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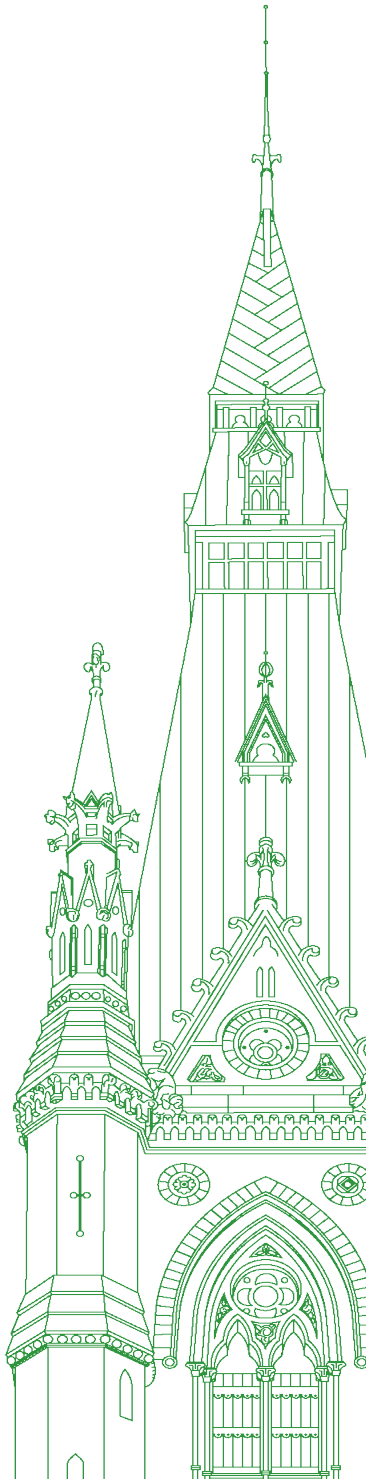

Chair: The Honourable John McKay

Standing Committee on National Defence

Wednesday, February 2, 2022

● (1535)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order. This is the third meeting of the Standing Committee on National Defence.

We are in a hybrid format. I'm sure all members are familiar with the rules and regulations that go with a hybrid format. I'm declining to read them all. We'll get right down to business.

We have two witnesses for our opening hour, Dr. Jolicoeur and Ihor Michalchyshyn. I understand, Mr. Michalchyshyn, you're going to go first, and then will be followed by Professor Jolicoeur. You have five minutes, please.

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

I'm here on behalf of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, where I'm the executive director. Our organization is the federation of national, provincial and local Ukrainian organizations in Canada. We work to coordinate and represent the interests of our community, which at the last census was tallied at just under 1.4 million Canadians. We've been active since 1940. We work in a number of spheres, including on defence policy.

As members of Parliament know, in February 2014, Russia invaded Ukraine. Since 2014, Russia has occupied Crimea, parts of the eastern Ukrainian oblasts of Donetsk and Luhansk, and prosecuted a war in eastern Ukraine where over 13,000 people have been killed and 1.5 million have been internally displaced within Ukraine.

In November of this past year, Russia once more intensified its troop movements near the Ukrainian borders. A series of diplomatic discussions in the past few weeks among the United States, NATO, Ukraine and Russia have yielded no concrete results or commitments from Russia to de-escalate its aggression against Ukraine.

The UCC and the Ukrainian Canadian community believe strongly that now is the time to act to further deter a Russian invasion of Ukraine rather than wait until it happens. We feel the most effective way to deter a Russian invasion is to take solid proactive actions rather than reactive steps.

In recent weeks, the United States, the United Kingdom, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, the Czech Republic, and most recently yesterday Denmark have all agreed to supply defensive weapons to Ukraine's armed forces in response to Russia's escalation of aggression and threats against Ukraine.

We note and welcome the extension and expansion of Operation Unifier, Canada's military training mission in Ukraine, which was announced by the Prime Minister on January 26. In the long term, the extension and expansion of this critical mission will strengthen Ukraine's defences. However, the threat of an immediate Russian invasion grows every day and the Ukrainian armed forces need our assistance now.

Ukraine is under severe threat of increased Russian aggression and needs these weapons now. Ukrainians are not asking anyone to fight for them, but they need our help to defend their country against a colonial power seeking their destruction. We understand that the Government of Ukraine has requested from the Government of Canada these defensive weapons for a number of weeks.

Stronger sanctions will help deprive the Russian state of revenue with which it continues to wage a war and finance its troop movements. They will reinforce a message to the Russian government that the west is resolute in countering Russian aggression.

The Ukrainian Canadian Congress urges this committee to support the provision of defensive weapons and the strengthening of sanctions against the Russian Federation. We know that the Canadian people overwhelmingly support this provision of weapons. We conducted a survey just last week, which found that three in four Canadians were supportive or open to Canada's providing defensive weapons to Ukraine, and 42% explicitly supported the provision of weapons, which outnumbers the number of Canadians opposed, or 23%.

I'd also make note that the 2017 report of this committee noted that the Government of Canada should provide lethal weapons to Ukraine to protect its sovereignty from Russian aggression.

No significant Canadian sanctions have been implemented since March 2019, when 114 individuals and 15 entities were sanctioned for aggressive actions against Ukraine. In the intervening 32 months, both the United States and the European Union have greatly expanded their sanctions against Russian officials and entities much more broadly than Canada has.

In summary, we're making two major recommendations to this committee and to all members of Parliament: to support the provision of defensive weapons to Ukraine by Canada as soon as possible, and to support the strengthening of Canadian sanctions against Russia for its increased aggression against Ukraine.

Thank you.

● (1540)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Michalchyshyn.

We now turn to Professor Pierre Jolicoeur from the Royal Military College of Canada.

Welcome to the committee, sir. You have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jolicoeur (Associate Vice-Principal Research, Royal Military College of Canada, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, everyone. I thank the committee members for inviting me to testify today.

I will not repeat the background information provided by the previous witness. I share his views and believe his description of the situation to be accurate. However, what I'd like to add to complement his presentation is what Russia is currently asking for and why this crisis is happening now.

First of all, through Vladimir Putin, Russia is practically demanding an end to NATO expansion efforts in Eastern Europe. He is trying to prevent future enlargements that would bring NATO's borders closer to Russia, because Russian decision makers still see NATO as a threat.

In addition, Russia is demanding that NATO withdraw its troops and stop strengthening its military presence in its new member states. Essentially, it's demanding that NATO revert to essentially the position it had during the Cold War.

So, these are explicit demands from the [*Technical difficulty*]. The Russian authorities know very well that these are unacceptable conditions, and that NATO member countries could never subject their decisions to a foreign power. It would be like giving Russia a veto of sorts on the decisions of NATO member states. So these conditions are impossible to meet, and Russia knows this very well.

We can ask ourselves, what does Russia really want, what does Vladimir Putin want? If you look at more recent foreign policy, what he's really trying to do is restore Russia to its former glory. He wants to regain Russia's respectable status in the international order. He is also trying to protect Russia's interests and security. Again, he believes that NATO is a threat to Russia. So he's attempting, by any means necessary, to move that threat away from his borders.

He's also looking to preserve Russia's sphere of influence. Russia wants a buffer around it of countries that will comply with its demands. These countries would therefore not be fully sovereign. The problem with these Russian demands, which are long-standing, is that they call into question the international order we live in.

In Russia's eyes, the world is made up of two kinds of countries, those that are sovereign, which theoretically [*Technical difficulty*], that is, they do not need to bow to any larger foreign or international powers. Then there are the "near abroad" countries—that's what Russia calls them—that emerged from the former Soviet Union. The 14 former republics—15, including Russia—are considered part of the "near abroad" and, the way Moscow sees it, they grew out of the former Soviet Union and are not fully sovereign because they must align their foreign policy with whatever Moscow wants.

Countries that comply with Moscow have no problems and Russia cooperates with them. For example, last month Kazakhstan experienced riots and asked Moscow to send troops to help re-establish order. Russia complied, and once order was restored, it withdrew its troops without issue. Kazakhstan aligns its foreign policy with whatever Moscow wants.

However, other states, like Georgia—as we saw in 2008—or Ukraine, that do not necessarily want to align their foreign policy with Moscow's and they run into problems. Moscow encourages such things as secession movements in those countries, and that's something Moscow can easily use to manipulate and pressure them. In other words, those countries are not fully sovereign.

● (1545)

I will say a few words about—

[*English*]

The Chair: Professor Jolicoeur, we're at five minutes. Can you wind up in a minute or two?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jolicoeur: Okay.

So, in closing, I would say that the current crisis seems somewhat manufactured. Russia is acknowledging NATO's desire to expand, but the last time NATO announced plans to expand was in 2008. Why is this crisis happening now? This looks like a manufactured, artificial crisis manipulated by the Russian authorities.

It's happening right now because Russia seems to think that Ukraine's desire to look to the West can only get stronger. Ukraine is strengthening its security forces thanks to training by Canada and other countries helping Ukraine. The military assistance to Ukraine has included sending it weapons.

Russia feels pretty strong right now, as it has just completed military reform. I'm not saying that Russia has to enter Ukraine, but if it's going to do it, better now than later.

I will stop there.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Jolicoeur.

We now turn to the first round of questions. They are six minutes each. The Conservatives have the first six minutes. We'll go to Mr. Ruff and then Mr. Fisher, Madame Normandin and Ms. Mathyssen, in that order.

Mr. Ruff, you're on for six minutes, please.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Thanks, Chair. I've just subbed in here, so I'm getting caught up. Fortunately, for the witnesses' sake, I have a bit of background experience with the Canadian Armed Forces, having just retired a couple of years ago after 25½ years, and having been involved in some initial discussions when we were standing up the Operation Unifier mission.

My first question will be to both witnesses. I'd like both your perspectives.

Can you give us a probability or what you think the chances are that the Russians will actually conduct a land incursion into Ukraine?

The Chair: Mr. Jolicoeur.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jolicoeur: I can start, if you like.

In my opinion, there are six possible courses of action Russia could take. I will list the scenarios for you and quickly assess their likelihood.

The first scenario is Russia does nothing, and it was all a bluff. I believe that this scenario is unlikely because Vladimir Putin has set the bar very high in subjecting NATO member states to very specific recommendations. In addition, so far he has refused to compromise—on the contrary, he seems to be ramping up his demands. In other words, I feel he can't back down without losing face.

The second scenario is a limited intervention in the Donbass. Russia may want to do what it did with Georgia and spur on secession movements, eventually recognizing the independence of Lugansk and Donetsk. I believe that this is highly likely, because Russia has done it before. It doesn't cost Russia very much, other than exposing it to additional sanctions. The international community would be reluctant to step in and liberate the two areas. That would fall on Ukraine's shoulders.

