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The Honourable Peter Kent

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● (1535)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC)): Good afternoon, colleagues.

As we continue our study of the defence of North America we have two witnesses, as individuals, appearing with us today. First is Mr. Whitney Lackenbauer, professor, Department of History, St. Jerome's University; and second is Robert Huebert, associate professor; Department of Political Science, University of Calgary.

Mr. Lackenbauer, your opening remarks, please.

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer (Professor, Department of History, St. Jerome's University, As an Individual): Thank you for the opportunity to be here.

Climate change, newly accessible resources, new maritime routes, unresolved boundary disputes, announcements of new investments in military capabilities to defend sovereign rights—no wonder the Arctic has emerged as a topic of tremendous hype and deep-seated misperceptions over the past decade, spawning persistent debates about whether the region's future is likely to follow a cooperative trend or whether it's fated to spiral into unbridled competition and conflict.

Commentators differ in their assessments about the probability and/or timing of developments, as well as general governance and geopolitical trends. Some, like myself, contend that the Arctic regime is solidly rooted in cooperation. Others, with Dr. Huebert at the forefront, anticipate heightened competition and conflict.

These frameworks are very significant in shaping expectations for the Government of Canada and for the Canadian Armed Forces more specifically. If one expects that the region is on the precipice of conflict then constabulary capabilities are insufficient. On the other hand, official military statements that anticipate no conventional military threats to the region, but instead see an increase in security and safety challenges, point to the need for capabilities suited to a supporting role in a whole-of-government framework; the ideas you heard from General Beare and General Loos a few months ago.

Rather than rushing a spate of new investments in combat capabilities to meet an impending security crisis, as Rob might have us believe, official frameworks provide the Canadian Armed Forces with appropriate and responsible guidance to support other government departments in addressing security concerns and responding to non-military Arctic emergencies.

Although several expensive capital programs remain in project definition or design phases, or have been scaled back in the case of Nanisivik, this does not mean Canada faces a critical combat capability deficit that leaves us vulnerable in an increasingly hostile Arctic world. Delivering on promised investments aligned to the broader national strategy for our Arctic before rationally ramping up to fight some fantastical Arctic combatant, conjured to the scene because of preconceived cold war mentalities and international events unrelated to Arctic disputes, is a prudent and rational course.

My first point relates to international events and risk assessments. It's important for commentators and analysts to contemplate worst-case scenarios. This is the way of identifying potential military risks and vulnerabilities. An excessive fixation on remote potentialities and their misidentification as probabilities can lead to misallocated resources: intellectual resources and material resources. It can lead to unwarranted suspicion and paranoia. That very messaging can lead us into a security dilemma.

Despite all of the considerable ink that's been spilled on boundary disputes, and uncertainty surrounding the delineation of extended continental shelves in the Arctic, official statements by all of the Arctic states are quick to dispel the myth that these issues have strong defence components. They do not. Despite all of the political saber rattling with Russia over the Lomonosov Ridge and the North Pole, which generates punchy headlines in both countries, it's simplistic and erroneous to draw parallels between Russian aggression in the Ukraine and the establishment of the outer limits of its sovereign rights in the Arctic.

The Ukrainian crisis has shown that Arctic politics are not immune to international events. We need to be careful to distinguish between global security threats and Arctic-specific security threats. The Ukraine has broader implications for NATO and for global security, but I think it's erroneous to draw a direct connection between what's happening in the Ukraine and to set up that same intentionality on the part of the Russians when it comes to clarifying the Arctic. There's a real tendency to conflate international threats with Arctic-specific threats.

Of course Russian adventurism has important impacts on Canada and on defence. I want to emphasize that I do not see this as an Arctic issue. The country that has the most to lose through Arctic instability is Russia. They're going to be facing a lot of challenges in the months to come if oil and gas prices stay where they're at.

Despite the hostile diplomatic atmosphere that's been created by the Russian annexation of Crimea there is no indication that it or any other Arctic state intends to move away from the existing international framework when it comes to asserting sovereign rights or substantiating legal claims.

The opportunities associated with Arctic resources also fire up imaginations and lead us to frame sensational narratives of unbridled competition for rights and for Arctic territory, which have little grounding in reality. Despite the wealth of Arctic resources depictions of a race between circumpolar states arming in preparation for a resource-fuelled conflict are fundamentally misinformed.

Exploration activities are not occurring in a legal vacuum, in which states might perceive a need to compete for control and access. Each Arctic coastal state has expressed interest in encouraging responsible resource development within its jurisdiction consistent with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Anything that deviates from it would create instability, thus impeding investment and slowing the pace of development, which goes against the expressed interests of the Arctic states.

Arguably the best way to protect the Arctic in this context is to clarify environmental regulations, things such as drilling requirements and corporate liability laws and benefits to indigenous peoples and so on, not fixation on a military lens.

Of course, all of the talk about resource development is still highly hypothetical. We see constantly shifting scenarios. Just take the price of oil and gas in recent months as a real exclamation point showing how subjective and volatile Arctic development trends are in the face of global market supply and demand.

It's important to also note that the United States has come to very similar conclusions to the ones I'm presenting to you and that Canada has come to. The U.S. Department of Defense's Arctic strategy states that, given the dismal fiscal environment in that country, it's not surprising that U.S. policies are hesitant and non-committal about Arctic investments, because there is a high degree of uncertainty about what developments are going to occur in the region and when. They keep emphasizing that making premature, unnecessary investments, spurred by reactionary thinking, will deflect resources away from more pressing priorities. Their Arctic strategy also warns that:

> Being too aggressive in taking steps to address anticipated future security risks may create the conditions of mistrust and miscommunication under which such risks could materialize.

So you have a U.S. Arctic strategy and U.S. Navy Arctic road map that instead adopt a very broad definition of security that alludes to the benefits of burden-sharing across agencies and with international partners. The U.S. Navy road map predicts that the region will remain “a low threat security environment” for “the foreseeable future”. To realize its desired end state of peace and stability, the report stresses the need to invest in the unique and enduring partnership that the U.S. enjoys with Canada.

The reason I bring this up before you as Canadian parliamentarians is that once we get past the very limiting dialogue over sovereignty that tends to trap us in Canada, we actually see that Canadian and American interests and priorities in the Arctic, particularly in the defence and security realms, are very well aligned. We have a long-established partnership, in the form of NORAD, and a whole bunch of other thick bilateral relationships that allow us to jointly manage defence relationships in the region.

Despite pressures in some Canadian circles to nationalize Canadian Arctic defence, as if somehow working with our American allies detracts from our sovereignty, I think this thinking needs to be resisted, because this would mean a tremendous misallocation of defence resources to somehow beef up our independent defensive capabilities in the Arctic to meet that paper tiger sovereignty threat that doesn't exist today and has not really existed since the early days of the Cold War. We can certainly talk in the question period about how this relates to potential capabilities and platforms such as Arctic offshore patrol ships and so on.

Managing issues in a bilateral relationship with the U.S. rather than through a broader NATO framework is also very useful for Canada, because it facilitates agreeing to disagree on the status of the waters of Canada's Arctic archipelago in ways that otherwise might be much more difficult or even impossible to do in a committee of the whole.

Working with allies is key, but Canadian strategic documents also emphasize, as the Americans' do, that there is no conceivable military threat in the near future and that our primary focus should be on security and safety. Certainly strategic frameworks that have been generated by the Canadian military place an explicit emphasis on the security and safety aspects of the operation continuum, things that you heard from General Beare.

What this means or what this entails is a whole-of-government or comprehensive approach, recognizing that it's often other government departments or agencies that have lead responsibilities for security and safety issues. What most commentators in the media and in academia overlook is how much work has actually been done to clarify and streamline relationships between involved departments.

