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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): Ladies and gentlemen, I bring this meeting to order.

We have quorum. We have our witnesses present.

The only unusual part of this first hour will be that Mr. Fisher intends to move a motion, which I understand all parties are in agreement with. He'll do that prior to his questions, but it should take virtually no time at all.

We will have a hard stop at 4:30, regrettably. I'm advising witnesses of that. We have to go in camera after that. It requires some technological changes, which are way beyond me. That's what I'm advised.

We have today retired Vice-Admiral Darren Hawco and Maria Popova, a professor at McGill University, who are carrying on a tradition of just absolutely excellent testimony. I'm going to call upon Vice-Admiral Hawco first for his five-minute presentation, and Professor Popova thereafter.

Go ahead, Vice-Admiral Hawco.

Vice-Admiral (Retired) Darren Hawco (Former Military Representative of Canada to NATO, As an Individual): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the opportunity, on short notice, to join you today.

I'm a military practitioner with strategic experience in NATO and with the CAF. I was involved in the writing of "Strong, Secure, Engaged" and was the chief of force development before my employment with NATO. I understand requirements, capability development and strategy. My comments and answers to questions will be addressed in that vein.

The writer's block analogy applies: If you've written yourself into a corner, you probably did it a couple of pages back. It's important to understand the context of how we got here as the basis to decide what we need to do about it.

The place to start is with Putin, who, most agree, is the decision-maker. His 16 years with the KGB, doing a lot of unsavoury dry work, turning people, etc., resulted, I think, in a person who perhaps has less regard for the human condition than the average. In 1991, on the dissolution of the Soviet Union, he joined Yeltsin's camp, not Gorbachev's, which shows what he thinks of those decisions.

From 1999 to today, he has been the prime minister and president, in various capacities, of the Russian Federation. He put in a really significant and impactful early focus on reform and the economy, which had significant value for the Russian Federation's standard of living, etc. It also probably created a lens on how he thought Gorbachev should have solved the problem of the Soviet Union, rather than allowing it to fail.

Putin would have observed the Russian Federation's decline as a bipolar superpower with NATO expansion at the expense of the Russian Federation. In 1997, 2004, 2009, 2017 and 2020, 14 countries left the Russian Federation's sphere of influence and joined NATO. A person could understand how he blames the west for going back on words spoken, notwithstanding the actual words in the NATO-Russia founding act.

How would Putin decide he could stop that pattern of behaviour? Well, he could take a chunk of a [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] a border dispute. If you have a border dispute, you can't join NATO. It's what he did in Georgia in 2008 and again, arguably, what occurred in 2014.

The Russian Federation [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] that was why Putin fought to address that as prime minister—

The Chair: Excuse me, Admiral Hawco. For some reason, you seem to be cutting out. I want to make sure we're keeping up here.

VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco: Sure.

The Chair: Are the translators okay? Are we good?

I don't think we can do much about it at this point. I apologize again for the interruptions, but welcome to 2022.

Please continue.

VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco: I think the Russian Federation would have seen that steep decline in their economy particularly challenging without a lot of the Soviet state's capacity in Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, etc., and that meant they were more relegated to a resource economy. That partially explains recent, expanded United Nations Arctic claims made by Putin and also may be part of his motivation in relation to Ukraine, because that was a significant industrial capacity element of the Soviet Union.

In the last 70 years, Russian Federation actions, generally speaking, have been opportunistic, but they're against a broader strategy and with a strategic intent in mind, with kind of a freeze-thaw mentality, as I've heard other speakers in previous sessions with you speak about. This means that, in recent years, in Georgia in 2008 and Crimea in 2014, they've taken action, allowed the international community to move on, and then looked for other opportunities.

That speaks to their use of information confrontation, what we would refer to as [*Technical difficulty—Editor*], refined in recent years by Valery Gerasimov as the Gerasimov doctrine, really just combining military, technological, informational, diplomatic, economic, cultural, all kinds of tactics to achieve specific strategic goals.

I would say that only Putin really knows what he wants, but predictably, he wants recognition. He doesn't want a bipolar world; he wants, as a minimum, a tripolar world with the U.S., China and the Russian Federation involved.

Reasonable or not, he wants to stop eastward NATO expansion. Some will say there's no place to go. Well, of course there is. There are Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Finland, Sweden, Austria, Moldova, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. He wants NATO to stop this eastward progression. He wants a sphere of influence; he needs to broaden his economy, and he's a human, so he probably has legacy in mind.