The third scenario is a variation on the last one. It would involve expanding the current secessionist regions. The two areas do not occupy all of their provinces as defined in Ukraine's administrative structure. Russia could therefore help them gain control over more land than what they currently occupy. In my opinion, [*Technical difficulty*] this scenario is somewhat likely.

The fourth scenario is a limited intervention in southern and eastern Ukraine. In this case, Moscow would seek to establish territorial continuity between secessionist regions in the Donbass and Crimea. This would establish territorial continuity for Russia across southern Ukraine. I feel this scenario is somewhat likely to happen.

The fifth scenario is an intervention into half of Ukraine, all of eastern Ukraine, to expand military occupation to the Dnieper River, which acts as a dividing line in Ukraine. All of eastern Ukraine would be under Russian military occupation. This is somewhat likely, because Russia has mobilized the military capacity it needs to do it, so technically it would be able to pull it off.

The sixth scenario is an intervention with the intent to take over all of Ukraine. In my opinion, it's unlikely this will come to be, but I wouldn't totally rule it out.

Finally, the last possible scenario would be a general intervention against NATO. In my opinion, that's out of the question, because Russia doesn't want to start a third world war.

● (1550)

[*English*]

The Chair: You have a little less than two minutes, Mr. Ruff.

You're on mute.

Mr. Alex Ruff: I'm sorry. I was just saying thanks to the professor.

Could we please get the other witness's take?

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: Thank you for your service, Mr. Ruff, as well, especially with Operation Unifier.

I think those scenarios should be taken seriously. I would say the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour, and we've seen Russia wage a war in eastern Ukraine, pretend to have a hybrid kind of invasion of Crimea—which ended up being a real invasion of Crimea—carry out an illegal annexation of Georgia and Moldova, and the list can go on.

People have been asking me about the percentages. I think 100% we need to take seriously the 130,000 troops they have in Belarus and on all three borders of Ukraine. We 100% need to take seriously the threats that Putin is making in the media to NATO, to Canada and to the United States.

What we can do, as per our recommendation, is to raise the level of risk that the Russians have, raise their calculation and change their calculation of what the risk of invading Ukraine would be. The risk is low if Ukraine has nobody supporting it, but if it is part of an alliance, the risk is now being raised by the United Kingdom, the United States and other allies, as I've noted. I think that's the most important thing we can do in this situation.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Thank you. I believe my time's up, Chair?

The Chair: It is indeed.

With that, I'll turn to Mr. Fisher for six minutes.

Go ahead, please.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. One moment while I let my dog out.

● (1555)

The Chair: You have to know this is a real committee.

Mr. Darren Fisher: You have to know that that could be the worst possible timing ever for a dog to tap at the door to want to get out.

Mr. Chair, I want to thank both of our panellists for being here today, for sharing their expertise and also their incredibly valuable time at a very volatile time in our history. I'll tell you it's very good to be back on the national defence committee. I served from 2015 to 2019.

I want to be very clear when I say that Canada is a friend to Ukraine and to the Ukrainian people. I was fortunate, blessed, with the ability and the opportunity to visit Ukraine a few years ago with this very committee. I met with some amazing people, with some locals and with some world leaders, and I have to tell you that it was one of the finest visits I've ever made.

As you know, Canada has clearly condemned Russia's continued threats and buildup of their military around Ukraine. Although we're all calling for and hoping for a diplomatic solution, we have other tools in the tool chest. As the ministers have said, any further aggression on the part of Russia will be met with consequences.

Now I'd like to talk about Operation Unifier, which our government has just extended and we're expanding. When it comes to Ukraine's armed forces preparedness, how is Operation Unifier helping to prepare Ukraine's defence team for this increasing Russian aggression in the region?

I'll go to Ihor on this as we've met several times in the past.

The Chair: Mr. Fisher's dog seems to be quite anxious to hear that answer.

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: Thank you, and again it's great to see you virtually here.

I actually had the opportunity with former minister Champagne just the week before the pandemic started. We were at the base in western Ukraine, Yavoriv, where we saw in action Canadians, Americans and, I think, Swedes and Danes. Operation Unifier certainly has been bringing in other bilateral and NATO allies to help Ukraine, and it's the largest permanent mission, I believe, that operates in Ukrainian territory.

The expansion of that mission speaks to the trust and the deep relationship between the armed forces. I'm sure many of you have heard from the returning rotations of Canadian Armed Forces we see coming back. They tell us that they have learned as much as have the Ukrainians they have been training. They have learned about hybrid warfare and technology. They have learned with admiration about the battles and the real cost of the war that Russia's waging, because they are talking to these soldiers who have served on those front lines.

All of that being said, again we think the extension and expansion of Operation Unifier is wonderful. I think, though, we have to realize that that is a medium- to long-term goal in terms of a program. Right now, obviously Minister Anand has announced that even now, before an invasion has begun, those soldiers have been moved back to the west of the Dnieper River, to safer positions in western Ukraine.

Unfortunately, I think we all realize that the minute an invasion begins, for their own safety, we would be evacuating Canadian soldiers and missions. I think Operation Unifier is important, but as we're saying today, the defensive weapons would make an immediate impact and would remain behind in the case of an invasion.

Mr. Darren Fisher: In my opening, I talked about other tools in the tool chest. We've made it very clear, and the ministers have made it very clear, that we're willing to take further steps should Russia continue this aggression. Strong sanctions, I think the minister said, are at the ready and can be instigated within half a day's notice.

Ukraine has asked for defensive weapons or lethal aid. Tell us more if you can, Ihor, about what these shipments would mean for Ukraine's readiness. Is there the possibility of these shipments causing further escalation of the situation with Russia?

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: Two or three weeks ago, we saw that there was a shift in the position of Ukraine's partners and allies, both bilaterally and in NATO. Everybody was holding off on doing anything, because there was a concern that any action would be Russian provocation. We then saw a shift, starting with the United Kingdom and then the United States.

I've lost track of how many planeloads of ammunition and missiles have been sent by those allies, and the growing list of countries—yesterday, it was Poland and Denmark. All of that gear and all of that kit do several things. It is morally important for Ukrainians to know that they have literal aid from these partners all over the world for their own self-defence. It is technologically advanced gear that they don't necessarily have, so there is an element of that.

We need to remember that nobody hopes to use this defensive equipment. This is the worst-case scenario, if Russian tanks were to cross the border or if Russian airplanes were to bomb—God forbid—major cities or infrastructure in Ukraine. Helping Ukraine defend itself actually extends, as you said, the work of Operation Unifier. We're there to help Ukrainians defend themselves. There's no ask to send combat troops from Canada or anywhere else. That's never been anything that Ukraine has asked for.

The sanctions are important. We're pushing for sanctions now. It's very clear that Putin keeps adding more and more of his military personnel to the deployment, so we think he should be facing some consequences now, as opposed to the day after or the afternoon after he decides he should roll in.

● (1600)

The Chair: Unfortunately, Mr. Fisher, that's it for your time.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Normandin, you have six minutes.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd also like to thank both witnesses for being here. They are setting the stage for the rest of the study, and we're very grateful to them for that.

My questions are mainly for Professor Jolicoeur.

Professor Jolicoeur, could you please tell us about the different kinds of direct threats that Russia poses to Canada and the likelihood that these threats will be carried out.

Mr. Pierre Jolicoeur: Thank you for your question, Ms. Normandin.

There are several types of threats against Canada. In my opinion, if Russia considers Canada's support to Ukraine to be a *casus belli*, an act of war, it could take action in several ways, directly or indirectly.

Threats against Canada could come in the form of cyber-attacks. As we know, in the past, Russia hasn't hesitated to use tools like this to intimidate other countries. Canada could therefore be subject to a cyber-attack.

Beyond cyber-attacks, Russia could directly attack our infrastructure or our government institutions using cybernetics. Russia could also organize misinformation campaigns or operations to spread propaganda, deride Canadian efforts, weaken Canada's social fabric and lead Canadians to disagree with their own government's decisions. These are the kinds of threats Russia could easily carry out. In my opinion, not only is this a highly likely scenario, but Russia has already begun doing it.

Another kind of threat Russia could pose to Canada is to threaten Canada's territorial integrity. In other words, it could attack. I feel this is unlikely. I don't believe that Russia would attack Canada or want to escalate the conflict or expand the theatre of operations. Canada is not the main actor in Russia's eyes. It may be tempting to attack a little country like Canada. I say “little” in that Canada doesn't have the same power as the United States, France or the United Kingdom. So Russia might want to discipline Canada and teach us a lesson. I find it's very unlikely, because Canada is a member of NATO. An attack on Canada would mean that all NATO countries would have to return the fire. I don't think Russia wants to expose itself to that kind of threat.

Another type of threat would be to use the Russian community in Canada. Russia could try to manipulate the Russian-speaking community or Russian-born nationals in Canada. We know that the Russian [*Technical difficulty*], but that policy would primarily target Russian communities in the former Soviet Union. In terms of more outlying Russian communities, Russia may be trying to influence them, and it may be communicating with them through various media outlets and television services, including RT, formerly Russia Today, Sputnik and other communication channels. Russia could use these channels to try to misinform, mobilize or influence the Russian community. In my view, the Russian community in Canada [*Technical difficulty*] many nationals, but it's smaller than the Ukrainian community in Canada.

Here are some other threats Russia could pose: It could try to manipulate the Ukrainian community in Canada to try to get them to break with the Canadian government's actions. I feel this is unlikely. In the end, Russia will likely try to do it, but it may be unable to influence the Ukrainian community, as almost all of them have gotten behind the effort to support Ukraine.

Finally, Russia may attack Canadian troops; not in Canada, but those in Eastern Europe participating in the UNIFIER and REASSURANCE missions. Canada has deployed troops to support NATO countries that are in close proximity to Russia and feel threatened by Russia's behaviour. So Russia could try to go after those troops.

● (1605)

In my opinion, if Russia did it, it would not do it overtly, through armed military attacks, but through propaganda or misinformation campaigns. That is already happening, in my opinion. So it's more than likely.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds left, Ms. Normandin.

Ms. Christine Normandin: I would barely have enough time to ask a question, let alone get a response, so I will wait for the second round. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Madam Mathyssen, you have six minutes, please.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you to the witnesses.

There has been a lot of talk, of course, about the increase of the provision of lethal weaponry from Canada and the potential for that. Of course, some New Democrats are not for that. We want to find the most diplomatic, the most peaceful, deterrent way forward.