● (1540)

The Department of National Defence is certainly leading from behind but it's playing a supporting role. Things like the Operation Nanook whole-of-government exercises and mechanisms like the Arctic security working group often operate outside the political or public eye, but I would argue these relationships are absolutely essential to allow us to respond effectively and appropriately to the sorts of hazards and threats that we're likely to see in the near future.

In speaking of relationships, I'd be remiss not to mention one of the most uniquely Canadian cornerstones of our Arctic defences, the Canadian Rangers. Full disclosure; I'm the honorary lieutenant colonel of 1st Canadian Ranger Patrol Group. The Rangers are a good example where having modest capabilities rooted in communities, rooted in relationships with northerners are essential. These relationships are the cornerstone of our behaving appropriately in our north. They represent a long-standing capability that serves as a force multiplier for southern units that have to go up and operate in a very austere and difficult environment. They're also a very critical bridge between the Arctic communities and other elements of the Canadian Forces, and I bring them up because they're a signature initiative of Prime Minister Harper. They've been expanded to 5,000, but we also need to remember that expansion is not just numbers on a sheet. It's ensuring that they have the support in the form of Ranger instructors and headquarters staff to allow them to accomplish their mission.

So as a wrap-up point, political statements are often generated in a heated atmosphere where, sure, we've taken a strident stand against Russian expansionism in Europe. Some of this may point to Rob's thesis that he's going to present, that there's a likelihood of conflict in the Arctic. But I think it's very important that regional priorities and threat assessments used to frame Arctic defence and security frameworks over the last decade in Canada remain sound. Our whole-of-government approach designed to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to non-combat security and safety scenarios should not be hijacked by a retreat to Cold War thinking.

Thank you.

● (1545)

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Lackenbauer.

Professor Huebert, 10 minutes, please.

Dr. Robert Huebert (Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, As an Individual): Thank you very much.

First of all, it's indeed my pleasure to be able to come here and to talk to you about a subject of such critical importance for Canada.

My talk will be based on the main premise that we are currently witnessing a fundamental transformation of the Arctic security environment. In many ways the types of transformation that we are seeing right now are akin to, and in many ways just as powerful as, when we saw the end of the Cold War and the factors, of course, that led in to that. I have three major points that I wish to address in explaining what the ramifications for Canada are for this transformation.

The first one, of course, is the foundation, which is what is causing this change and why we should view it as long-term, destabilizing, and of complete importance to Canadian interests.

Second, I want to talk about some of the indicators of this change. How do we know that it's just simple talk? How do we know that it's not rhetoric, that in fact what we are seeing within the Arctic region is indeed a transformation of a security regime, and that as much as I wish I could believe in Dr. Lackenbauer's optimism of cooperation and progress, unfortunately the indicators, at least through my assessment, suggest a different direction?

The last point, and what I would contend is the most important, is where are the pressure points? Where does Canada actually have to be paying attention in the long term and what does this mean in the context of the types of responses that we have to create?

For the foundation of why we are seeing this transformation there are four major factors. The first, and the one that has gathered the most attention, is of course the impacts of climate change. The reality of an ice cap that probably will be gone as a permanent ice cap is something that our children will be seeing in terms of a new globe. This is something as humans we haven't seen before.

Alongside of that is the recognition of new resources. I would disagree with my learned colleague in pointing out that resources have been developed. When we look at the production of diamonds within the Canadian Northwest Territories alone, we have seen the manner in which resources have already started to be developed. Mary River has started production in what is probably going to be the largest supply of iron ore in the world, full stop. So it has already begun.

The third factor is the interest of the international community. The fact that the Chinese, the Japanese, and the South Koreans are all now very interested in the Arctic, and many Europeans have become so, also highlights the changing nature of the field.

But perhaps the most important and the one that I would argue is the most overlooked is that there is a growing strategic importance of the Arctic to the Americans and Russians that goes beyond anything in regard to the current situation in Ukraine, and rather represents core strategic interests that regardless of climate change, regardless of resource development, are going to be the fundamental challenge that Canada will be facing.

What indicators do we have? We can look in terms of policies. There were no Arctic security policies amongst any of the Arctic countries until around 2006. Now everybody has one. Everybody, of course, says the good stuff at the beginning, we want to cooperate and it's an area of peace, etc., but all of them conclude their defence statements with, but by the way we will defend our national interests by unilateral means if necessary. So it's a two-way rhetorical comment.

We are also seeing clearly however that there are force developments. The Russians, particularly commencing in the second term of the Putin administration, have begun to reinvigorate their strategic deterrent capabilities, and that is focused on their submarine capabilities, both for their SSBNs and their SSNs. This, of course, has to be situated in the north by virtue of geography. The Russians do not station their older subs on their Pacific coast, even though they say they treat them as equals. That simply is not what they are doing in terms of the evidence.

We see the Americans developing their strategic capabilities, particularly their anti-strategic capabilities, in Alaska. So we are seeing indicators that go beyond just simply dealing with constabulatory issues in the Arctic, but rather larger strategic ones.

We are also seeing a conduct of exercises the likes of which we thought had ended at the end of the Cold War. Canada was first with the beginning of its operations back around 2002, but since that time countries such as Russia, the United States, and Norway regularly have winter exercises of up to 10,000 troops, which is a substantial effort and endeavour.

● (1550)

Where are the pressure points? Where should we be concerned, having set the stage in this context?

The first pressure point is, of course, oil and gas. This is the one everyone focuses on. This is the one, of course, they talk about, the rush to resources. I do agree with Dr. Lackenbauer that there is little evidence that we are going to see conflict over oil. Oil, of course, goes up and down in terms of price, and some people suspect, for example, that right now the Saudis are oversupplying not only to bring pressure on Russia—once again the larger geopolitical picture—but also to push out the independents and the medium-power industries in North Dakota that they claim are oversupplying the market. There are all sorts of interesting geopolitics in that.

The problem that we will probably face will be environmental security. The activism of many NGOs as we've seen in both Russia and Greenland is, of course, to physically try to stop oil exploration. The challenge that Canada will face in that regard is that when oil drilling occurs in the Beaufort and Mackenzie Delta, and I'm completely convinced it will in the long term, will we be prepared to respond to the type of situation that both the Greenlanders and the Russians have had to face?

I'd like to go to the two major pressure points that I see. The second one is fish. The allocation of the seabed under article 76 does not touch the water column beyond 200 nautical miles. When the ice is eliminated, and on a permanent basis, and, as many suspect, fish stocks move north, we can anticipate that there will be international fishers who will become very interested in moving into this region. Combine that with the factor that world stocks are collapsing. Experts from both the University of Victoria and Dalhousie University have been very vocal in explaining that we are heading towards a fishing worldwide crisis. If in fact we have a limited stock moving north, I dare say that we will be facing a replication of the type of crisis that we faced with the Spanish in 1995, that the British and the Icelanders faced off their waters, and that we are starting to see increasingly worldwide.

But I'd like to finish by looking on what I see as the major challenge, the issue that no one wants to confront but will confound Canadian defence interests in the Arctic, and that is the changing strategic balance in the Arctic region. The Russians have three core strategic needs. The first is nuclear stability, and that means deterrence in our context. It is still their number one security policy, the maintenance of their nuclear deterrent capability. Their second major security statement is that they do not want to see the expansion of NATO. The third is to stop the American ABM systems. All three of these are core defence requirements and are in the Arctic.

To maintain their nuclear stability, their modernized nuclear stability, the Russians are rebuilding their submarine force. We helped them decommission a lot of their Cold War era...through the cooperation programs that we set up, through what is known as AMEC and the G...well, what was then the G-8. The Russians are now rebuilding and it is going to be north. They are rebuilding the bases that give them the infrastructure protection. Regardless of what happens in the north per se, this increases the challenge for Canada.

The crisis in the Ukraine has very much been sparked by Russian fears that the Ukrainians were going to join NATO. We have to recognize that this is not the first time the Russians have engaged in such activity. Going back to 2007, the Russian intervention in Georgia, many analysts contend, was the result of the Georgian open consideration of joining NATO. We can take the Russians at their word that they are fearful.