In our sense, what are the types of things...? Sanctions, yes, but consider that he operationally planned this a couple of years ago, so he's planned and accounted for sanctions to a certain extent. If you think about what the Chancellor of Germany, Olaf Scholz, recently said to the Bundestag, which I think is illustrative, Germany has put €100 billion for armaments, a commitment to exceed 2% of GDP for defence spending. They've adjusted their energy policy intentions to avoid long-term dependence, and made other industry policy decisions, and they've committed to, of course, the reinforcements that one would expect for NATO missions and activities. Most importantly, I would argue, the chancellor marks this as a turning point in German foreign policy in favour of alliance and efforts through the EU and NATO. Our corollary, perhaps, as Canada, would be the Five Eyes and NATO.

With that, Mr. Chair, I'll turn it back to you.

Thank you.

• (1535)

The Chair: Thank you, Admiral Hawco.

Please go ahead, Professor Popova.

Ms. Maria Popova (Professor, McGill University, As an Individual): Hello, and thank you for this invitation.

I am a professor of political science. I have worked on Russian and Ukrainian domestic politics for about 20 years now. I have extensive experience researching the political processes of both countries. I have written articles and books about that.

What I want to talk about today is the political root of the crisis. As you'll hear in a second, I have a slightly different view from the admiral's, so you'll get a broad range of views here.

The root cause of Russia's invasion of Ukraine is the view expressed many times by Putin, but also probably held by a portion of Russian elites in society, that Ukraine is not a real nation and should not be entitled to its own state. The dissolution of the Soviet Union was a tragedy, according to Putin. He has emphasized this numerous times, and he is working right now to restore it—and here I agree with the admiral—with a view towards his legacy.

One key point that I wanted to emphasize here is that this rhetoric from Russia lays bare the fact that NATO's eastern expansion neither precipitated nor hastened this crisis. NATO [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] issue to Russia. I'm not going to say that it's irrelevant, but it is behind in importance to the reunification of the Russian and Ukrainian peoples. Even former Soviet president Gorbachev opined recently that he always thought the separation of the Ukrainian and Russian people into two states would cause serious problems. This is first about this issue, and only secondarily about security issues.

Wrapped up, however, in this world view is really a very gross miscalculation about how strongly Ukrainian citizens are attached to their national identity and to their independent state. The resistance that we see from the Ukrainian army and the Ukrainian population at large shows that Russia's expectation with which they went into this war—that they would easily advance to Kyiv as the Ukrainian army lays arms down and the population acquiesces—has turned out to be false. Ironically, this view of Putin, partly a Russian view, undermines rather than advances Russia's stated security interests in the region. Had Putin taken Ukrainian independence seriously, the current crisis could have been avoided.

Even after pro-Russian president Yanukovich was driven out by a popular uprising in 2014, Russia could have achieved many of its security goals through soft power: no NATO expansion into Ukraine, as Ukraine has never been even close to joining NATO; a Ukraine that was separate but largely friendly to Russia; and continued levers of Russia's influence over the political process in Ukraine. More pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian presidents alternated in power throughout Ukraine's 30 years of independence. Russia had important levers of economic and political power in Ukraine. All that was needed was for Putin to recognize the 2014 events for what they really were, a domestic upheaval against an increasingly authoritarian and unpopular president, rather than a western plot against Russia. He went with the second interpretation. This is where we're at now.

I also wanted to address the broader issue of how peace can be achieved, and what security and political situation we will have once these hostilities end, which we hope is sooner rather than later.

• (1540)

The latest news from today is that Russia may be willing to start talks with two pre-conditions: Ukraine should disarm and stay neutral outside of NATO; and the west should agree to a formal recognition of Crimea as Russian territory. For now, these are non-starters, but we really need to start thinking about what peace may and should look like. Agreeing to disarm is equivalent to capitulation of Ukraine without any security guarantees from somewhere that Russia would not invade again.

The Chair: Professor Popova, could you wind up, please? We're past your five minutes at this point.

Ms. Maria Popova: Okay, sure.

Let me mention that the biggest problem is that Ukraine needs security guarantees. Also the problem of recognizing Crimea is that this is a threat to the international rules-based order.

What I want to say really briefly is that the reality that Europe and North America are faced with right now after this Russian aggression is that a new iron curtain will be descending in Europe. After this war, Russia's neighbours and any states that were part of historic Russia will not feel secure from Russian attack.

The EU and NATO members have the structures through which to think about how to deal with this hostile Russia in the future. The non-EU NATO members in the neighbourhood will have to figure out how to avoid being sucked into Russia's sphere of influence or worse.

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

Ms. Maria Popova: Absolutely.

The Chair: I'm sure you'll work those points in as members question you. I apologize.

For the six-minute round I have Mr. Doherty, Mr. Fisher, Madame Normandin and Madame Mathysen.

Mr. Doherty, you have six minutes, please.

