use?

**Mr. Eugene Czolij:** Yes.

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** I will turn now to the other two witnesses.

Although there has not been much discussion of this in the committee to this point, you mentioned the role that Turkey could be called on to play.

Mr. Okhrimtchouk, you in particular mentioned Turkey. What role do you feel Turkey could play?

● (1700)

[*English*]

**Father Ihor Okhrimtchouk:** Mentioning Turkey, what I wanted to say is that the lady who left before me had mentioned it to me. She actually mentioned it before, but she mentioned to me that she lived in Crimea for three years and she analyzed that aspect.

She is a political science major, Dr. Lada Roslycky. She said that at this point in time, it would be good to coordinate with Turkey, which is an ally of the United States to a great extent, as well as Bulgaria, Romania, and so on.

The Russian media, when you read it, portrays Turkey as saying, “Aha, they are with us because they agreed with our statement”. The role of Turkey, even if the gesture is not that grand, is pivotal as well, bringing perhaps the ships closer to the Ukrainian coast, and so on. That's my understanding of that aspect.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Eugene Czolij:** I will send you my speech. However, I would like to mention that the Minister of Foreign Affairs has been to Ukraine twice now. He has seen people and been able to meet with them. The propaganda that extremists have taken power will continue. I learned today that Mr. Yanukovych has called on the Russian president to use the military to restore order in Ukraine, because a band of extremists had taken power.

The Government of Canada did send its Minister of Foreign Affairs and he has been able to hold discussions with people there. I think that there will be some debate on the legitimacy of the people who are in power. I think that the minister needs to tell us what he has heard and indicate that the people he met with are people like us, people who simply want to live in a modern, democratic, European country.

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** Thank you.

On that point about being modern and democratic, what role could Canada play around the elections that we still hope will be held in late May?

**Mr. Eugene Czolij:** When the last elections were held, Canada was very engaged. There were up to 500 observers during some elections. The Ukrainian community in Canada sent the same number of volunteer observers. I believe that at least that many observers should be sent for the next elections, since this is a turning point in the country's history.

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** Mr. Okhrimtchouk, your congregation members probably still have many friends and relatives in Ukraine. What are they hearing? How is the current situation affecting them?

[*English*]

**Father Ihor Okhrimtchouk:** As I was driving from the church to here, I actually was on the phone, a speakerphone, and I talked to two people. One of them is actually from Crimea itself and said there was a tremendous fear because there are announcements of the fact that action will start in a couple of hours. If you think about it, he says that you see lots of people that they've never seen before. He doesn't live in a large city. He lives just out of Sevastopol, in a village a couple of towns over. He says there are lots of people who are coming in with covered faces, and they assure people that order will be restored. So that's one thing in Crimea.

The second person I spoke to had talked to someone from the western Ukraine, where I am actually from. They were saying it's a tremendous fear. What she said to me is that people are talking on the streets saying that Putin wants to bring Yanukovych back to the Ukraine at any cost, establish his rule and dominance, and then say, “Aha, the lawful president is back.”

They are saying that Putin will not stop at any cost, so he has made up his mind and he will go there at any cost.

That's about all I can say at this point in time.

● (1705)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Father Ihor Okhrimtchouk:** On Sunday we had more people than we had at Easter for Pascha. We had so many people coming in, and we were just praying for victims, for those who had died. You know, the petitions that you have in the Orthodox liturgy are very simple and say, you know, for the peace in the world and for the welfare of all people. Really it was the most poignant statement you could ever have made. It was probably the strongest for me.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We are going to move to Mr. Anderson.

You have seven minutes, sir.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank our visitors for being with us here today. Father, I'd like to ask you one question first.

I also want to share my time with Mr. Goldring. I'd like him to have a couple of minutes here.

I'd like to ask you, Father, what you see the role of the church being in solving this crisis in Ukraine. There have been some reports that the church has actually been used to create division rather than bring people together. I'm just wondering if you could give us a short statement as to what you feel the role of the church would be.