Could both witnesses talk about why some of those diplomatic ways forward have not been successful thus far? I tend to believe—and if this is true, it would be great to hear it from the witnesses as well—that Canada has failed to provide the supports that it needs to in terms of the diplomatic corps and in terms of the international aid that it needs to, so that we find ourselves down many years into more of a crisis than we need to be.

Just for the sake of time, could you could also answer this question? With that ask for lethal weaponry from Canada, it has been suggested that there are planeloads.... I think Ihor said that he lost track of the planeloads of ammunition that have been received or sent by the U.S. and the U.K. Why is that not enough? Clearly, the United States and the Brits have far more capacity than Canada to provide that lethal weaponry. Why is that not enough?

The Chair: To whom did you want the question directed? Is it for the Ukrainian congress?

We'll start with them.

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: That's great. I can partially answer.

I was taking notes, and on the last answer, Russia is doing all of those things on misinformation. This committee has seen cyber-attacks on Global Affairs. We know that Russia is our northern neighbour. They are actively running a disinformation campaign. Fortunately, our community works with those in the smaller Russian community here who have fled from and escaped Putin's Russia and who want to live in a place where there are human rights and there is freedom of expression. I [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] answer.

In terms of lethal defensive weapons and diplomacy, what we have seen in the last several weeks, as Dr. Jolicoeur has laid out, has been bad faith diplomacy. The Russian Federation has come to the table with outrageous, undeliverable demands. I believe they wanted Poland and all the Baltic states kicked out of NATO. Putin has a vision which is back to the U.S.S.R. and which is redrawing the borders of Europe and, I would say, Eurasia, to his liking, and we shouldn't entirely disbelieve his interest in Canada's north as well.

Putin understands force. In this scenario, the provision of lethal weapons is something we hope nobody will ever have to use, but the provision of lethal weapons actually increases the seriousness with which the diplomacy may be taking place with the Russian Federation and NATO in this scenario. They build a seriousness of response and mean that Ukraine is not alone in that scenario.

In terms of the question that was asked about why the current aid is not enough, we saw yesterday that the Canadian flag was part of a group of flags raised in Ukraine's Parliament, so for Canada, while the Operation Unifier mission is important, it is very significantly noted that Canada has not joined the list of countries, particularly the NATO ally countries, that are providing these kinds of military defences. To ensure Canada's good reputation in Ukraine and within our NATO alliances, we believe that whatever can be done should be done. I don't have a list from either country. I just know that our armed forces certainly work closely together, have a trusted, secure relationship, and know what could be done in terms of immediate steps.

● (1610)

The Chair: You have about a minute and a half.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jolicoeur: Okay, I will add something to this.

I agree with the other witness's analysis. I believe that Vladimir Putin [*Technical difficulty*] that it wasn't possible to meet with NATO member states. I don't think negotiations are being conducted in good faith. Because NATO countries could never meet their demands, I think we can question the true intentions of the current Russian authorities.

If we could offer Russia something, it may be able to save face and stop the pressure it's currently applying at the Ukrainian border, but we would be surrendering our sovereignty and this would send the wrong message.

I have also noted that the United States, the United Kingdom and other countries are now providing weapons directly to Ukraine or strengthening NATO's military presence near Ukraine to bolster security around this. That is going on near the Black Sea and in other countries bordering Russia as well.

That is the kind of thing Canada can do, but I don't think the current state of the Canadian Forces allows for a much larger mobilization or deployment to Ukraine.

That being said, I believe Canada is doing what it can to support Ukraine, but sending additional troops would be difficult.

[*English*]

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're going to have to leave it there.

Colleagues, if we're going to get a full second round, it's going to have to be fairly smartly executed. We'll get started on it.

I need some guidance from the Liberal Party as to who the third questioner might be in the event that we get there.

We'll start with Mr. Doherty and Madame O'Connell, for five minutes each, please.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): I just want to be clear. Do you support Canada's providing lethal defensive weapons to Ukraine?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jolicoeur: That's a very good question.

[*English*]

The Chair: Professor Jolicoeur, excuse me again.

Apparently the sound connection is cutting in and out with you. The suggestion is that you turn off your camera and respond and we'll see whether we get better sound.

Thanks.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jolicoeur: I hope the sound is better.

Thank you for your question, Mr. Doherty.

Do I agree that Canada should send lethal weapons to Ukraine? It could be done. Canada has certain technologies that could be used to Ukraine's advantage and could increase the cost of a possible Russian military intervention on Ukrainian territory, such as the use of drones or any other lethal equipment. Canada has some industrial capabilities. However, this would lump Canada together with the United Kingdom and the United States. To Russia, they would be seen as highly supportive of Ukraine, potentially exposing Canada to further intimidation policies from Russia.

If Canada is prepared to face the impact of it from Russia, then yes, it could.

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Either witness can chime in here if they can. What challenges do Russia's grey zone tactics—actions that are intended to gain advantage, but which fall below the threshold of war and just push to the brink—pose for NATO countries?

● (1615)

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: We've seen them become experts in this. That's what I was talking about in the earlier answer in terms of what Canadian forces, through Operation Unifier, are learning from their Ukrainian comrades. It is how those false flag operations and the Crimean “little green men” scenarios are rolled out in ways that are not the—I don't know what the proper military term is—traditional combat we might have imagined. Again, Ukrainian armed forces have learned to adapt. At the operational centre, I've seen first-hand our interaction with the Ukrainian armed forces.

Frankly, of that list of countries that I read that are supplying weapons, all of those countries—albeit with smaller missions—are there as well to learn and to share technology. We need to understand that our contribution of lethal defensive weapons is a part of that. It is a very meaningful, symbolic and important part of our military and security relationship with Ukraine, bilaterally.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Professor Jolicoeur?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jolicoeur: I don't really have any comments to add to those of the other witness. We can proceed with the other question.

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty: I'm wondering if either of you support the former commanding officer of Operation Unifier, Melanie Lake, when she made the statement that we need to stop talking about a Russian invasion of Ukraine as inevitable. She said we need to get a steady stream of world leaders and diplomats flowing through Kyiv continuously between now and spring and run the clock. Russia can't afford to keep that many forces at such high readiness indefinitely.

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: I could chime in briefly. We were very pleased to have Colonel Lake on our briefing.

Russia has been and is invading Ukraine. There is a war now. This is a further invasion. That's one of the main points I've been making everywhere I've been speaking. Again, the costs for Russia—the financial costs of keeping 130,000 forces out and about, paid, equipped, fed and all the rest of it—can be very high, but if we implement sanctions now, that will be higher. The sanctions on Russian military officials and Putin's inner circle can increase the cost to the Russian Federation at this time.

The Chair: Unfortunately, we will have to leave it there, Mr. Doherty. I'm running a clock here.

Madam O'Connell, you have five minutes, please.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Thank you both for coming. I want to follow up on some of the questions that were asked by multiple members already in terms of the support for sending lethal weapons or the request for sending lethal weapons. I'm not sure—in the interest of time, your answers were short—but I almost got the impression that of course these weapons could be useful, but it was also about sending the message that Canada is doing everything. Again, if your statement needs to be clarified on that, I would appreciate it.

Are there specific lethal weapons or technology that the NATO allies have not been able to provide that you would like Canada to provide, or that the Ukrainian government would like Canada to provide? What are those specifics? Or is it about sending that message? In fairness, I think Canada has been there for years. We've talked about the different operations as well as Operation Reassurance, which is about the surrounding countries as well.

Could I, then, maybe get some more specificity around your comments on lethal weapons? Are there specific gaps you'd like Canada to fill? Or is this about a continuation of sending an even stronger message?

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: I went first the last time. Maybe Professor Jolicoeur wants to start.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jolicoeur: For the moment, Canada is trying to avoid committing too much, and the reason is understandable.

Would Canada have the weapons needed to strengthen Ukraine's military capabilities? Ukraine would have to draw up a specific list.

I alluded earlier to drones. I know that Canada has these technological capabilities. We know that some drones—built in Turkey, in particular, but with some Canadian technology—were used admirably in a recent conflict in the Caucasus, in Nagorno-Karabakh, in the fall of 2020. This is the kind of weapon that was able to make a difference in a theatre of operations where Canada was indirectly involved through Turkey in a recent conflict. Technology like this could be sent to Ukraine and help the Ukrainian armed forces build up their military capacity. Other than that, I'm not familiar with the details of the type of weaponry Ukraine would need.

● (1620)

[*English*]

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: To briefly add to that, again, these lists exist. The armed forces of both countries have been reviewing them for a number of months, if not longer. What I've been told generally is that Canada obviously specializes...and has a large land and sea border, so any kind of surveillance systems we could be sharing with them would be particularly useful in terms of detecting [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] are going to invade. We have a speciality in that, particularly in the high-tech sector.

It's all about, as you said, putting a higher cost on the Russian calculation to invade. We know that the trusted relationship between the two armed forces means that those discussions are ongoing at a very secure level.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you for that clarity.

Just on a follow-up, would that surveillance technology, especially for land and sea, for example, be considered lethal defence weapons? Again, we keep getting asked for the specific lethal weapons. Just as an example, if land and border surveillance have been working with the forces there, would that fall into the lethal category?

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: Again, I can't speculate on the exact names of those kinds of systems. I can just say that the Ukrainian and Canadian armies have clear communication on what they need and what can be used. I would just have to leave it at that in terms of my comments.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Fair enough. Like I said, if we're being asked for lethal, it doesn't sound to me that surveillance would be considered lethal. I was just trying to get a little clarification, then, on what the specific ask is and that determination.

In terms of—

The Chair: Regrettably, I'm going to have to cut you off, Ms. O'Connell.

You have two and a half minutes, Madam Normandin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

I would like to continue my conversation with Mr. Jolicoeur, who has already talked about various possibilities for Canadian intervention. We've talked quite a bit about weapons, for example. We talked a little about the possibility of military intervention, but also about the risks associated with it. I would also like to hear what he has to say about other possibilities for intervention, such as economic sanctions, increased support through operations such as Unifier. I would like him to rank the risks associated with each of these possibilities as well as the effects they may have on the conflict.

Mr. Pierre Jolicoeur: Good afternoon, Ms. Normandin. Thank you for your question.