The question that you need to be watching right now is, what happens within the context of Finland and Sweden? Both countries have begun to increasingly consider the possibility of joining NATO. If they decide to do so, that means, then, that the members of the Arctic Council will have seven NATO members, and one non-NATO member. That does not bode well for future cooperation.

The third aspect, and this leads me to my last comment in terms of the development of American strategic capabilities in the Arctic, is that the two core defence initiatives of the Americans are first of all maintenance of the deterrence, but also protection of the homeland, particularly protection against the possibility of missile attack.

● (1555)

This is where this comes directly into the issue that is being considered vis-à-vis NORAD. Every time the North Koreans do something to unnerve the Americans, the American response, Democrat and Republican, is to increase the number of mid-course interceptors that are placed in Alaska at Fort Greely. This is about 70 miles away from the Canadian-American border of the Yukon. Every time the Americans do that it causes the Russians and Chinese to view this as being directed against them and not the North Koreans.

If we bring this all together, I wish I could believe we were headed for a cooperative era. I wish the last 15 years of impressive cooperation we've seen could continue. When you look beyond the Arctic and you begin to consider the strategic imperatives of both the Russians and the Americans—the requirements to pursue fish stock — and you combine that, my assessment is the Arctic is going to become a less cooperative regime. This developing international security regime is going to be more problematic and it is going to get worse before it gets better.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Huebert.

We'll move now to our first round of questions in seven-minute slots. Mr. Norlock, please.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and through you to the witnesses thank you for appearing today.

The first question, hopefully with a short answer, as sort of a retort from Mr. Huebert is for Mr. Lackenbauer, and thanks to the Library of Parliament for this question.

Jane's Defence Weekly says Russia is in the process of renewing "70% or more of its weapons and equipment by 2020". The Russian government is planning to raise defence expenditures by 32.8% in 2015; the largest annual increase in defence budget in 10 to 12 years. In addition there are new plans to further expand the Russian defence expenditures by 2025. Some of the funds are being used to bolster the military capabilities in the Arctic, which includes building new air bases and stationing additional troops in its polar regions, as well as expanding the size of its northern fleet. This is coupled with the information we just received from Mr. Huebert.

How do you continue to defend your claim that this is nothing we should worry about especially with Mr. Putin and some of his most recent expansionist policies in eastern Europe?

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: Great. Thank you for the question.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Remember, leave time for Mr. Huebert.

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: Absolutely.

Russian increases in expenditures are largely aspirational. It's wonderful for Mr. Putin to have these bold plans. Whether or not he can pay for them and finance them I think is still very much in doubt.

New air bases are taking out of mothballs old Cold War air bases and infrastructure. The troop redeployments they are shuffling around in my view are a lot of smoke and mirrors for the domestic Russian audience. These are not offensive capabilities that can be deployed anywhere in the Arctic. Where are they going to go and what are they going to take over? There's nothing to do with it without potentially risking World War III, which is certainly not in Russia's grand strategic interest.

When it comes to their northern fleet, these recapitalization plans have been bantered about for more than a decade now. This is dealing with the deteriorating capabilities since the end of the Cold War. Even if they realized their most wild aspirations for their northern fleet it would still be a shadow of its former self. This is about them maintaining credibility as a global player.

I don't see the northern fleet, while it's deployed in an Arctic context, being an Arctic capability. So much of what we're seeing the Russians doing there is a defensive aspect, but I don't see an offensive dimension to it that should worry Canadians at this point.

We have commentators and analysts who are going to be monitoring these developments and a lot of my conclusions are based upon Mr. Putin being a rational actor. Maybe some of his actions would raise some doubts about that.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

Dr. Robert Huebert: My response is to look at where the dollars go. Following *Jane*, following the other open sources, we see that it's not talk. They have already recommissioned three new nuclear power submarines. Presumably they have been having trouble with the missile, but they seem dedicated to spend the resources. They are building three more as we talk. They are building two new attack submarines.

If you start drilling down to details, it's not rhetoric, it's not talk. They are going through....and it's their strategic balance. Have a look in terms of where they are making the investments.

We also see them making the investment on their air capabilities particularly in terms of cruise missiles. This is why an aircraft that's built in 1958—the Tupolev 95s—people laugh at them, but it's a question of what they are carrying. It's going from the KH55s to the KH101s and KH102s that pose the greatest problem for the NATO forces.

I see the exact opposite. I see difficulties. They are going from having an economy the size of the Netherlands in the 1990s to reasserting themselves as a great power. There are all sorts of challenges. They have had false starts. The dedication they have given from 2007 until 2014 undermines their determination to eventually regain that military capability.

● (1600)

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

I believe Mr. Huebert mentioned the movement of fish stocks because of warming waters in the north and the availability of basic food, you know, the smaller fish, bigger fish.

My thoughts are as follows. When countries are in trouble, especially autocratic regimes or regimes that have dictators, like China and the communist party ruling the country, with huge populations that need to be fed, future wars or conflict will be not so much over oil or other resources but about food and fresh water. That being the case, there are other nations that we've left out. I'm particularly referring to China, which is a sleeping giant in its need to feed a burgeoning middle class that will want more meat, more vegetables, and more of the things that we in the rest of the western world have and that I am sure they aspire to. I don't leave out Russia because Russia's economy is tremendously weak. Usually, in dictatorial countries when these happen they look to pick a fight somewhere to take their people's mind off the problems they really face.

Starting with you, Mr. Huebert, a very short statement....

The Chair: You have a minute and a half.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Take the minute and a half and divide it by two.

Mr. Huebert and then Mr. Lackenbauer.

Dr. Robert Huebert: We're already seeing where the future is going.

The Russians and the Chinese have stopped an international effort to create what's called marine protected areas in Antarctica to preserve the fish stock there. Canada and the United States are the only two countries that have imposed...and said there is an issue, to step back and understand what is happening with the fisheries. We are the only two countries currently supporting moratoriums on commercial fisheries in our Arctic waters. We're not calling it moratoriums in Canada but it's a de facto moratorium. There are your divides right there.

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: I think what Professor Huebert is leaving out, though, is the reason why the moratorium is declared is there is no evidence either way to support the idea of fish stocks in the high Arctic basin. Everything else is scripted according to international law. If there are pressure points I don't anticipate that they're going to emerge in the Arctic. These sorts of battles are going to be picked out in areas where there are proven and very well-established fish stocks. Again, we're operating in hypothetical situations that are several decades out. The moratorium is in recognition that we simply have no evidence either way about fish stocks. Of course, we're going to keep monitoring it but I don't think that's a primary fixation, short to medium term.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Norlock.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, you now have the floor.

Ms. Élaine Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to the witnesses for their presentations.

My first question is for Mr. Huebert. Mr. Lackenbauer, please feel free to add to the answer afterwards.

I find it interesting that we are talking about climate change at this committee. We don't often, if ever, talk about it here. There are probably some explanations for that, particularly because of the way the government is handling the oil and gas regulations. However, my question has to do with a different issue.

Here it is. In your view, what impact does climate change have on Canada's Arctic security and military operations? I am particularly thinking of the ice melt, but there are other consequences.

Could you comment on those concerns?

[*English*]

Dr. Robert Huebert: There are two factors.

There's the impact that it's having on human security. In other words, we are seeing a transformation for the livelihood of everyone who lives in the Arctic, both aboriginal and non-aboriginal, the likes, I would contend, that we have not seen before. A way of life is undergoing a complete and utter transformation, also being brought on by other factors of globalization.

From a traditional security perspective the answer is simple: access. We're going to have to deal with the types of comings...of the international community, the likes of which we have not seen before. Franklin was stopped by impacts of climate change. We had some of the worst ice ever when John Franklin was trying to go through the Northwest Passage. We're in the opposite era now. We are seeing the diminishment of ice and the same types of pressures that drove John Franklin to try to find the Northwest Passage are already bringing the Chinese. Look at what the Chinese are doing in Greenland. Look at what's happening in Iceland. Have a look in terms of the new international types of cooperations and I daresay challenges that will be coming. So it's access.