**Father Ihor Okhrimtchouk:** I thank you for your question. Actually, Mr. Goldring has asked me that, and I failed to mention it as I was not really prepared in a very systematic sense.

As for the church in Ukraine, there is the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, which has about three million to five million followers. There is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which has broken into three branches. There are two smaller branches: the Autocephalous church, which is an independent church; and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyivan Patriarchate, which has about half of the Orthodox followers in Ukraine. Then there is a large authoritarian church, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate.

The first three churches I mentioned were with people from the onset. You see the film of the conflict in Independence Square in Ukraine and you see the doors of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyivan Patriarchate, St. Michael's monastery and church, opening up and covering the protesters from the bullets. A makeshift hospital has been established there, and so on.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate is almost like a Trojan horse, you almost never know where they would go. They made a very pivotal statement a couple of days ago and the entire church said they were pleading to the Moscow Patriarch, who is the head of that church, to ask the president to stop by any means the invasion of Ukraine. The interesting part was that the official reply from the Moscow Patriarch was that he prays and hopes that Ukrainians will encourage their government and their troops to the least resistance of the rightful coming of the Russian troops.

So that's what I can tell you. Of course it outraged that part of the church. Depending on the circumstances, perhaps it will be the biggest catalyst for the unity of the church, but also the biggest catalyst for the people of that church to truly express the patriotic feelings of the people.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Thank you.

Mr. Czolij, we had a chance to meet at Vilnius. At the time the three opposition leaders were meeting and trying to discuss strategy. It looked like the protests might almost fade out, and then that weekend was when the police decided to beat protestors. Our previous witness said that he really believed that Russia wants to provoke an overreaction from the government of Ukraine; they want them to react. Can you comment on that?

The second part of that would be, how far can the government be pushed before it needs to react and needs to push back?

● (1710)

**Mr. Eugene Czolij:** Thank you for the question.

Mr. Chairman, we have received various reports today both from the press service of Ukraine's Ministry of Internal Affairs and from the former adviser to President Putin, Andrei Illarionov, to the effect that special Russian forces, dressed as if from the Ukrainian side, would kill three to four Russian soldiers during the night, from March 3 to March 4, in order to escalate the conflict. That has been done in Georgia and it has been done elsewhere. That's the type of provocation that we are looking to see in the next days.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Okay.

I'll turn it over to Mr. Goldring. I wish I had much more time to ask you, but he had a question he wanted to ask.

**Mr. Peter Goldring:** Thank you very much.

I've been, of course, talking to the Ukrainian ambassador, and talking to the Russian embassy, too. Again, this morning, I phoned the Russian embassy and talked to a consul there. I talked to him about the so-called threat to the lives of the Russian-speaking Ukrainians. I asked him if he could explain why he feels that Russian-speaking Ukrainians are at risk in the Crimea and indeed all of the Ukraine. I asked him what the risk was. He could not say. It's simply because they're not at risk, as we speak.

Is the risk to the Russian-speaking Ukrainians a fact, or is it a figment of the maniacal mind of Putin?

**Mr. Eugene Czolij:** I think you answered your own question. I think it's obvious.

**Mr. Peter Goldring:** On the record, though...?

**Mr. Eugene Czolij:** On the record, the Russian minority in Ukraine is treated as well as a minority is treated by a majority in the best countries.

**Mr. Peter Goldring:** Would the risk, if there is any, be characterized more as the risk from the Russian troops in the Crimea than from day-to-day life without the troops? The Russian troops indeed are the risk.

**Mr. Eugene Czolij:** Absolutely.

I'm a lawyer, and usually we're not allowed to ask questions to which the witness can only say yes or no because it's so obvious, but I guess that rule does not apply here.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Eugene Czolij:** Clearly, the biggest risk, the only risk, is a blatant violation of international obligations by a Russian president who is clearly imperialistic and clearly has never accepted Ukraine as an independent country. He thought that he could orchestrate through financial control and through President Yanukovych. As I've said in my presentation, that geopolitical dream has been shattered, and he, as any leader who resorts to anything to achieve his goals, has turned to the military to settle the issue in a forceful way.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Duncan, you have seven minutes, please.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Father, thank you for your heartfelt testimony.