In terms of the type of sanctions or other measures that Canada can take to increase pressure on Russian authorities without necessarily being in Ukraine itself, Canada can adopt additional economic sanctions. We can identify Russian personnel, including oligarchs or supporters, people who are close to Vladimir Putin, or Vladimir Putin himself, and increase sanctions, freeze the economic assets of these people. Of course, Russia's great fortunes aren't necessarily stored in Canada, it's more in London or in other banking systems abroad. Such economic sanctions freeze the assets and certainly increase the economic pressure on Russia. This is the type of action that Canada can take without too many consequences, but that increases [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. That's the kind of thing that is highly likely. In this case, Canada would have to do it not alone, but in coordination with the other NATO countries, and Ukraine, of course, to coordinate a simultaneous and coherent effort.

We can also increase support to Ukraine, increase funding. Even if we don't want to deploy troops, we can still support the Ukrainian government with a financial contribution. We can also send weapons, including lethal weapons. These are also means we can use.

● (1625)

[*English*]

The Chair: We're going to have to leave it there, unfortunately, Madam Normandin.

Ms. Mathyssen, you have two and a half minutes, please.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: I'm just going to pick it right back up from Madam Normandin.

The Chair: Well, that's good. It was a good line of questioning.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: I would like to hear as well from Ihor about the sanctions and the supports. Canada has talked about using those potentials. Even just today, one of the committee members said that we're ready and willing. I'm not sure what's holding that back.

Mr. Jolicoeur, you said that NATO allies have to coordinate those sanctions. Maybe both of you could quickly talk about those.

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: I'll just say quickly that sanctioning Russian oligarchs through the Magnitsky legislation is something we can do more of. We can certainly step up to do more. For example, we know of people like Oleg Sentsov. These are Ukrainian political prisoners who were taken into the Russian domestic system. He's the most well known and was released, but there are many hundreds of others. Those people are prosecuted and jailed by specific people within the Russian Federation.

Those kinds of personal sanctions, which mean that those individuals and their families can no longer travel or participate in financial transactions in the West, are what we think would make a real difference. Again, we appreciate Canada's commitment to sanctions, but we're saying that we have not matched the strength of the American and EU allies on those in the last number of years.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jolicoeur: To add to the answer that was just given, the importance of coordinating with NATO countries is that if an additional sanctions regime is adopted, it isn't really Canada that will bear the brunt, but rather our European allies.

Imagine, for instance, preventing the import of energy sources from Russia. The European consumer countries are the energy customers. It would put great pressure on Russia, but the European partner countries would also be affected. We would like to see if there are partners who can replace Russia as an energy supplier. Canada could perhaps make a small effort in this respect, but Canada has trouble exporting our oil resources because of the lack of pipeline networks, a long-standing internal Canadian dispute. So we would have to find—

[*English*]

The Chair: Unfortunately, again, we're going to have to leave it there. I feel bad. It seems that's my role in life: to cut off professors.

Professor Jolicoeur, I apologize to you.

For the final two questions, we'll go to Madame Gallant for five minutes, and then Mr. Zuberi for five minutes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): First of all, Mr. Michalchyshyn, you mentioned false flags. In the news this week, we had our state broadcaster say that the Russians were behind the truckers on Parliament Hill right now. They were calling it a plot by the Russians.

How likely is it that they are behind these people who seem to be grassroots individuals there for their own causes?

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: RT and Sputnik are two of the state-owned Russian channels in Canada, both on cable and online, and they sow a lot of disunity and disinformation on Western democracies. They are what we believe to be state-sponsored media. We would urge this committee and others to change the ways those media are allowed to broadcast within Canada, because I think they are trying to undercut our parliamentary democracy in many ways, as well as via the other covert kinds of media operations that might be going on.

Really, we think going after the state-sponsored media of the Russian Federation is the most powerful way to ensure that there is good information about Canada and around the world.

● (1630)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: It was actually our CBC that was making that report, but has Russia Today had any involvement lately in Canada, from your perspective, in terms of riling up the Russian population with respect to Ukraine?

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: I'm fortunate that I don't have to watch much Russia Today, but I know that in the past they've gone and done things like harass our community leaders at their homes and community centres and perpetuated some of the false disinformation narratives, when they send so-called “reporters” out to Canada.

Therefore, unfortunately, or actually fortunately, I don't have any current examples, because I'm too busy speaking with you and with other Canadians such that I don't have to watch RT, but maybe the professor has some other comments on that.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Jolicoeur, do you have any idea, since past actions are sort of a prediction, with regard to the timing of the Russian aggression in Ukraine should they decide to start to take land? Twice now, it was during the Olympics, and we have the Olympics just starting recently. Do you predict that it is fairly imminent?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jolicoeur: Thank you for your question.

As for when an intervention might happen, I think that Russia will want to spare the Chinese authorities and wait until after the Olympic Games. As for whether military action is likely to be taken, Vladimir Putin is used to surprises. The intervention against Georgia in 2008 took place during the Olympic Games in China. The “five-day war” in August 2008 took place while the international community's attention was focused on Beijing. Will this scenario be repeated? I can't say, but I would be surprised. I think Russia is trying to be gentle with China because China is a major support of Russia at the moment, so much so that if measures and sanctions are adopted and the energy that Russia provides to European countries is cut off, for example, China would be Russia's best partner to help it bear the economic burden weight of such decisions. I think Russia is trying to spare China and could therefore wait.

Having said that, I would like to come back to something the other speaker said. Russia is a master of misinformation. Arte and Sputnik are the primary vehicles that Russia uses to try to influence the behaviour of Russian Canadians and Canadians in general. It may be that news stations like the CBC will pick up news that is broadcast on Arte, so it's possible that Russia is somewhat behind the support for truckers protesting in Ottawa, indirectly.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Gallant.

For the final question, we have Mr. Zuberi. Welcome to the committee.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thanks for having me.

I'd like to put forth this first question concerning Canada's role in NATO, the new Operation Reassurance, and how that compares to other NATO nations.

The Chair: To whom do you want that directed?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: My question is for Mr. Jolicoeur.

[*English*]

Mr. Pierre Jolicoeur: Could you repeat the question? It's not clear to me. To what extent—

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: It's with respect to Operation Reassurance and our country's role within NATO. How are other NATO countries involved in this operation as it relates to central and eastern Europe?

If you'd like to shed light on that, I'd be happy to hear you on this point.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jolicoeur: It's important for Canada to take part in these missions. This is a priority since it's NATO countries that benefit from this support. For Canada, it's important to support Ukraine on both fronts, of course, especially since we have a large Ukrainian community in Canada. Other NATO partners, including the United States, have announced additional troops in eastern Europe, but care is being taken not to put additional U.S. troops in Ukraine to avoid upsetting Russia and increasing the pressure. It must be said that Russia is addressing the United States in this crisis. It's not Ukraine or NATO in general, but the United States that is being targeted by Russia. I think the United States is doing very well to avoid putting U.S. soldiers there. However, if there were U.S. soldiers in Ukraine, it would increase pressure on Russia considerably, more than Canada could do.

● (1635)

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thank you, Mr. Jolicoeur.

I have a second question for you.

[*English*]

With respect to Canada's strengths, how do you feel we're leveraging them when we compare ourselves to the collective NATO alliance? How are we leveraging our strengths and expertise in addressing the issue of the conflict?

I don't know if that came through.

The Chair: I'm not getting any sound from Professor Jolicoeur.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jolicoeur: I was having sound problems.

Sorry once again. Could you please repeat your question?

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Of course.

[*English*]

With respect to Canada's expertise and our capacities, and if we look at the NATO alliance, are we seeing our expertise and capacities being leveraged in a productive, useful way when it comes to NATO's involvement in Ukraine and the region?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jolicoeur: Thank you for your question.

Canada is doing virtually everything it can with its military capabilities. Canada already has forces deployed in many places around the world, and there is currently a shortage of personnel within the Canadian Armed Forces. Canada could certainly contribute a little more, but current Canadian military capabilities have a limit, and I think Canada will soon reach that limit because of current deployments. Canada is making the best use of its resources and doing what it can to support Ukraine and NATO countries.

[*English*]

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thank you for that.

[*Translation*]

I'd like to ask one last question.

[*English*]

With respect to the territorial expansion and Russia's intent to destabilize the region, do you see in this conflict—in Russia's involvement in Ukraine—an attempt to expand territorially [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] with respect to destabilization there in the region?

Again, it's for Mr. Jolicoeur.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jolicoeur: Okay.

Again, thank you for your question.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jolicoeur: I see this as a possibility, but the most important thing for Russia is to destabilize Ukraine. The important part that Russia wanted was Crimea, and they have it for now. The international community has adopted sanctions, but is doing nothing to turn the situation around.

Does Russia want to expand its territory further? It's a possibility, but I think it's minor. What Russia absolutely wants is to destabilize Ukraine so that it does not become democratic. As long as the conflict is at Ukraine's doorstep, Ukraine won't be able to join NATO. In this sense, Russia is achieving its objective, in my opinion.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Zuberi and Professor Jolicoeur.

That brings our first hour to a close. On behalf of the committee, I want to thank Mr. Michalchyshyn and Professor Jolicoeur for an outstanding start to this study. It was very informative.

With that, we'll suspend for a minute or two while we re-empanel.

● (1640)

_____(Pause)_____

● (1640)

The Chair: We'll bring the meeting back to order.

I'm very delighted to see both Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Perry, neither of whom, the last time I saw them, had beards.

I want to invite them to make five-minute statements. Is there any agreement between either of you as to who proceeds first?

Okay. We'll go in alphabetical order, then.

Mr. Mulroney, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. David Mulroney (Former Ambassador of Canada to the People's Republic of China, As an Individual): Thank you very much, and thank you for this opportunity to speak to the committee. Since retiring a decade ago, I've spent a lot of time reflecting on two issues from my professional life. One is the challenge of managing our steadily evolving relationship with China. The other, heavily influenced by my experience working on Afghanistan, is the inclination within the public service to focus much more on policy development than on policy delivery: how things actually get done. It's an attention deficit that all too often leaves things undone. Both issues are, I believe, relevant to the work you're undertaking.

When I left Beijing, I argued that we were failing to see China comprehensively as a country offering real opportunities but also a growing set of challenges. Ten years on, this hasn't changed, except that I now believe that the balance has shifted decisively in the direction of challenge, and that China represents the greatest long-term threat to our country.

Let me be clear that when I refer to China, I am referring to the People's Republic led by the Communist Party and not the people of China.

This growing threat is fed by the conviction in Beijing that weakness and decline in the west are ushering in unprecedented opportunities for global leadership for China. This ambition is collective, shared at the highest levels of the Communist Party, but it's also profoundly personal, the guiding star of China's paramount leader, Xi Jinping. It is fed by a dangerous overconfidence in China's capabilities and at the same time by nagging doubts that growing economic headwinds, demographic decline and mounting international push-back will deny China its global hegemony unless it moves quickly and decisively.