● (1605)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Thank you.

[*English*]

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: Thank you for the question. I'm glad you highlight something that I think is much more short- and medium-term than a lot of the discussions we have.

Looking at threats and hazards, military threat assessments, whole-of-government threat assessments, Public Safety across to Environment Canada emphasize a great deal more uncertainty brought about, which is a common theme between Rob and myself. This means activities associated with resource development. I don't see a defence dimension to the diamond industry that Rob brought up as a case for why we should be fearful of the Arctic, but there are certainly public safety and criminal dimensions to heightened resource developments that I think are borne of increasing access. I differentiate that from defence threats, which is an important distinction that's often not made. Many of the threats and hazards that are real right now relate to changing conditions: unpredictability for hunters living in communities, for people who rely upon ice conditions to travel between communities; more wave action, because there's not as much ice cover in the Beaufort Sea, affecting communities and leading to more coastal erosion; permafrost deteriorating. I bring this up in the context of this committee because given the modest capabilities that the Government of Canada and other governments have in the Arctic, it doesn't take long before the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces get a call as the capable organization to come and deploy to deal with an emergency.

I think focusing on climate change, focusing on the uncertainty, and focusing on the real, local impacts that are affecting Canadians today is an appropriate way of realizing and justifying why we need to enhance Canadian Armed Forces' capabilities. It's not to fight these imaginary wars that are conjured up somewhere potentially in a fantastic future. There are real reasons to develop capabilities now, but they relate to community security.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Thank you very much for your very thorough and informative answer. That brings me to my next question.

What impact would climate change have on the work of the Rangers, with whom you are very familiar? Could you elaborate on that?

[*English*]

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: Certainly. Rangers are a long-established organization. They've been around since 1947. They have worked out a really incredible balance between national security dimensions to their role and also community interests and looking out for their communities.

Certainly their ongoing operations are a challenge, like they are for all other northerners in terms of their activities on the land. There's increased unpredictability, trails.... Seasonal cycles that were well known are now being thrown into question. Certainly they're being called out with increasing frequency for ground search and rescue, where they're playing a supporting role to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. But nevertheless, as the organized group in communities, they're being called out with greater frequency. At the same time, resource development and other things are also giving them opportunities for jobs competing for their time.

In terms of the Rangers, it's making sure that they have the tools, but as well having the support from Ranger instructors, having the support from staff to allow them to do their jobs.

The Rangers are part of the Canadian Armed Forces family, a very essential part of it. Again, we can't assume that just because they've done everything as they've done for decades, that without increased support and without attention they're going to be able to continue to do it in the future. I think they are on the front lines of seeing that a lot of the threats and hazards and challenges associated with the 21st century Arctic are not the need to retool them as primary reservists and to prepare to fight wars; it's to be able to respond appropriately to the challenges they are facing at a grassroots level.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Thank you very much.

I will now turn to a different topic.

Recently, the Parliamentary Budget Officer released a report on Arctic offshore patrol ships. In that report, he pointed out that, unfortunately, the government will not likely be able to deliver on its promise of providing six to eight ships for $2.8 billion by 2024. There will only be four or even three ships, if more delays come up.

In your view, what would be the impact of a potential drop in the number of Arctic offshore patrol ships on the navy's capabilities in that part of the country?

● (1610)

[*English*]

The Chair: A brief response, please.

Dr. Robert Huebert: The impact would be quite dramatic.

The rule of thumb for the navy is for every three vessels that it has it can have one at sea. You can surge, there is that capability, but when you are talking about reducing back from eight to having about three, it means you're going to be able to, at any given time, have one vessel available. And that, of course, given the size of what we're talking about, is a huge problem.

The Chair: Do you have a brief response as well, Professor?

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: Yes. I'm concerned because every year projects like that are delayed, costs increase. Again, I don't think we're increasingly vulnerable because we don't have those hulls in the water by a certain fixed date. Again, that would belie my overall threat assessment to say we don't face an acute military threat in the region. What I worry about is that every year projects like this get pushed back. Escalators mean that we're going see a reduction. Again, these are important deliverables, I think they fit within the whole-of-government context. These are very versatile platforms that play a very important role. It would be very unfortunate if they slipped away over time.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Williamson, seven minutes, please.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Although I'm tempted to discuss the number of ships that the Irving shipbuilding...or the shipbuilders will ultimately deliver, I would suggest just for the record that we consider inviting them to this committee at some point in the new year, given their importance in the defence of the Arctic, our sovereignty there, and to get a sense of their plans.

Gentlemen, thank you very much for coming today. The picture you're giving us is rather interesting, but I'm wondering, Dr. Huebert, where does it all lead? You talk about the potential of there being a lot of traffic in the north, a Russian military or navy that is more robust and more active. What does that mean on the ground for Canada in the Arctic, through the Northwest Passage, within what we view as the 200-mile limit? Can you continue on that with more micro detail?

Dr. Robert Huebert: Absolutely. There are two drivers, and this is what's going to bedevil Canadian defence planners, because you are going to have to have the types of capabilities that Dr. Lackenbauer has talked about. You will need constabulary capabilities to deal with the inevitable ship issues that arise, maybe a grounding, a sinking...these are areas that have little infrastructure, little capability. We've been very lucky to date with the groundings that we've had, that they've been in good conditions. We haven't had to worry about loss of life. That will be coming.

So we're going to have to have a constabulary capability, the type of which we have on both the east and the west coasts of Canada. In other words, the Arctic Ocean is going to become much like the Pacific and Atlantic and that will require a certain set of capabilities. The more challenging capability and one view that Dr. Lackenbauer and I do disagree on, though, is we're going to have to figure out more in terms of our overall strategic orientation. We are not going to be able to sidestep the issue, for example, of participation with the American ABM system. The Americans are building it. It's causing a reaction and I dare say we may have to start looking at what the Norwegians are thinking about doing, and that is retrofitting their existing frigates to give them an ABM capability. They're good ships already and they're going to tie them in. That's the rumour I'm hearing at this point.

The question is, how do you have a naval arm and air capability that then can deal with both the constabulary capabilities that are going to be day-to-day—those are the ones that are going to get the most media attention—but also deal with the longer-term strategic changes? The Americans are moving away from nuclear deterrence. If they're successful with their ABM capability, despite what they say, that changes the balance. We, sharing a continent with them, will have to figure out what that means for our defence posture.

Now that's getting away a little bit from the Arctic, but a lot of our capabilities that we are going to have to be dealing with that will be Arctic-based. We will have to re-examine the north warning system under the NORAD nexus. We are going to have to revisit the decision that was made not to participate with the ABM. We are going to have to re-examine the decision that Canada had to say that we agree with NATO's position on ABM, which I would argue is somewhat contradictory.

All these issues are both the big and little and you have to do it at the same time with expensive kit, and that's going to be the real devil of dealing with these issues.

● (1615)

Mr. John Williamson: Dr. Lackenbauer, do you have anything to add?

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: Yes, please. I think some of the answers are airframes to intercept potential Russian bombers that are going to test boundaries. They're not transgressing Canadian airspace. That would be an act of war, but coming up to it, we need to be able to meet them absolutely as a demonstration of our defensive resolve. That's no question. That's something that has been well-scripted since the Cold War. I think there are cases of losses of life. The first air crash in Resolute a number of years ago is a key example. We were fortunate to have forces on the ground as part of Operation Nanook.