Mr. Czolij, I think you've made very specific recommendations to this committee and we'd be grateful if you could table them.

Mr. Czolij, if I may, I'll begin with you. In the opinion of the Ukrainian World Congress, is there anything Canada and its allies can do to pressure Russia to withdraw?

**Mr. Eugene Czolij:** I think Canada played a pivotal role during the three months when the Maidan was fighting a corrupt authoritarian regime in Ukraine.

I would be looking for Canada to take the same leadership role in pushing the agenda forward. In terms of that agenda forward, as I always say, when you're speaking to a thug, you need to speak a thug's language. The only way the situation in Ukraine changed was when sanctions were threatened. Then the country started to make the necessary steps in order to implement them. I think the same thing needs to be done in this critical situation.

When somebody blatantly violates international obligations, it is not sufficient to deplore and to condemn. Concrete actions must be imposed immediately in order to make not only the president of Russia but also his entourage feel that there are serious consequences to this type of violation. That is the only thing that will make them change their minds or de-escalate the conflict.

Canada can play a lead role in pushing that agenda forward.

● (1715)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** I think you've answered my next question, but I'll ask it anyway, just so you can reaffirm this.

What, if anything, can be done to deter Russian aggression that is not already being done?

**Mr. Eugene Czolij:** I think basically it is to move that agenda forward, one that goes beyond just declarations. Declarations had to be made, they were made, and now I think we need sanctions. We need trade sanctions and we need an immediate monitoring mission in Ukraine on the ground.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Thank you, Mr. Czolij.

We know that Ukraine has asked for our monetary assistance. Have there been any developments there in terms of the IMF?

**Mr. Eugene Czolij:** My understanding is that the European Union is tabling an offer of a short-term package and a long-term package. I recall that last week Elmar Brok, the chair of the foreign affairs committee in the European Parliament, stated that a package of about 20 billion euros would be put together. I know that the United States is preparing a package.

So yes, this issue is being discussed. To my liking, unfortunately, the discussion is a very lengthy discussion, whereas immediate action, including immediate financial assistance, is needed in order to allow this new government to address the issues, to avoid an economic collapse, and to implement serious reforms.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** You said “immediate”. How much, by when, and what would you like to see Canada doing?

**Mr. Eugene Czolij:** I think there are discussions. I don't want to put a number for Canada, because there are discussions between the EU, the United States, and the Ukrainian authorities in order to put a package together. The only thing I'd say at this point would be for Canada to push for the discussion to be accelerated and for some substantial money to be put on the table immediately.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Thank you. I appreciate that.

Can both of you talk to what the Ukrainians are facing right now, both in Crimea and in the east and west of Ukraine?

**Father Ihor Okhrimtchouk:** Right now it's overwhelming fear.

Number one, there is an information vacuum in Ukraine. Mr. Czolij was talking about where else Canada can help. Hopefully the situation will be resolved quickly, or at least painlessly, for all sides without the sacrifice of human life. But really, when you think about it, one thing would be to help coordinate and create a country-wide television network that would be able to give out signals on what the parliament was doing, and so on and so forth. Hopefully it would be a transparent one.

That's one thing. What else are people facing? I think fear is one of those things that are probably the best in determining...in that, with fear, people are determined to defend themselves. We see it in the eastern regions. My cousin lives actually in Donetsk, where you would say it's very pro-Russian. His wife is Russian. They're both saying, “This is our land. We don't want to go anywhere. We don't feel threatened. We had a small business. We were doing okay. Why are we pushed to believe that we are persecuted?” It's stuff like that.