There is a military dimension to this threat, and I will leave that for specialists to describe. While it applies to Canada, it is most acute for our friends and allies in east Asia, democracies whose safety and survival are vitally important to us, not least because they are home to so many Canadian citizens.

This argues for investing seriously in the expeditionary capability of the Canadian Forces, something important in itself, but also essential if we are to be welcomed into new alliances and if our voice is to be heard in the conversations that matter.

In addition to the military threat, Canadians face PRC—People's Republic of China—aggression here at home. This includes harassment of members of the Chinese diaspora, as well as the many Tibetans, Uighurs and Falun Gong practitioners that China's Communist Party targets across this country. The threat also includes aggressive espionage, efforts to influence media and various levels of government, and even attempts to limit our autonomy—what we can say and do as a nation. China's objective is to compel us into the kind of bilateral relationship it understands best, which means becoming its compliant satellite, a vassal state.

Responding to this unprecedented challenge calls for a level of leadership, vision and coordination that is rare in government. It will require multiple departments and the Canadian Forces to understand and pursue goals over narrower organizational objectives. This challenge must not be underestimated and almost certainly requires changes to the machinery of government.

We must also address two operational issues so fundamental as to be existential. First, we need to revitalize and repair leadership culture in the military and the public service and recover the conviction that all public service—and here I include elected office—entails lifelong loyalty to Canada and an enduring obligation to protect privileged information acquired while serving this country.

Second, we need to recapture what I would describe as a sense of national purpose. The defining element of Chinese strategy is psychological, aiming to intimidate and discourage an opponent so that he or she submits without a struggle. Bluster and intimidation are deployed to encourage passivity and defeatism, engendering in the foreign target a kind of national exhaustion, a widespread failure of will and a drift into a terminal dependency.

● (1645)

The best antidote to this is a healthy sense of confidence in who we are and what we've accomplished, and faith in our history, our institutions and our people. We've needed to call on this resolve at key points in the past, and it has never failed us, but it is a resource that needs to be cultivated and replenished by our leaders and by our leading institutions. We can't meet the threat posed by China if we've lost touch with Canada.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mulroney.

Mr. Perry, you have five minutes.

Mr. David Perry (President, Canadian Global Affairs Institute, As an Individual): Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the invitation to speak to you today about the threat analysis affecting Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces' operational readiness to meet those threats.

In my opening remarks, I'll focus on the changes in the threat analysis since the publication of Canada's defence policy, “Strong, Secure, Engaged”, in 2017; recent changes to Canada's armed forces' operations domestically; long-standing shortfalls in key maintenance budgets; and the implications for operational readiness.

As we are witnessing currently with Russia's military buildup on the Ukrainian border, the return of great power competition, which was identified in our defence policy five years ago, has only amplified since. Russia and China, in particular, continue to invest in programs of widespread military modernization and employ those modernized armed forces, in concert with other elements of state power, in ways that threaten Canadian interests. The demonstrated behaviour of antagonistic great powers is the backdrop against which the ongoing reinvestment in Canada's military is occurring.

That reinvestment is needed both to maintain Canada's basic commitments to national, North American and international roles, and to enhance our ability to deter unwanted great power behaviour. In North America and the Indo-Pacific, in particular, greater clarity of purpose and matching resources are needed to ensure Canada's ongoing security and open access to international trade.

Set against those international pressures, the last several years have seen a dramatic increase in the use of Canada's military on domestic operations. Our changing climate and the current pandemic have resulted in deployments across Canada more frequently, and for new and unanticipated purposes. The operations have unquestionably provided a valuable service to the country. However, if we anticipate employing our military at the same scale and frequency domestically as we have recently, we need to re-evaluate the full set of missions we are asking the military to perform and how they are being resourced.

Defence planning presumes the military will be a force of last resort for domestic operations, but that premise no longer appears valid. If the military has become the force of choice for providing domestic assistance, and those roles are prioritized, that will necessarily reduce the operational readiness of the military to perform other missions by impacting training, equipment usage and personnel operational tempo. If that kind of defence reorientation is desired, it should be done purposefully and with any required resourcing trade-offs made deliberately.

Finally, a key aspect of operational readiness the committee may wish to investigate is the operational availability of the Canadian Armed Forces' equipment fleets. The ability to deploy equipment operationally is dependent on the maintenance and support regime that keeps our ships, aircraft and vehicles serviceable. A key component of that serviceability is the availability of funding and the ability to deploy it in what National Defence refers to as its national procurement account, which is a centrally managed budget that funds a significant portion of the military's maintenance.

Within the last decade, defence has been dealing with two different shortfalls related to its ability to address the identified maintenance needs of its fleet. The first is a shortfall in the capacity available in government to put maintenance contracts in place, as well as in industry to do the actual work. The second shortfall relates to the availability of funding to conduct all that.

As a result of combined shortages of funding and capacity, for years our military has been conducting less maintenance across its equipment holdings than is required. Over time, undermaintaining equipment reduces its availability for operational employment, a dynamic exacerbated as equipment ages. Given the advancing age of some key fleets—frigates and fighters in particular—this maintenance deficit is growing, which will limit the operational readiness of Canada's military for the next several years.

In sum, several factors are combining to constrain the operational readiness of Canada's military. These are the need to take additional steps to defend Canada and North America with our American allies, an imperative to be more involved in the Indo-Pacific, a significant increase in domestic operations and the long-standing but ongoing maintenance shortfalls. A re-evaluation of what Canada is asking its armed forces to do and the resources required to do it is in order.

● (1650)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perry.

With that, we'll go to our first round of questions. For the first six-minute round, we have Mr. Motz, Mr. May, Madame Normandin and Madame Mathyssen, in that order.

Mr. Motz, you have six minutes.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Perry, for your testimony. It was very enlightening.

Mr. Mulroney, I'll start with you. Given the statements you've made, do you see the government's current policies on foreign affairs and national defence as being somewhat disconnected from each other? If so, is that a problem?

Mr. David Mulroney: I'm quite sure that they are disconnected, but I would say they have been disconnected for a long time. There were a lot of reasons for that.

One is the failure to think strategically and to take foreign policy seriously within the public service and government. We do that because we've had the advantage of having the United States as our neighbour. It takes care of the main things that you have a foreign policy for, which are prosperity, defence and security. We've never thought seriously enough about foreign policy as a tool for advancing our interests.

Secondly, I think there has been a failure—this is my personal view and observation—of civilian leadership over the Canadian Forces, so we've lost that partnership that used to exist 25 to 30 years ago.

There is a failure today, but I think it is a long-standing failure. It contributes to what I would call an inadequate foreign policy for Canada.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Perry, do you have some brief thoughts before I move to the next question?

Mr. David Perry: I would agree that there is an emerging disconnect between our public rhetoric and what we're asking and resourcing several different elements of our international policy to do. Bringing those back into a better calibration would lead to better outcomes for Canadians.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Mulroney, in your opinion, is Canada in good standing with its allies? It seems like we're out of step with our Five Eyes allies on Huawei. We're out of step on China, on defence and on international co-operation.

What are your thoughts on that?

Mr. David Mulroney: We have slipped, even within the Five Eyes. I think we have come to be seen as the fourth most aggressive member of the Five Eyes when it comes to combatting Chinese interference. New Zealand is basically not doing anything. We're at the back of the pack. We see that in terms of the meetings that are taking place and the times that Canada's name is referenced when people are talking about the new alliances and new multilateral groupings that are being formed.

That has to do with two things. One is that we're seen to be people who see foreign policy as transmission. It's sending messages, but not so much listening. It's largely rhetorical. Secondly, because we have allowed our military capability to diminish over time, we're simply not able to be present. Increasingly, as new alliances and new multilateral groupings are formed, membership depends on what you bring to the table. We're not seen as bringing enough.

● (1655)

Mr. Glen Motz: Before my time is up—

The Chair: Mr. Motz, I'm sorry to interrupt you, but apparently there's a difficulty with your microphone. It's something to do with your not having connected into the audio part of the Zoom call. Do I have that correct?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Andrew Wilson): Mr. Motz, it seems like you've selected the speakers, but not your microphone. The interpreters are having a hard time hearing you.

Mr. Glen Motz: Is that better?

The Clerk: Yes. We're getting thumbs up in the room.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you very much. I apologize for that.

Mr. Mulroney, before my time is up, I want to get to what you started out with on your opening statement, which is your experience with China.

The communist regime there has obviously made Canada a target. We're targeted for political and economic interference. Can you expand on how they go about doing that? You did a little, but for the time I have left, can you just give us your thoughts on that specifically?

Mr. David Mulroney: There are three things principally that China has in its Canada policy. One that we're seeing is that we're one of the most important allies of the United States. Anything they can do to weaken that alliance and split us off is valuable. Two, we're a source of technology. They don't always respect us, but they respect us in certain areas, and they are working 24-7 to make off with as much of that technology as they can. Third, Canada is home to groups that are of interest to China, notably the Chinese diaspora.

The Chinese leader, Xi Jinping, talks about the great Chinese nation, and he's speaking globally, and that leads China to interfere in diaspora communities and to treat people as hyphenated rather than as Canadians. They victimize members of the diaspora but also Uighurs, Tibetans and Falun Gong practitioners.

They're working at making us less reliable allies to the United States, deepening our economic dependency on China, making off with our technology, and interfering at the community level in Canada, all with a view to transforming us into a more reliable client of China. You need only look at the rhetoric and the way the Chinese ambassadors and Chinese diplomats speak to us, including to parliamentarians. I've followed that over the last 10 years. The decibels are rising; the stridency is rising. They're assuming they can tell us what to do.

Mr. Glen Motz: I'll defer the remaining 20 seconds to one of my colleagues coming up in order to get a question.

Maybe Mr. Perry did such a good job of answering the short answer last time that I'll let him weigh in on that for the time I have left.

The Chair: You don't have that much time left. I'm sorry.

We're on to Mr. May for six minutes.

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): First of all, I just wanted to confirm that the translators are hearing me okay. I just want to make sure.

The Chair: They're happy with you.

Mr. Bryan May: That's fantastic.

I want to thank both of the witnesses for being here today. My questions will be for Mr. Perry.

Mr. Perry, in your opinion, should Canada be increasing its ability to counter cyber-threats?

Mr. David Perry: It should. That's been a key area for a number of years, in that it's been recognized that we don't have enough capacity to adequately engage in that modern field of warfare but, more generally, the field of statecraft. I know there are efforts under way, especially given the technology sector in this country, that should be an area of focus and potentially an area of particular strength for Canada looking ahead.