Is that a portending of things to come? Perhaps, but again these are not reactions to ideas of a buildup in alleged arms race capabilities in the Arctic; these are civilian responses. I think the bottom line comes down to situational awareness and maritime domain awareness in the context of Arctic waters to make sure that we're not only able to share information across departments and agencies within the federal family, recognizing that these issues sort of blur the lines between security and safety and sometimes defence, but also figure out if there are mechanisms to share information with our allies, whether they be Greenland, Denmark, or the United States. It's a difficult environment in which to gather some forms of intelligence or information. In my mind, the more we can work together to get a picture of what's happening, the better off we're going to be in terms of preparing to meet those exigencies.

Mr. John Williamson: I'm trying to summarize. We need to do a lot of things well; RCMP, pre-positioning of emergency responses, equipment throughout the north, a coast guard presence, updating radar installation, and a role for the navy. Comment on that and then answer one question: what is your view of NORAD in terms of addressing a naval component?

The Chair: You have a minute to split.

Dr. Robert Huebert: We need to have NORAD take seriously its commitment to the naval side that was made back in 2006. The issue is how do we do it? How do we have the sensors? The challenge we face with NORAD now is that—given the ongoing American economic crisis that they face combined with their political inability to move forward—we are going to have to pay a lot more than the traditional 10% or so that we have paid on to NORAD. The issue for Canada when it comes to the Arctic and maritime is that we need to do it, but we need to be aware that it's going to cost us a lot more than it's ever cost before.

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: I agree with Rob wholeheartedly on this and I think the briefs you received from Dr. Charron and Dr. Fergusson earlier were right on the mark. NORAD is the way to build in that maritime watch component. It is a very resilient, long-standing partnership that works very well. This is a critical aspect of where we should be investing our resources with our premier partner and ally.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. McKay, for seven minutes, please.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank you both for your thoughtful and provocative presentations. I found them quite interesting.

I was looking at the Library of Parliament's statement that defence expenditure is going to rise by approximately 33% next year, and 33% of nothing is still nothing. The ruble is in free fall. The Russian economy is in free fall. It's getting some stiff resistance in Ukraine. It has a full front on the Baltic and the Russians historically are very fond of sabre rattling. No one has ever been able to initiate any conflict in the Arctic.

I'm wondering if the precariousness of the Russian economy makes some of this discussion a bit moot. It doesn't mean it is not important and it doesn't mean you shouldn't prepare, but in some respects it pushes it out further than crisis *du jour*.

Either one—

● (1620)

Dr. Robert Huebert: I'll start with that one.

My immediate response to you is the Finns would have a different perspective about the Russians never attacking in the north. The winter war is a bit different, but the challenge we are facing is that regardless of where the Russian economy is today...and there is a lot of suspicion that the Saudis are unloading as a punishment, or as a means of supporting American foreign policy, against the Russians. There is a lot of thought in the open literature on that. This may be part of the overall—

Hon. John McKay: Could you explain that to me?

Dr. Robert Huebert: Given how important oil is to Russia, if you can oversupply at this point in time this sends a very subtle message to the Russians that we may not be bringing formal sanctions against them, but if they continue with their aggressive actions in the Ukraine, they can expect to see oil prices collapse. Do I have hard evidence to back that up? Absolutely not, but that is some consideration and—

Hon. John McKay: That's a hell of a message for Canada as well.

Dr. Robert Huebert: I think we're collateral damage in that context; look at the pipelines. The issue is that the Russians are being put into a situation that regardless of the free flow of where it goes they need to respond. They need in their view to respond to NATO moving closer to their borders. I dare say that Sweden and Finland are making a lot of noise that they are seriously considering to do that.

You talk about the historical view of Russia—one of the historical realities is the moment the Russians feel entrenched it doesn't matter if their economy is in a free fall, as it was under the Stalin regime following the purges of 1937-38, they will respond when they think their core security issue—

Hon. John McKay: In this kind of context he who has the biggest bankroll wins because to project force costs a heck of a lot of money. It's not as if you can march forward millions, literally millions, of soldiers to be incompetently managed and to die. You need to have some sophisticated equipment backed up by some very deep pockets.

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: Of course, Rob paints an interesting picture of Russians sort of bristling with these new investments, these new subs. When were the keels laid for those subs? It was in the late 1990s for some of them. It's taken a long time for them to realize a very modest fragment of a recapitalization program and their northern fleet is still a tiny shadow of its former self during the Cold War.

So all of this incredible growth as you're describing in terms of budgets is also mirrored in terms of their capital assets. The Russians are a shadow of their former self. In some ways I'm more concerned if Russians do nothing, because in the absence of feeling like they can defend themselves, they might take brash actions for fear that they're going to be vulnerable.

In essence, modest Russian defensive capabilities that stabilize the situation and give them the confidence that they have an effective deterrent is not antithetical to the presentation I'm making to say that the Arctic is on a trajectory and has been since the end of the Cold War towards greater peace. In fact, the Russians undertaking modest investments in defence, if that appeals to a domestic audience in Russia, can lead to the desired end state of a stable, secure Arctic and circumpolar world.

Frédéric Lasserre wrote a very interesting article with a colleague that appeared in the *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* a few years ago where he belies the myth that Rob is suggesting to us of an Arctic arms race. He traces when a lot of the Russian announcements were made to show that a lot of their real capital investments were announced long before the Arctic racheted up in terms of its international profile. So, in essence, questioning this whole idea of an arms race is something I think is very much open for discussion or debate.

Hon. John McKay: To pursue the financial aspect a little further and deal with the notion that Russia has really got some financial challenges that are quite formidable, China on the other hand doesn't. China has real money and real capabilities.

I'd be interested in your response to the relationship between China and Russia in the Arctic. The secondary question is should we actually be far more worried about the Chinese in the Arctic than the Russians?

Dr. Robert Huebert: That's an excellent question.

The relationship between the Chinese and the Russians is increasingly complicated. The Russians, under the current environment, see the Chinese as their major source of resources. They're trying to sell their resources to China and we're seeing that in a series of announcements that have been made.

On the other hand, I think the Russians have made it clear that they also are concerned about some of the Chinese positions vis-à-vis the Arctic. The Chinese haven't officially told us what they think in terms of the status of the northern sea route and the Northwest Passage. Are they internal or are they international waterways? I think the Russians think the Chinese will eventually go for freedom of the seas, but once again that's speculation.

This relationship is developing. The Russians are looking over their shoulders. They also see the growing dynamic situation in China and I think they see the Chinese as an opportunity right now to counterbalance the west. But they are cognitive that they remain a security challenge into the future and they have to balance that vis-à-vis the Arctic.

In terms of China as a security threat, there's a lot of speculation. It depends on how you want to interpret Chinese motivation. I will agree, and I know that Dr. Lackenbauer will say that to date the Chinese have been, if anything, very proper players within the rules that have been established, but they are starting to bring tremendous pressure in resources into this situation. Watch what happens in Greenland. There is a bill to allow foreign workers, up to about 10,000 Chinese workers, to come along to work in the mining sector in Greenland. Now what happens after this most recent election...I'm not quite sure what's going to happen in that context.

● (1625)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McKay.

Ms. Gallant, for five minutes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Russia has also been standing up an Arctic command, including training special combat forces. If we go back to the previous administration, to the first notion of threat in our Arctic from the Russians, we had stood up the Canadian Airborne Regiment and were able to deploy 500 paratroopers rapidly anywhere in the Arctic until the Chrétien government disbanded it in 1995.

Now we have, as has been mentioned before, a smaller force there. Do you think that, in light of the special Arctic command that Russia is standing up with all the special combat training for their forces, we should be looking at more than what we already have in the Arctic?

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: I think it's looking at the purpose of Russia's combat forces. If they're using them or envisaging them as expeditionary forces, I have no idea where they're going to go. We have enough difficulty historically in sustaining our own forces in our own Arctic, so the thought that the Russians are going to send land forces to parachute down on Canadian sovereign territory and effectively create World War III, to me is a very unlikely scenario, a highly improbable scenario.