So there is hope, and also if the attack is to occur, I do believe there will be as large a fury as there will be large human losses.

● (1720)

**Mr. Eugene Czolij:** Mr. Chair, if I may add just one sentence to this. Over the last three months, various high-level officials from various countries have been in Ukraine or in Euromaidan, and have told Ukrainians, “We are with you”.

I think a lot of Ukrainians in Ukraine want to see those words being transformed into concrete action and concrete assistance today.

**The Chair:** That's all the time we have.

We're going to start our second round.

Ms. Grewal.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

I would also like to thank each one of you for being here today. The situation in Ukraine, as all of us know, is really deeply troubling, and our government stands with our allies in condemning the actions of President Vladimir Putin.

It would appear that President Putin is using the current turmoil as an opportunity to take control of Crimea. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Crimea has been a source of tensions between Ukraine and Russia.

Could you tell us anything about Crimea, its ethnic makeup, its constitutional position with Ukraine as an autonomous republic, its current government? From media reports, it sounds as though the Russians may be welcomed with open arms by a large part of the Crimean population.

In your opinion, would this be accurate?

**Father Ihor Okhrimtchouk:** I'm sorry. Could you repeat the last question? I didn't hear.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** From various media sources it sounds as though the Russians may be welcomed by part of the Crimean population. In your opinion, is it accurate that the Russians will be welcomed with open arms by the Crimean population?

**Father Ihor Okhrimtchouk:** I'll start answering. Mr. Czolij is more astute when it comes to the politics and the polity there.

When you think about the makeup of Crimea, I'm not quite sure of the numbers, but over 50% of the people consider themselves to be Russian. Then another 20%, or close to 20%, would be Tatars and another 20% to 25% would be ethnic Ukrainians, or of other descent. The borders are always kind of shifting. If my mother is Russian and my father is Ukrainian, sometimes I am Ukrainian and sometimes I am Russian. I'm not talking about myself but generally, the statistics.

Crimea, when you think about it from the standpoint of Ukraine, is a very heavily subsidized region of Ukraine. The capital city is 80% subsidized by the federal government and the entire peninsula of Crimea is subsidized about 65% by the government. It's interesting that this had been used against Ukraine by the eastern regions, which maintain that it's western Ukraine that is mainly subsidized, but there are a lot of subsidies that go there.

You were asking whether there are any loyalties to Russia. Yes, there are. It would be wrong to deny it. Some 60% of the people are Russians, so there is strong sentiment. However, the elected officials of Crimea have always said that they belong to Ukraine, that they are part of Ukraine. They have autonomy, and I think the Ukrainian parliament had tabled a motion for wider autonomy for Crimea.

When the last government came to power, the gentleman who right now represents himself as president, only got, what, 4% of the votes in the last Crimean election. But he is known as the one who embezzles lots of funds, so of course for him, a stabilization of the region, supported by Russian forces, would be appropriate.

Quite often, the card of Ukrainian nationalism, if I may put it that way, is played in Crimea, and the reason for that is that Crimea has all 158 channels from Russia and only selected channels from Ukraine. Before events in Maidan, the media was controlled mainly by the Russian president. So there is no objective opinion. Whatever the media feeds you, that's what you believe is the truth.

● (1725)

**The Chair:** Thank you, that's all the time we have, Ms. Grewal.

I'm going to have to move over to Madame Latendresse.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** Like all my colleagues, I would also like to thank both of you for coming here today.

I will start with a question to Mr. Okhrimtchouk.

[*English*]

We are interested in knowing what kind of presence the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has in Crimea.

In light of the recent events, what kind of impact has the church experienced?

**Father Ihor Okhrimtchouk:** As I said before, there are three branches of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. In Crimea, which is a large territory, there are only two Ukrainian Orthodox Churches of the Kyivan Patriarchate, which is—if I might simplify it—a pro-western-oriented democratic church. However, the majority of churches, over 90%, are Ukrainian Orthodox of Moscow Patriarchate.