● (1700)

Mr. Bryan May: Where do you see the biggest threats coming with regard to cyber?

Mr. David Perry: I would tie the cyber-threat back to the general threat from great powers in China and Russia that have a number of different elements of statecraft at their disposal. Cyber is one that they employ in concert with a number of different aspects—intelligence, conventional military and economic linkages—but cyber is increasingly the fabric that underpins much or all of that. Having a sophisticated understanding of how that all works, a good ability to defend our own networks, and an ability to take so-called offensive action, if that's what the Canadian interests require, is important.

Mr. Bryan May: Do you see progress with CSE at this point?

Mr. David Perry: There has been significant progress in that area, in bolstering that, and the Canadian Armed Forces has done that as well. There's still significant room to expand that.

Mr. Bryan May: I'm going to shift gears a bit. You talked a little about the domestic activities of the military and the request for support from the military. You talked about climate change, and obviously COVID over the last two years.

You kind of talked a bit about the idea of how you cover both fronts, the domestic side and the challenges we're facing there versus the more traditional sense of the forces. Do you have any suggestions? Do you have any recommendations that we could consider on how to deal with that moving forward?

Mr. David Perry: The key recommendation would be to decide or provide some suggestion about how much priority should be placed by Canada's military specifically on filling those functions, or whether or not there might be other bodies in the federal government or other levels and types of support that could provide some of the assistance that we are increasingly calling on the military to do.

The military has been very successful at doing that, but it's coming at a cost in terms of its ability to simply do something else, whether that's collective training, being prepared on an individual basis, or doing things like vehicle maintenance. You're making a trade-off every time you deploy somebody to take on that type of task. While they can do it quite effectively, it simply means that they're unable to do something else at the same time.

I've moved away from an assumption that the Canadian military will effectively be called last, when no one else is available, and that's an assumption that I think in the last couple of years we've seen doesn't seem to hold up. We're going to have to either re-evaluate the collective totality of what we're asking them to do, or look at the individual resourcing impacts of asking them to do more in the domestic space.

Mr. Bryan May: What have other countries done in this regard? Obviously, especially on climate change, this is a global problem. Have other countries addressed this, or are they leaning on their military as well?

Mr. David Perry: There are a number of different models. Certainly, you've seen during COVID that lots of other countries have used the military domestically. Just as a general observation, supports like these have taken place in more specific and focused areas. Some of the militaries have dedicated forces that can do things like civil engineering, effectively, with parts of the United States military as an example.

We have more of a general multi-purpose force approach. Some of the same people who we're asking to potentially deploy to eastern Europe are being asked to provide support at home. They can do that, but if you're helping fight a forest fire, or you're helping people in support after a flood, then you're less able to have the type of training to go overseas. In particular, with the military medical capacity, which is designed purely to deploy and provide medical support to our own troops, we're really stretching that particular aspect of our forces pretty significantly.

Mr. Bryan May: Mr. Chair, can I get a time check?

The Chair: You have a little less than a minute.

Mr. Bryan May: Perfect.

I have a very quick question about procurement. You mentioned “Strong, Secure, Engaged”. Within the 30 seconds I'm going to give you here, I'm wondering if you can talk specifically about the national shipbuilding strategy.

Mr. David Perry: I'll say, in 30 seconds, that it's moving forward but slower than anticipated. I'd love to see that accelerated to the extent that it can be accelerated. The ships it's supposed to deliver will be vital. Until we get them, our options in the Pacific in particular will be a lot more limited than they hopefully will be once those ships arrive.

● (1705)

Mr. Bryan May: Excellent. I think that's my time.

To both witnesses, again, thank you for being here.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Normandin, you have six minutes.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

I'd like to thank the two witnesses for their presentation. It was particularly interesting.

I would like to start my round of questions with Mr. Mulroney.

Mr. Mulroney, you talked about some of the problems of understanding that we had in the past regarding China. China was seen more as a source of opportunity and certain risks were perhaps overlooked.

Recently, with the crisis in Ukraine, a number of people have commented on the state of diplomacy in the world and its shortcomings. Some people have mentioned that we have seen a revolving door phenomenon. There is a lot of staff turnover. There have been five different ministers in six years.

I'd like to hear what you have to say about that, as well as about the request from a number of people who want Canada's foreign policy to be thoroughly reviewed. We need a fully study and a new white paper.

Would that be relevant?

[*English*]

Mr. David Mulroney: On understanding China, it goes deeper even than diplomacy. If you look at any newspaper in the last 10 years, you'll see a glowing story about some new technology in China or some incredible app that Chinese consumers use. Maybe somewhere else, in the political section, you'll read about Chinese aggression or what China is doing to meddle in some other part of the world. We've tended to have this bifocal approach to China.

When I would come back to Ottawa as ambassador, I would try to get as many of the deputy ministers together as possible. Otherwise, the economic deputy ministers would see China as an opportunity, but the security and defence ones [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. It's changing slowly, but it is beginning to change. I don't think it's too late, but it's happening.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I would like to ask you another question, which Mr. Perry can also answer if he'd like.

China is known for its espionage capabilities. We know that it is very active in this area. However, we know that Chinese soldiers have come to Canada for training.

Do you think it was a mistake to train Chinese soldiers here?

[*English*]

Mr. David Mulroney: In my view, it was an error. I have long argued that there needs to be some level of communication between the Canadian Forces and the People's Liberation Army simply to understand their doctrine, their tactics and their thinking. You can't separate yourself. There came a time, though, and this was clearly past that time, as China's aggression increased, and particularly once they took our Canadian hostages, that other forms of co-operation were completely inappropriate.

What alarms me is that there's no mechanism in Ottawa, no warning light that goes on, in any department, saying this is a China issue and think about it carefully. It's just not happening.

The Chair: Mr. Perry, do you want to respond?

Mr. David Perry: I would largely echo and agree with what Mr. Mulroney said.

In having that kind of engagement, they develop a better understanding that's very useful, but particularly in dealing with that country and that part of the world, we need to be thinking about the message that any one of our individual lines of engagement sends as part of a wider package of our involvement in that world.

We should try to aim for more consistency and alignment between what we're doing and how that might be looked upon by other people as sort of a sign of goodwill at the same time that we're trying to take a different and tougher message on a different area of focus. Certainly, though, engagement is positive if it's done the right way.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Okay.

My next question is first for Mr. Perry, and then Mr. Mulroney can answer.

My question is about military training. We know that psychological tactics are being used more and more against the military and that officers are being sent to the field to obtain information.

Do you think the Canadian Armed Forces are currently adequately trained psychologically for this type of more recent intervention? There's no trench warfare anymore; we're really engaging in more psychological jousting at times.

[*English*]

Mr. David Perry: Getting our heads around [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] conflict that has less clear lines of the actual physical fighting, much more involvement of intelligence aspects, of cyber-activity, as well as the softer...what is referred to variously as “hybrid” or “grey zone” conflict. Understanding the different manifestations of that is something that collectively—not just in the military but across the foreign service and other parts of government—we need to better understand and have the wider country understand. For the military in particular, understanding how different countries are trying to leverage misinformation/disinformation and what potential impacts that might have on our individual forces members would be important.

● (1710)

Mr. David Mulroney: I couldn't agree more. In fact, I would advocate that we create a China school for senior public servants and for members and rising stars in the Canadian Forces, with a longer-term track focusing on language and culture and a shorter-term track for a variety of people, where we bring in the best thinkers, writers and professors on China and bring them up to speed, because I think the knowledge gap in Ottawa—across the board—is significant.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Could that comment also apply to other officials, Mr. Perry, including members of the diplomatic corps? Do you see any gaps there?

[*English*]

Mr. David Perry: Yes, absolutely. It's important to keep in mind that China, Russia and some other players don't engage only in a defence context. They do so across economic realms and in engagements on a personal basis. You really require an effort on the part of the entire Government of Canada to adequately provide for our defence and security. Focusing only on our soldiers would be a mistake. It requires a much broader effort than that.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Normandin.

Madam Mathyssen, you have six minutes, please.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Mr. Mulroney, you were talking a lot about China pushing as hard as they wanted to and really working on that ability to make those around the world fall into that defeatist sort of category, defeating them before they even put their minds to working against that Chinese objective.

There is the recent example of Lithuania, where they tried to ally themselves with Taiwan and were entirely cut off. Canada is showing support, of course, of Taiwan, in some ways, but I don't believe we are doing so in all the ways we could. The HMCS *Winnipeg*, for example, is going through the Taiwan Strait.

What do acts like that show China? We've called for greater supports for those trying to flee Taiwan, for activists as well as those from Hong Kong. What type of reaction would we get to a further push on China? Do you think they would do something to Canada as exacting as they did to Lithuania?

That's for both witnesses, please.

The Chair: Mr. Mulroney, do you want to lead off?

Mr. David Mulroney: First I would say that having the Canadian navy participating in these operations in the Taiwan Strait, in the region, is tremendous because you're sending a message to China that this isn't just a sign of American rivalry. A lot of serious countries are concerned and willing to be present, and it does get attention. Xi Jinping has his critics, and they're beginning to say they're beginning to see more and more people doing this. I had the privilege of being the defacto head of mission in Taiwan before I served in China. That's where I met Mr. McKay for the first time. He visited often with Canadian parliamentarians, which was very useful in itself.

I remain convinced that we're not using all of the policy space we have to support Taiwan and to support its dynamic leader, Tsai Ing-wen. If we even did what we were allowed to do, what we could do, there are real red lines. There were things that we could do, that others could do, that could endanger Taiwan, because China would become even more bellicose and possibly even attack. There are a lot of things we could be doing, though, if we put our minds to it to support this vibrant democracy.

As to Lithuania, one thing that's coming out is that they haven't been totally brought to their knees by Chinese sanctions. Chinese citizens buy and sell often according to what they want to buy and where the price is best. We are too easily cowed by this. They've hit us on canola; we push back on canola. We're willing to take enormous steps on climate change. We should also think about our autonomy and sovereignty and put a price on saving that too.

Mr. David Perry: To start, we need to be very cognizant of the likely reaction. With certain countries, when we do things that we know they don't like, they're going to react forcefully, and we need to be able to accept that and make a calculated decision that if things are in our interest, we will do them and accept some potential downside.

In specific reference to Taiwan and Hong Kong, it would be beneficial for Canada to be clearer and more consistent about identifying things like international waterways. If we think there are parts of the water space over there that are international and navigable, and that Canada and any other country have a right to transit, we shouldn't be as cautious about doing so as a way of indicating that despite what China says, it doesn't actually own certain pieces of real estate on the ocean. In doing that, we can help reinforce international safe usage for other people in concert with some of our key allies. I worry that at times we've been overcautious. What some people have been concerned about is provoking China, but looked at a different way, that would simply be reasserting our rights on the open seaways.