What we have invested in or what we're focusing on—in terms of developing Arctic response company groups based around capabilities down south, exercised in the north, and guided, led, and trained by Canadian Rangers—in my mind is an appropriate measure to show that we are committed to defence and to creating very interesting and exciting training scenarios for members of the Canadian Armed Forces who get to go north and learn a bit about their country as well as develop their own capabilities that are deployable all around the world. It's also to show the flag, if nothing else, to convince Canadians that we're doing something urgent in the region. To me, that's sufficient.

So, again, the Canadian Airborne Regiment disbanding is a wonderful topic I'd love to debate from the standpoint of our having the capabilities to be able to respond to the very highly improbable, unlikely scenario of a Russian incursion. I think we would find that we would have a lot of allies who would come to our support as well to join us. But we certainly have the capabilities to go and meet any threat that I'd anticipate in that sense.

Dr. Robert Huebert: I would agree the land forces are more of a lesser importance. What the Russians are doing in terms of their land capabilities, that's more the constabulatory that I've talked about. We need to be watching what they do in terms of their sea-based and their aero-based.... What that means for us is we definitely need to be doing more in our surveillance capability. We need to make sure that programs such as....

What's the underwater listening device?

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: Northern watch.

Dr. Robert Huebert: Northern watch actually goes through...in terms of the procedure. We need to have an airframe replacement of the CF-18s when they basically end their productive life. So we need surveillance and we need a reaction capability from an aerospace perspective. RADARSAT Constellation and these types of systems that have been well in place have to be maintained and they have to be expanded. In other words, the plan we have is good; we have to do it, though.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Dr. Huebert, after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, you wrote extensively about the Arctic Council, which is currently chaired by Canada, and potential conflicts that could occur within the council between Russia and other members. How did the relations on the Arctic Council change after Russia invaded Ukraine? Do you foresee potential trouble when Russia takes the chairmanship once again?

● (1630)

Dr. Robert Huebert: Yes and no. It's a typical academic answer. There's been a lot of good work that people have been able to continue to develop at the lower levels. The work to develop the business council is something I think Canadians will rightly look back on and be very proud of, and it has Russian participation.

Where we see a lot of the challenges though, that I've written about coming to unfortunate fruition, are with some of the issues that are dealing with a broader political environment. For example, we have the search and rescue treaty that the Arctic Council is very proud of, and is very rightfully proud of. The Russians didn't participate in the exercise this year. Under the terms of the treaty, I believe that was to be expected. They did not participate.

We also created, under Canadian leadership, an Arctic chief of staff group that was to meet. That, unfortunately, has now been indefinitely postponed.

We see the efforts to communicate, to discuss, to have confidence-building on the military side. I say that would be the most direct price that has been paid at the Arctic Council. In the longer term is the issue of what the Finns and Swedes do again. That's going to be the larger political issue.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brahmi, go ahead. You have five minutes.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Professor Lackenbauer, you talked about the connection that some people think exists between what is happening in Ukraine and the real danger in the Arctic. Those people think this could have an impact on the Arctic. I think many people agree with you that there is no connection between the two.

What do you think is Russia's perception of Canadian police officers training Ukrainian police officers, having Canadian boots on the ground? How do they feel about that? Do they see the act as aggressive or insignificant?

[*English*]

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: From what I've been tracking, it's interesting. Canada has played an intriguing role in Russian threat perceptions relating to the Arctic. We've been mobilized by Putin since 2007 as the country or Arctic state that's arming, rebuilding, and preparing—to do whatever the Russian imagination wants to have us doing as a revisionist actor in the region—as though we are the country that's preparing for conflict along the lines Rob is suggesting, and that we're the country that's the catalyst for this arms race that's going on.

To Canadians this is shocking. We see ourselves as being reactive to events going on elsewhere. We're being created and constructed as that threat in Russia. As much as the language from 2009 to 2010 until early this year was getting more..... Even Minister Baird had a newspaper article at the beginning of the year stressing that as much as we disagree with Russia on issues like gay rights and other core areas, we typically get along with Russians in terms of the Arctic.

This seemed to do a quick turn after the aggression in the Crimea and the Ukraine, and the rhetoric has shifted. Putin expressed dismay that Canada was linking the two issues of Ukraine and the Arctic, and saying that it was a false connection. That's continued to play out in the Russia media as well that we're falsely conflating two separate issues, at least in the Russian mind. What they see as responding to legitimate nationalist interest in Crimea is in no way analogous to them taking offensive action in the Arctic when their interests are purely defensive. What we think of it and whether we believe it's credible is almost secondary to the fact that it has taken hold in Russia.

How they perceive the Canadian involvement in responding to the Ukrainian crisis more generally is beyond my area of expertise. I have tracked how it's translated into Arctic perceptions and they see it as another example, as Putin has said, of Canada outstepping its legitimate backyard. He said that if Canada had responded to some act of aggression in the Arctic they would understand that Canada is an Arctic nation like they are. For Canada to come and be engaging in something in Ukraine—which I support, just to put it on the record—in his mind is something that is outstepping our proper purview or our area of interest.

● (1635)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Is there a difference between the perception of the Putin regime and that of Russian civil society? Russia is also perfectly entitled to ensuring its own immediate protection. We can therefore understand that it would be difficult for Russia to agree to the Sevastopol base becoming part of a NATO country, just like the Americans did not agree with Cuba having missiles. Is there a difference between the Putin regime, on the one hand, and Russian society in general, on the other hand?

[*English*]

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: My honest answer is that I'm not sure. I'm not an expert on what's going on internally within Russia. Rob may be able to speak to this.

Dr. Robert Huebert: The one challenge we have with Russia and civil society is that when we talk about the Arctic we've seen very definitive steps by Putin to limit civil society. The one act we all are aware of is that Putin moved very strongly against their indigenous organization, RAIPON, delisting them in November of 2012. They subsequently were re-listed, but there have been reports that the Russian government is now trying to place their officials on their board of governance and other civil society movements within the north. What this seems to suggest overall is that the ability to draw the distinction between civil society within Russia and the Russian government is decreasing.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Leung. Five minutes.

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Willowdale, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let me say that I feel that a lot of these discussions could be quite academic if we look at this possible scenario. We have the capability to do surveillance in the Arctic. We have the capability to assert our Arctic sovereignty. It's easy to put hard assets in there to make the preference. The day when another foreign country comes and plants its flag in our soil and says that they claim this for XYZ country is not going to happen.

My question has to do with enforcement of that sovereignty. If Japanese, Chinese, Russian, or Scandinavian fishing vessels happen to cross into the Arctic Ocean to take fish, either accidentally or realistically, or if they try to use the Northwest Passage to shorten their trading links from the Atlantic into the Pacific, what do we do about enforcement? Obviously with some civil society we could easily go in and negotiate it. With some countries where we don't have that ability to negotiate a treaty, how do we enforce our sovereignty in that area?

Dr. Robert Huebert: Well, the two examples that you give have to be enforced differently. For a vessel going through the Northwest Passage and not following Canadian laws and that would be, of course, through the NORDREG system and the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act, we would have to go through the courts to address that particular issue. That's what we said we will do and that's what we will follow through. We're not going to have any type of direct gunboat-type enforcement.

The fishing issue is more problematic. There is a study at the University of Ottawa that is trying to address the issue of how much fishers are, in fact, coming over into Canadian waters, particularly in the Davis Strait. Their suspicion is that, through the RADARSAT data, it's happening a lot more. For that type of enforcement to stop it, you physically have to go up and address the fishers. You are going to have to have a patrol capable of going into the Davis Strait to deal with the Greenlanders, the Faeroese, and the others we are starting to think are crossing over on a much more frequent basis. You need to have two different types of enforcement regimes. Both of them have to be pursued as vigorously as possible.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: But does that mean that our coast guard needs to be backed up by naval power?

Dr. Robert Huebert: All of the above.... I don't believe that you draw distinction. There's often, do you do it coast guard or do you do it navy? As far as I'm concerned, when it comes to the Arctic paint them all pink and call them whole of government because you need that.