I have to say in their defence that when the events started, there was a picture showing the Ukrainian Orthodox of Moscow Patriarch Kirill standing in front of the Ukrainian military regiment in front of the doors and telling people to stop—with the cross and everything else. He was saying, “Please stop, we cannot afford any bloodshed”.

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** All right.

I also have a question for both of you on....

[*Translation*]

I will ask it in French.

Some are saying that the current military intervention in Ukraine was apparently orchestrated and planned a long time ago. Several people are saying that this occupation could not have been organized within 24 hours.

Do you think Russia was planning to use its armed forces in Crimea a lot longer ago than what we may think? Are they planning to go a lot further than Crimea?

**Mr. Eugene Czolij:** Your analysis of the situation is correct. It is impossible to plan that type of military movement within 24 hours. Clearly it was planned a while ago. I think that the Russian president did not want to send any armed forces during the Olympic games. As several predicted, as soon as the closing ceremonies were over he once again showed his true colours.

I would like to add something else. This is often being described as a conflict between Russians and the Ukrainians, or between the extremists and all the others. I think that the real reason the Russian president sent in the army was because of what happened in the Maidan. Everything started with a political issue, the direction a country was going to take, but it turned into a will on the part of the population to live in a democratic country without abuse nor corruption. Whether they live in an eastern, western, northern or southern country, any normal family wants to live in those conditions. I think that what the Russian president felt was that this will, which turned into a spectacular victory for the Maidan, could also surface in Russia.

[*English*]

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** I don't know if Mr. Okhrimtchouk has some...with his background in military?

**Father Ihor Okhrimtchouk:** I was a soldier so I don't know how valuable I am from a tactical standpoint, but yes, I do believe it was planned. It was planned because he told Yanukovych.... By giving the money and please remember that the people who were in power in Ukraine—prosecutor general, president—when the grant from Moscow comes in, it's filtered into their pockets. Whatever crumbs are left go to pay salaries and stuff like that, so a grant comes in and so on. As an outcome, after the events hopefully that will unfold right now, it would be good to have the monitoring tools as well. But yes, it was planned before.

The most important point is that Russia said they'd protect not only the ethnic Russians but also Russian-speaking people. Czech Republic announced today that they will terminate or limit the visas to Russian-speaking people because....

Let's think about the worst scenario. The west says to heck with it, Ukraine will be invaded, we don't have to care about anything else, so get gas to the border of Ukraine with the western union. In Czech Republic there is a large population of Russian-speaking people so what would prevent them from going further?

Canada is one of the largest immigration communities of Russian-speaking people. People who come to our church speak in Russian.

You know my rationale, right? You can make up excuses all you want; well, somebody on Scott Street told them that they shouldn't wear a scarf, but they should wear something else. It's a democratic country, we can say it, you don't have to agree with me.

● (1730)

**The Chair:** Thank you. That's all the time.

Gary, you had a quick question. Lois, do you have a question as well? No.

Gary, you have a quick question to finish up.

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Thank you very much.

On the weekend I spent the biggest part of the time going back and forth between Russian television, RT out of Washington, and CNN, and it was like watching two different football games, just exact opposites.

One thing I did see though was that the governor of Crimea—I think he's a governor or whoever is over that particular area—was interviewed and he said that he took charge of the area. He asked President Putin to come to help the Russian people.

The other thing, in my understanding, is that there was going to be a referendum held in the Crimea in May. Would that be along with the election? Is that a referendum for separation? They've moved it ahead to March. Is it going to be a fair referendum with a bunch of Russian troops in the area?

**Mr. Eugene Czolij:** I think your last words answer the question. How can you seriously have a referendum with military troops on the ground?

One thing that is telling though—and I can provide the site to you—is how swiftly Russians in the Crimea put their names on the petition that I read, which said, "Please leave. We do not need your protection. We live well here".

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you very much for coming in today. We appreciate your testimony.

With that, we are going to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting is adjourned.