● (1715)

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: You spoke about those policy spaces that Canada could occupy, Mr. Mulroney, without stepping over the red line. Could you expand on that, please?

Mr. David Mulroney: Well, one, obviously, is trade and economic development. Taiwan is a tough negotiator, but there are lots of opportunities. When I was there we had a very vibrant cultural program. We had artists coming from across Canada sharing Canadian ideas with a very big program on indigenous co-operation. The new government in Taiwan was rediscovering the fact that there's a very vibrant indigenous culture in Taiwan that had been ignored, and we brought groups from Canada and Taiwan together. Also, people to people, there are a lot of people of Taiwanese origin. There are all kinds of things we should be doing with Taiwan, and we would do with Taiwan, if it were seen as any other place. It's just that we have self-censored, and this is the effect that I spoke of earlier. China so intimidates you that it gets you to stop well before any red lines it might have.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathyssen. Of course the father of modern Taiwan is a gentleman named Mackay.

We'll go on to our second round, with Mr. Paul-Hus and Mr. Gaheer, for five minutes each. Colleagues, if we're going to run this whole round it's going to take us to 5:42. I hope that's acceptable. I see that it is.

With that, Mr. Paul-Hus, welcome to the committee again.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, gentlemen. I'm pleased to be a member of the Standing Committee on National Defence.

Mr. Mulroney, I absolutely agree with what you said in your presentation about our current relationship with China. We also fully understand that Canada has two problems in this area, one relating to foreign affairs and the other, the decrepit Canadian Armed Forces, which are understaffed and under-equipped.

On equipment requirements, I want to touch on two things. I want to get your thoughts on the navy. I liked Mr. Perry's comment that China did not own the seas.

Are the Canadian Forces' current plans for the design of new ships adequate?

Is there other equipment, such as submarines, for example, that should be considered? Are we on the right track in terms of naval equipment?

What do you think about the air force? Is the upcoming fleet of jets the best thing for the air force?

I'd like to hear from Mr. Perry first.

[*English*]

Mr. David Perry: I'll start with the jets. We're hopefully down to the end game of the most recent round of trying to get new fighter aircraft. We're down to two choices that have very different types of capabilities. We'll have to see how that plays out and what the government ultimately wants to do with them.

One thing I would say, building on what Mr. Mulroney offered, is that I'd like us much more involved in that region of the world on a more consistent basis. It's a place that we tend to visit episodically. I don't know that we have spent enough time staying in the region and learning how to really operate and understand what's happening there.

With respect to the navy, the ships we are designing, our new surface combatants, are ships that are going to be very capable and very suited to that part of the world. If we're going to buy 15 of them, as is the current plan, that would see Canada effectively holding our weight class, if you will, for our navy in a way that a lot of our allies haven't. That's something to look forward to once those ships are delivered. It's the delivery time frame that I have more concern about.

On submarines, it's important for Canada to keep that particular capability. It's vital to being part of a modern naval force. Certainly, the Indo-Pacific region, with the proliferation of submarines over there, would be one area in particular that is leading to that demand for us to have a modern submarine program.

I'm happy to see that we're now looking into whether or not we're going to keep that. I hope that particular project goes ahead.

● (1720)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you, Mr. Perry.

Mr. Mulroney, what position do you think Canada should take with respect to China? It's clear right now that we have no power. However, we can take a firm stance. Can we take a firmer stance and still be realistic?

What would be the best approach to take with the Chinese communist government?

[*English*]

Mr. David Mulroney: One obvious thing we should do is to adopt a policy where our initial approach doesn't necessarily involve flattery. I watched with dismay as Canadian officials were speaking about China's pandemic response in the early days and flattering China at a time when we didn't even have all the facts in, and in fact, there were a lot of things in China's response that weren't deserving of flattery. When in doubt, don't flatter; just stick to the facts. Stick to what you know. When we are obsequious in our behaviour with China, we encourage China to be even more abrupt and short with us.

China is no longer a foreign policy issue. It's increasingly a domestic policy issue, and we should do—and I have advocated this—what Australia has done and take a very firm stance on interference in Canadian affairs. They have set up a registry of people who are acting on behalf of China. You certainly can act on behalf of China, or any other country, in Australia if you wish, but you have to be transparent about it, and there are criminal sanctions if you aren't. That means people who are reading Chinese talking points or using student associations or other groups to harass Canadians. We need to shine a light on that and there need to be repercussions.

Dealing with the domestic issue, the safety of Canadians, people in this country, is a fundamental responsibility of any government, and I think we're failing it.

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Okay.

I have one last question for you.

Do you think Canada has the capacity through the RCMP to monitor Canadian territory? Should National Defence play a greater role?

[*English*]

Mr. David Mulroney: The commissioner sounded rather passive, as if she had not been briefed on this, when she spoke about it recently. If we don't have the capacity, we should darn well add it, because the responsibility of the RCMP includes the safety of Canadians, and if they can't do it, we should find somebody who can.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Paul-Hus.

Mr. Gaheer, welcome to the committee. You have five minutes, please.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.): I'd like to ask Mr. Perry my questions. They're regarding the Indo-Pacific region.

Specifically, how do the armed forces of Canada and its allies in the Indo-Pacific region co-operate and share information currently?

Mr. David Perry: With respect to information sharing, we have relationships with some of our Five Eyes partners, two of them in particular that have a permanent presence there. Some of the British in particular visit occasionally, as we do. That's a relationship to bolster, but there's a lot of room to expand on the relationships we've established with some of the other partners in the region, such as Japan and South Korea, and look to broaden those out.

What we lack in that area of the world that we benefit from elsewhere in Europe is a standing, formalized, regular, institutionalized set of arrangements that we can reliably go back to whenever we're working an arrangement. The absence of that type of formal structure increases the value of our simply spending more time in the region—deploying there more often, establishing those relationships, setting up mechanisms and then actually trying to use them in peacetime in a training environment, so we could call upon them if we really needed to later.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: You mentioned mechanisms. Could you elaborate a little more on that? What would the mechanisms look like? What partners would they be with?

Mr. David Perry: For things like defence co-operation agreements, understandings about different types of intelligence or logistics support and sharing, some of the most logical partners would be Japan and South Korea.

There are a number of other countries we could look to to establish deeper and more meaningful relationships. Singapore, Malaysia and potentially Vietnam come to mind. We already have a lot of those linkages with Australia.

It's also worth exploring what we could potentially gain by partnering more closely with the French, who have a presence and assets in a different part of the region, and certainly more than we do, but also by being more intentional and being more strategic long term in thinking about what's really in Canada's interests. To me that would start with a better understanding of what's actually happening there on a more consistent basis, and then trying to establish arrangements with other like-minded countries to try to support what we want to do ourselves.

● (1725)

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: How can Canada continue to respond to emerging threats in conjunction with these other nations' threats from the Indo-Pacific?

Mr. David Perry: I guess you could look at that in two different veins. One is what we could do five or 10 years down the road, when more of the modernization that's under way right now goes through, and that will open up a number of other options. We're going to have more modern and more capable warships, more modern and more capable fighter aircraft and surveillance assets of various different types.

In the short term, unfortunately for Canada, given where we are in our reinvestment and recapitalization process with our armed forces, we're actually entering into a period in which we're probably going to have less ability to be meaningfully engaged on a sustained basis. One of the key ways in which we've done so in the last 10 years is with our frigates, which are getting increasingly old. Some of them are approaching 30 years old, which means they're going to be less consistently available to send that long distance.

What we could try to do, though, is to look for innovative ways to send people if we can't send ships, to do rotations where that's possible and to look to get more people on the ground physically and in as many places as we can afford to.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: That's great. Thank you.

I'm just on time, I think.

The Chair: You actually have a minute and a half. You might direct that last question to Mr. Mulroney, who not only is the representative in Taiwan and was an ambassador in China but also had some work in Afghanistan. I'm sure he has an opinion.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Mr. Mulroney.

Mr. David Mulroney: Sure.

I felt a sense of nostalgia as Mr. Perry was answering that question, because I remember seeing HMCS *Regina*, then one of our new Canadian patrol frigates, make its maiden voyage to Hong Kong, and I organized its program in Malaysia with the Royal Malaysian Navy.

Our rhetoric at the time was that we had these new vessels and we were going to be present in the Pacific and in Southeast Asia. The Malaysians were tremendously impressed by that, because they liked the technology and they liked the Canadian approach; it tied them into systems not from a superpower but from a like-minded partner.

As well, the Canadian Forces and the Canadian navy were fantastic in terms of the program they put on, not just for the Royal Malaysian Navy but for Malaysian charities. They got us more goodwill in a week than we could have gotten in six months, but we didn't follow up.

Our history is replete with Canadian objectives. “Canada is back” is almost, I think, a drinking game in some parts of the world. How many times will the Canadians say that...?

What we have to do, above all, is sustain our commitment to building long-term capacity. Ottawa is full of South Asia strategies, America strategies and Africa strategies. If sometimes they last a year, we're lucky.

Sticking to it and getting to know—

The Chair: Okay.

I like that idea of the drinking game.

Madam Normandin, you have two and a half minutes.

Go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to follow up on the questions my colleague Mr. Paul-Hus asked Mr. Perry, particularly in relation to hunters.

One of the issues we've heard about is that the choice of Lockheed Martin suggests that the dice are loaded, which will result in a loss of intellectual property. The model chosen implies less technological adaptability and the fact that much of the maintenance will be done in the United States.

I'd like a general comment on the importance of the Canadian Armed Forces controlling the technology so that it can be adapted to their needs.

[*English*]

Mr. David Perry: The fundamental issue is that we're buying an airplane that is effectively wings and a jet engine wrapped around a super computer that has missiles and can do other things. It's really about the software and the computing power, the ability to bring together information that will make either of the different aircraft that we could potentially buy effectively work.

What we're looking at is, depending on which fighter jet is chosen, a very different regime for managing that. With the F-35, we would be part of a consortium that we've been a member of for approaching two decades, where the program that manages that will be managing that data, managing that intellectual property, and Canada will have access to it to leverage a lot of what's happening and being done primarily in the United States, but with the other partner members of that program.

With the Gripen, what's being proposed is to basically transfer all of that information to Canada, which would give Canada sovereign control, as has been proposed, over doing that. That would put more of the onus on Canada to actually maintain that ourselves, as well as the opportunity to do so. I don't think we would have the same type of availability to access what's happening with some of our other key allies as we will with the F-35s.