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: I disagree with that because again we do have mandates, and departments and agencies have their lanes that they are expected to stick to. The only way that this thing works is, if we're looking at this from the standpoint of North American defence, that the military have the ability to integrate and work with all partners in this whole-of-government comprehensive approach that doesn't just see it as “it's immaterial from a legal standpoint”. It actually matters a tremendous amount.

Before we face situations where we are perceiving a crisis—and you're talking about turbot wars as analogies to this—we actually have time because there's no clear and present danger or crisis facing us today to sort out the relationships and get them right. If there's nothing else you take away from my comments, it's to emphasize the importance of relationships and getting them right before a crisis comes so you can respond appropriately rather than reacting. I think it's very important that responses also allow the Canadian Armed Forces to stick in their place, to stick within their lanes, to operate within their mandate, and to not get forced by public perception or political perception to do things that are going beyond what we should expect from them as Canadians.

To me, this is where differentiating between security and sovereignty and safety is absolutely important. Enforcing the territorial integrity of Canada and ensuring that we're protected is, of course, a defence mandate and, of course, they're going to take a lead. But in many other cases it's important that we not put the responsibility on the Canadian Armed Forces under the defence umbrella to respond to threats and hazards that are not defence in nature.

● (1640)

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Let's look at a little bit of retention. In most of the countries we talk about—

The Chair: Quickly please.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: —we're talking about civil society, society that we can communicate with. What happens if North Korea tried to do this?

Dr. Robert Huebert: That's where you have to have the capability to push back. Full stop.

The Chair: Thank you very much for following the chair's direction.

Mr. Sullivan, for five minutes please.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you to the witnesses.

You touched on it earlier, the use of the Northwest Passage as a transportation route. The Minister of Transportation five years ago thought it was a great thing that was going to be here very soon and this year she has said—and the words in the press were that she threw cold water on the idea—that there would not be a Northwest Passage any time soon. But with the ice pack melting and with global warming, it is coming.

What is it that the Canadian government will have to do in terms of its military—the Rangers, the military itself, and perhaps the coast guard—to properly create, maintain, monitor, and defend a seasonal but permanent Northwest Passage? We already have a fair amount of traffic from the Port of Churchill that transports something like a half million tonnes of grain every year. There's a proposal to move oil out of the Port of Churchill. There is some serious concern that we haven't mapped enough up in the north to really know what we're doing. What is it that, as a country, we should be doing to properly prepare ourselves for what is coming?

Dr. Robert Huebert: You hit on a whole host of answers within your questions.

First of all, on the charting, the general consensus of the coast guard is that we've got charted to modern standards approximately 5% to 10%, which means that we've got 95% to 90% that is not properly charted. So, you need to chart. The bottom line and the real quick answer is that we need to start treating the Arctic like we treat the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts. We need that type of relationship. We need that type of regulatory regime. The challenge we'll face is that we do not have any of the infrastructure along a vast area of what constitutes the Arctic to the degree that we have on either the east or west coast. So, you're also going to have to start addressing the infrastructure issue because eventually you are going to have port facilities that go beyond what we see in, say, Iqaluit or Tuktoyaktuk or any of the other regions that we do use as some sort of point of refuge. When the ice goes we are going to have to address that.

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: A colleague and I produced a report, which came out last week, called “On Uncertain Ice”. I'm very skeptical, at least within horizons where we have some sort of predictive capability, that the Northwest Passage as a transit route is going to be used for a high tempo of transits. It means distinguishing between the Northwest Passage, as it's often popularly understood, as just a route through versus Canada's Arctic waters. When you're talking about the Port of Churchill and other resupply activities for communities, that tempo of vessel activity has been going up, but there is not a sovereignty dimension to it. If they're coming into Canadian ports or landing in any Canadian communities they're having to declare that they're doing so on Canadian soil. There's not a strong defence component to a lot of those activities.

If, for some reason a lot of the obstacles—and there are many obstacles to navigation in Canada's Arctic waters still today, you mentioned a few—are overcome most of the activities are going to be constabulatory in nature. One would hope that if the tempo of activity does go up, and if there are threats, that we would have the Arctic offshore patrol vessels able to deploy into the region, and that we will have a heavy icebreaker to complement our medium icebreakers, to be able to go up and bring up police forces, or CBSA agents, or whoever else is needed to deal with whatever threat is perceived coming from that. For the most part these are not going to be core defence issues.

Where those do still come in...the potential for submarine activities, absolutely. I think Rob has already gestured appropriately to the northern watch technology demonstration project, which has been going on for a number of years now. I'm not privy to whatever classified findings they have from it, but it's taking all the different capabilities—subsurface, surface, space-based assets—taking all of that data being generated, and putting it together to have a better operating picture of what's going on. To me that's the first step for what we need to bring into place: harmonize a lot of the information-gathering and develop technologies that are appropriate to be able to supplement what we have now. When that activity picks up, even though it may not be a threat to our sovereignty and even though I don't anticipate large-scale international commercial transit shipping just passing through our waters, I still think that we want to be able to have eyes, and ears, and capabilities to respond to any sort of oil spills, search and rescue contingencies, and other threats that may pose themselves to Canadian communities, many of which are going to be outside the defence component of the spectrum.

● (1645)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bezan, please.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Thank you, Mr Chair.

I want to thank our witnesses for appearing today and presenting very differing views on defence, especially in the Arctic.

Professor Lackenbauer, you said that the whole premise of your presentation today is that President Putin is a reasonable, rational individual. Would you say his invasion and annexation of Crimea was done by a reasonable and rational individual who's behaving in a responsible manner from an international norm?

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: No, but I think the risk that he can play and whatever his motivations are—and there's lots of debate about intentionality—was it about getting access to certain seaports and getting access to certain gas resources that the shale revolution would allow Ukraine to go and exploit, and therefore use as a counterbalance to the influence of Moscow? There's lots of that.

All I'm mentioning is—and to answer your question, no I do not believe he is reasonable; rational, perhaps—Putin probably believes that he can get away with things in Crimea that he would not be able to get away with in other parts of the world.

Mr. James Bezan: It's not Crimea. He's already got the war going on in the Donbass, that region of Eastern Ukraine. There's a buildup of troops in Trans-Dniestr, and Moldova is seriously concerned about their situation. This weekend we had Russian Bears, flying close to the airspace of Estonia and Latvia, intercepted by CF-18 fighter jets. We also had Putin and the Russian military during the month of September fly over 20 sorties that came within NATO, as well as NORAD, airspace and flew right through Sweden, which was really an act of war. They flew right through Swedish airspace before they were intercepted in mid-country by a Griffin.

Here's an individual who is acting not rationally, not reasonably, and is being a bully. I question you saying he's not a threat to our sovereignty.

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: All of the things you are suggesting hold true for the region you're talking about. What is the end state that he gets out of those bullying tactics in the Arctic, in a space beyond sovereign jurisdiction of Russia, beyond its historic area, where it doesn't have any rights that can be misconstrued and sold to the Russian people as legitimate? If you're suggesting that there's a likelihood that he's going to take the same mindset from Ukraine, or the conception of interests in Estonia, and say that those apply to Ellesmere Island, I beg to differ.

Mr. James Bezan: I'd try Alaska. In 1870 it was part of Russia.

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: And you'd bring on the Third World War, and you're going to test those ballistic missile defences around Moscow—

Mr. James Bezan: I'm talking about their nuclear capabilities. He uses it in his speeches all the time. His Friday address to the Kremlin was over the top, sabre-rattling, if you want to call it that, but here is an individual I think who is a real threat, and Canada has a responsibility to defend our sovereignty.

I just want to put that on the record.

I'm more closely aligned with what Professor Huebert has been saying. Professor, you said you're an honorary colonel of the Rangers. We had some witnesses here who said that we could do a lot more with our Rangers, including search and rescue and using UAVs.