They're a very different set of potential scenarios, depending on which aircraft we choose.

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Should priority be given to obtaining intellectual property and internal adaptability to suit our needs?

[*English*]

Mr. David Perry: There would be a trade-off in doing that, because we would need to have the ability to manage that on an ongoing basis. We'd need to weigh that against the potential access to what we could get through the other program. I don't think there's any simple answer or clear-cut solution there.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Normandin.

Madame Mathyssen, you have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: I'd like to go back to the discussion on staffing, on the people on the front lines of the armed forces.

Mr. Perry, you spoke of the increased focus or the requirements that we have now domestically. Of course, the pressures of that will only continue to increase as we experience a great deal more climate change and the potential continuation of COVID due to our unwillingness to contribute to the global fight, as I see it.

What's the answer to that? What would you recommend in terms of that increase to the Canadian Armed Forces of retention and recruitment, and to help with that internal crisis that we're seeing?

Mr. David Perry: There are a couple of ways to look at it. If we're talking about keeping the same sets of rules and not increasing the size of the force, we're going to have to make some trade-offs, because we'll be less able to do other things.

In part, with the personnel piece, if we're going to have people spending more time doing that, we might want to think about giving them some specific and dedicated training, rather than having them take on some of these functions as sort of an ostensibly unplanned for but regularly anticipated function, which kind of seems to be what [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

The other point of view would be that if you're going to be recruiting people and giving them the impression that they're going to be doing a certain set of activities, deploying to Latvia or to Iraq, and then they're spending a lot more of their time at home fighting fires or responding to floods, you want to make sure that's what they understand is actually going to happen. What would be unhelpful would be to have people's expectations for what they're joining the military to do be misaligned with what we're actually then sending them out to do in real life.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: All right. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mrs. Gallant, you have five minutes.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Mulroney stated the need to expand expeditionary forces, whereas Dr. Perry says we must decide if we want military to be a domestic responder or a defensive kinetic force.

Should Canada be considering preserving our weapons-trained military to combat military aggression abroad, thereby upholding our collective defence operations and agreements, but also stand up a national guard to augment civilian first responders and frontliners, and a corps of engineers to monitor the critical physical infrastructure conditions of dikes and seawalls and to be able to rapidly deploy to major disasters?

That question is for both of our witnesses

Mr. David Perry: There's a lot of merit in looking carefully at that type of model. That would obviously require additional resources, people and specific training. The focus has to always remain on that type of operational war footing that you described. We're not going to ever look at other public servants to deploy abroad and do those types of things, but the Canadian military has become de facto the only federal supply of easily deployable human labour to do a lot of different tasks. They also come with a command and control structure, mobility and a bunch of other aspects.

Some of the things we're asking them to do domestically could be done by some construction companies, as an example, on a standing-offer basis. We've seen the use of the Red Cross for some of the pandemic response. I'm not convinced that we necessarily need the military specifically to do other aspects of that. We could have other arrangements set in place to allow the military to focus on the other tasks that we can't ask anybody else to do.

● (1735)

Mr. David Mulroney: About those other tasks, I'll say they're not purely altruistic. If Taiwan were to fall to China, the security picture in east Asia would change overnight. We'd see the U.S. have to pull back and we might see a nuclear-armed Japan as a result. The reverberations would be felt in Canada.

I'd also remind the committee that China has very specific ideas about its role, both in the Antarctic and in the Arctic. We need to think about that. That requires some capability. We don't have to do all of the job, but not doing any of it means we have no say in how the job gets done.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: That leads into my second question.

Should China take over Taiwan, how would the threat analysis change for Canada? Given our submarine fleet—which I don't believe has increased since the last time both of you were witnesses here—how ready are we in terms of the Arctic?

Mr. David Mulroney: On the Taiwan scenario, what would happen first is a global reaction that would cripple the global economy. China would do that if it felt it was in danger of losing Taiwan. There would be immense economic chaos.

Also, China thinks in terms of island chains. It would push the U.S. Navy out of the western Pacific into the mid-Pacific. That would make it much more difficult to have influence and to do business in a part of the world that is very important to us. As I said at the outset, it has tens of thousands of Canadians.... We talk about a couple of hundred thousand in Hong Kong. The implications for us are significant.

I'll turn it over to Mr. Perry.

Mr. David Perry: To focus on the Arctic, in about the last decade and a half, or a bit more than that, we've seen incremental enhancements to our ability to operate in the Arctic. Certainly the new Arctic and offshore patrol ship that we have, which did a transit this summer, is giving us more ability to be more present there more of the time.

We absolutely need to move forward on a range of other initiatives that have been hanging up for a while, such as new icebreaker, to give us more of an ability to be there year-round and have better surveillance.

In the context of looking at threats from Russia and China in concert with the United States, modernizing the defence of the continent is now important, including but not limited to the modernization of NORAD. Part of that would look at renewing our submarine fleet, which is about to basically time out. I worry that, unless we really get moving on a new project, we won't have new submarines available before we have to unfortunately retire the ones we have now. Defending all three of our oceans against modern naval threats would require us to have new submarines.

Mr. David Mulroney: I'd like to jump in at the end with one comment on the Arctic.

As to my comment about flattering first, I remember a meeting of the Arctic Council a couple of years ago, where the Canadian minister present told the Chinese that he warmly welcomed their interest and presence in the Arctic. We didn't need to say that. It wouldn't be rude, necessarily, to sit on our hands and think. To welcome China sends a message of Canadian intent that is, I think, different from one that's in our interests.

The Chair: Mr. Fisher, you have the final five minutes.

If you're running out of questions, the chair also has questions.

Mr. Darren Fisher: I wasn't really aware that I had the next question, but I'm glad I get the opportunity.

First of all, hello to David. It's nice to see you, Doctor, after a long time. As I said earlier, it's great to be back on this committee.

Mr. Mulroney, thank you very much for your testimony.

I spent a lot of time at NATO meetings as part of the executive of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Every time I went to those meetings, everyone I spoke to or everyone who spoke in front of the gathering of NATO representatives—to a country—talked about Canada's role in NATO and how we punched above our weight class.

We talked about Five Eyes. We've talked about all kinds of things today. How do NATO and Canada's contribution advance our country's defence and foreign policy interests?

I'll go to David, but Mr. Mulroney, for sure I'd love to hear your opinion as well.

● (1740)

Mr. David Perry: NATO has been a cornerstone of our international policy and it remains so today. We make a lot of valuable contributions there.

To turn to some of the previous conversation, I worry that we've put so many of our eggs in that particular basket. We have a lot of positions there, a lot of staff, and we have the regular meetings there, but there are other places in the world where Canada has interest. I'd look at the Indo-Pacific region in particular as an area where I'd like to see Canada put that type of sustained regular investment of people, of time and of presence that we put into Europe. That's not to discount what we get from NATO, because that's very valuable to Canada's defence and security, but looking for that level of commitment and engagement elsewhere, I think, would benefit the country.

Mr. David Mulroney: I couldn't agree more. If we were to get to what I would refer to as a real foreign policy, we would agree that we have to make tough decisions. We think about where the greatest risks to our sovereignty and to our national security are and I think they are now coming from the Pacific, so we either spend more or we make the tough decisions and reallocate. The same is true, in fact, for our diplomatic resources.

Mr. Darren Fisher: How is our role in NATO likely to evolve as we continue engagement in Europe through enhanced forward presence in eastern Europe?

Mr. David Mulroney: That's not my area. I focus on Asia, but I think it's becoming more virtual than actual. What we need to do, and I see this more from a Canadian perspective, is see a realignment of our resources, including our navy, and continued realignment to the Pacific, acknowledging that there are many players in Europe, Germany included, who should be doing heavy lifting in NATO and crises in Europe, but not as many in the Pacific, although I think we recently welcomed the presence of the Royal Navy, the French navy [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. This Pacific shift that we talk about is something we have talked about for three decades. We need to begin in earnest.

Mr. David Perry: What we could look to in the future is to have a more balanced type of engagement. We put a lot of emphasis, for good reason, if you just take the case of Ukraine, on the Russian tanks and artillery. We should be looking to put almost as much emphasis on what NATO, as a collective alliance, and its adversaries are doing in the cyber domain, what it's doing from an intelligence standpoint, economic involvement, economic linkages, and some of those other activities that are just as important to providing for the security of all the members of NATO as paying attention to the tanks and artillery.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Chair, that's all I have. I'm not sure if there's any time left, but if there's another Liberal that wants to poke at something else—

The Chair: Well, this Liberal will take the prerogative of the chair and direct this to Mr. Mulroney.

Mr. Mulroney, you've had an outstanding career in Taiwan, in China and with Afghanistan. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe that you are now a principal at St. Michael's College, an outstanding college associated with an outstanding university, namely the University of Toronto.

I take to heart your comments about the way in which the Chinese government activates, if you will, the theft of intellectual property. I'd be interested in your comments about, not specifically your institution, but the way in which that becomes a security threat for us all.

Mr. David Mulroney: Just as an update, I am no longer at St. Michael's College, and I can only say that my time in the university sector has increased my respect for government as an organized institution.

We're seeing, in China's activation of its espionage capabilities, how multi-faceted it is, how it uses traditional methods, cyber, infiltration, and what's referred to as elite capture—that is, bringing people onto Chinese boards, giving them contracts, giving their kids scholarships, providing free trips to promote its views—to begin to shape the Canadian debate. It's becoming much more sophisticated over time. It's also using ethnic media and Chinese language media, through their influence on advertisers, to shape the message in Canada.

It's both espionage and interference, and we're seeing it at an unprecedented level. Yesterday the director of the FBI said that they're opening a new Chinese investigation every 12 hours. I don't think we're as busy as that in Canada, but we are busy. We have a hard time taking in the totality of it, but it's happening. It's growing, and it's serious.

What's most worrying to me is the extent to which it victimizes innocent Canadians. I've talked to Uighurs who haven't spoken to 30 family members in five or six years, who can't even speak to their own mothers. The agony that this causes on a personal level across Canada is shocking and shameful.

● (1745)

The Chair: With that, on behalf of the committee, I want to thank both Dr. Perry and His Excellency, David Mulroney. Both of you have made an outstanding contribution to the deliberations of the committee. Interestingly, at our next meeting, on Monday, we will be talking about the very thing that you've just alluded to, Mr. Mulroney.

Colleagues, we'll adjourn the meeting to Monday. On the following Wednesday, we will be having the minister, the CDS and various assorted folks. It's to be continued.

Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.