I just want to get both your opinions on how the UAV component can play in defence, in monitoring and surveillance as well as search, from the concept of the Arctic, and how we incorporate the Rangers into that.

● (1650)

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: Great, thank you. I think it's a wonderful question.

Again, there are challenges and technical questions associated with UAVs. Given satellite capabilities and GPS when you get into really high latitudes, those, in my mind, are a very interesting science and technology question that Canadians can solve. Just as we are world leaders in terms of autonomous underwater vehicles, I'd like to see us playing a lot more in Arctic applications of UAVs, and to supplement that with all the different sensor systems and human surveillance systems, like the Rangers, to develop that common operating picture so we get that situational awareness. I'm strongly supportive of that and I think it is a wave of the future.

You've certainly heard from General Loos and General Beare about the challenges dealing with such a vast territory. Having unmanned or unpeopled systems that are able to go up and actually do a lot of that patrolling to supplement the human eyes and ears of the Rangers is a great opportunity. I think it's one that should be more fully explored, and it has great applications in terms of search and rescue, being mindful, of course, that DND has a mandate for air search and rescue; maritime search and rescue belongs to the coast guard; and ground search and rescue belongs to the police force, the RCMP, in the north. So being respectful of that, recognizing that some of the military systems can support those efforts as part of a whole-of-government piece, in my mind, is exactly the way we should be going.

Dr. Robert Huebert: The UAV is the wave of the future. Everybody knows there are unique challenges with the north. There is line of sight, limited population, the problems of GPS lock, and so forth, but these are all technical issues that Canada will figure out in time.

The problem, of course, is that a lot of this technology is out of sight.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Through you, with respect to the Canadian government, it opened a Canadian Armed Forces Arctic training centre in Resolute Bay, in Nunavut. The commander of the army stated that, “The Arctic Training Centre is a tangible example of the Army’s increasing presence in the North. It will provide the Canadian Army with the necessary support and resources to protect the Arctic.”

In light of Russian investments in their military bases in the Arctic, which we spoke about before, how important was this investment? Is it enough, and what more can or should be done?

Dr. Robert Huebert: Well, it's a critical first step. There is no question that at the end of the Cold War we lost the capability to operate our land forces in the north, with the exception of the Rangers, and I want to make that very clear. The Rangers always retained that capability, of course. But we simply lost the ability, and we saw that when we resumed exercises. In 2002 they were engaged in September, and the assumption was, well, if it's September you don't really have to bring your winter gear. We had some very near fatal accidents just because of misperceptions about the environment.

It's clear from our experience from 2002 onward, we need to actually be up there. Someone made reference to it being purely academic. You have to be there; you have to have the experience. Therefore, having a training base up in Resolute.... By the way, I'd say that the shared ability for them to work with the polar shelf project is outstanding. That's the way we need to proceed. You need to have that.

Also, I would add that our allies have been telling us that they are lining up to be able to exercise with us, so this is also a very important step for improving that relationship piece that Dr. Lackenbauer was talking about.

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: I think the training centre is a good example of a strong success story. They're budgeted at $62 million, delivered for $25 million, by partnering with the polar continental shelf project, not only enabling training but also setting up infrastructure that's civilian and military, dual purpose, that can be used as a forward-operating base if that very unlikely scenario presents itself where we need to deploy to the region and sustain operations for a significant period of time. In my mind, it is a great success story.

There are modest amounts of training that are going on at the centre to date. Certainly there are opportunities to augment that, but they have to fit, of course, with Canada's global priorities and what we're choosing to do in the coming years with our forces. Is our primary focus going to be on preparing for Arctic operations? Or are we going to find ourselves dragged into other parts of the world like Ukraine? As I said before, it's an operation that I certainly support, recognizing that we can do more for defending the Canadian north and the rest of Canada—North American defence—by going out beyond our borders than adopting a “fortress Canada” mentality and looking within as though we need to be standing ready on guard in the farthest reaches of our Arctic.

I think we're training, and the training that's going on there not only serves to develop Arctic capabilities, as Rob said, it's also a great training opportunity to build small unit cohesion, esprit de corps, and individual capabilities for Canadians to be able to go abroad and use that training to great effect for our country.

● (1655)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: The Canadian Coast Guard's largest and most capable icebreaker, the CCGS *Louis S. St-Laurent* is scheduled for decommissioning in 2017. The CCG will be acquiring a new polar icebreaker capable of operating in the Arctic for a longer period and in more difficult conditions than is currently the case.

How will our upgraded icebreaker capability compare to that of other Arctic nations? Bearing in mind that by the time Finland's icebreakers were finally ready for launch they no longer had a need for them because of the open waters, do you feel that it's important for Canada? How will this compare to other nations and will we be in the same situation where by the time the work is finally done we won't have a need for them?

Dr. Robert Huebert: That's an excellent question but I've got to update you. The Finns have just gone through a major debate and have reversed that decision. In other words, they're about to engage upon a large-scale recapitalization because the paradox is less ice actually means more ice. You have the situation that when you get into the environment where the ice is melting, you actually need more icebreakers. I know it sounds counterintuitive, but this is what coast guards will tell you.

What it means for Canada, when we get the *Diefenbaker*, that will be replacing the *Louis St-Laurent*. What we absolutely need is to have a series of replacements for our mid-level icebreakers, the real workhorses. That's not politically attractive. People don't like talking about getting these medium ships but that is absolutely necessary.

Now, comparison, to the point of your question, the Russians are going ahead. Once again, if we look at the capital expenditures, the Russians are building two follow-ups to their largest—it's the 50-year anniversary—which is the world's most powerful icebreaker. It's nuclear powered. It's what we used to call a Polar 10, very powerful. They're currently building two new ones. They're also building a new mid-level series of icebreakers to respond to the very definitive increase of trans-polar shipping in the northern sea route.

The Americans have got themselves totally locked into this chaos that no one can understand. They are about to drop down to one functioning icebreaker, maybe one and a half, depending if they can get the *Polar Sea* to actually work, and they're going into a crisis environment. No one knows how they're going to dig out of it. The Finns are going to start re-evaluating. The Norwegians will be about the same as us but what's interesting is to watch the Chinese. They're talking about starting to expand their icebreaking fleet. It will be interesting to see whether or not that's just talk, as some people think, or whether they'll continue.

The Chair: And it's time.

In the last minute, gentlemen, while we have you here, I'd like to exercise the chair's prerogative. We've heard suggestions from various previous witnesses about the several options with regards to NORAD, whether to expand to an all-threat capability, whether to maintain the maritime warning system, or whether to revert to the simple original North American air defence concept.

I wonder if I could get from each of you briefly your recommendations, for the record, in the context of comparing Russia's current military capabilities in the north, the original threat—the Soviet Union is the original threat—to Canada's current capability?

Dr. Robert Huebert: That's an easy one. We have to go to the all-encompassing. I look beyond just simply...the Russians are the ones with their increase of long-range bomber patrols, and, I would add, for the first time ever, fighter patrols. They actually sent a MiG up this time which they never even did during the Cold War. That's the first one, but we also have to take into account that when we talk about the aerospace, the geography of the Arctic means that even for a crisis with North Korea, and remember, Canada has never signed a peace treaty following the 1950 Korean War...if that escalates again....

Also, of course, that's the path coming in. That's where NORAD kicks in. So you talk North Korean, a future potential aerospace challenge from the Chinese...NORAD is the answer. It has to address this issue and it has to look at aerospace, maritime, and any other conceivable ability.

The Chair: Professor Lackenbauer?

Prof. Whitney Lackenbauer: Canada and the United States both refer to one another as their premier partners in the Arctic, particularly in the defence domain. I think NORAD is a great success story. I fully agree with Rob that it should be an all-threat capability.

● (1700)

The Chair: All right. Thank you both for attending and informing us today.

Colleagues, we will suspend briefly and resume with committee business.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]