Mr. Doherty, we can't hear you.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Can you hear me now?

The Chair: I can hear you now, but it's a little faint.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): The interpreter says that the microphone maybe isn't connected.

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Grant McLaughlin): Mr. Doherty, we're wondering if maybe your microphone isn't plugged in. Can you unplug and then replug it to double-check that?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Testing one, two, three.

The Chair: Okay, Todd, you can restart.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Professor Popova, last week Conservatives called on the government to take additional actions to show Canadian solidarity with the people of Ukraine. We called on the government to declare Russia's ambassador to Canada *persona non grata*

and expel him. Would you agree that in this time of a global crisis—

The Chair: Mr. Doherty, sorry again. Your mike is now too close to your mouth.

Have another go at it.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Professor, should Canada take a stronger stance in the wake of a global crisis and expel the Russian ambassador from Canada?

Ms. Maria Popova: To be honest, we would have to talk to the Russians in order to stop this war. Expelling is a very strong symbolic step, but somehow the talks will have to continue.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Admiral Hawco, do you concur with the professor's comments?

VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco: Yes.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Admiral Hawco, in terms of protecting and defending Canada's Arctic sovereignty, would you agree that there are significant vulnerabilities on this front?

VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco: On the question of vulnerabilities, I would say that Canada has, in Canada's Arctic, all the access that it needs, much more so than anyone else would. We have RADARSAT Constellation imagery 16, 17 or 20 times a day, so we know what's happening up there. That's not to say there isn't value for infrastructure and for increased opportunities for surveillance, which we will get ultimately through acquisitions. I don't know that there is an imminent risk of sovereignty issues in the north.

The one thing that we do see, Mr. Doherty, is normal ADIZ incursions by Russian Federation aircraft, which are met with by NORAD on a very routine basis.

• (1545)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Should we be modernizing NORAD's early warning system?

VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco: I believe that NORAD's modernization efforts, which are planned and in active discussion, are intended to do just that.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Admiral Hawco, you talked about Putin's grey-zone tactics. Have we gone beyond his grey-zone tactics with the mobilization of his nuclear force?

VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco: I would say that the actions in Ukraine represent classic examples of things that are not part of what one would look at as information confrontation activities, because it is actually kinetic in nature. But the actual signalling of an intent of use of nuclear assets is an example, I think, of grey-zone tactics, because it's intended to sow doubt, to cause fracture in alliance cohesion or in thought process and the like. It's an example, I would say, of the diplomatic part and the military part of information confrontation.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Professor Popova, would you like to elaborate, or jump in on that question as well?

Ms. Maria Popova: Yes.

I think that his invoking of nuclear escalation is signalling how committed he is to winning this war in Ukraine and how important Ukraine is to him. For Putin, it is primarily about taking control of Ukraine, and that's why he is trying to divide the alliance and to send a signal to the international community that he should be let to do that.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Do you think he should be let to do that?

Ms. Maria Popova: No, I don't think he should be let to do that, because Ukraine will not be the last country that he takes over. He has already de facto taken over Belarus. Belarus is used as a launching pad for his military operation. Arguably it is no longer an independent country, de facto. All the other post-Soviet states in the region should also fear if the west decides to yield to Putin's demands on Ukraine. There are several countries that are in the line for that. Then it gets to the NATO members, which are probably safe only by virtue of NATO expansion.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Chair, how much more time do I have?

The Chair: You have one and a half minutes.

Mr. Todd Doherty: To both of our witnesses, should Canada's stance—and, indeed, the west's—go beyond sanctions?

Admiral Hawco, go ahead.

VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco: I would say that our response and support within a NATO context is the most appropriate foreign policy decision to make right now. Canada has consistently acted in that frame of reference in terms of European security. It certainly makes sense to continue to do that, recognizing the decisions that have been made by government already in terms of direct support of aid of various natures to Ukraine, which is an acknowledged partner of Canada.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Professor Popova, go ahead.

Ms. Maria Popova: Sanctions are already starting to work. The Russian ruble is crashing. The banks are under threat. If sanctions need to be escalated even more, that can be done. Military aid to Ukraine is going ahead. I think this is the way to go.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Thank you to both of our witnesses.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Doherty.

Mr. Fisher, I'm not going to start the clock. I understand that you have a motion and I understand that this motion has the consent of the other parties, so I'll call upon you to present your motion.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to take a moment to thank all members of this committee for being supportive of this motion, which will truly be a motion from this committee. I move:

That the Standing Committee on National Defence stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and the Government of Ukraine, and unequivocally condemns:

- a. the unwarranted, unprovoked and egregious attack on Ukraine, which was ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin, and represents a clear violation of Russia's obligations under international law and the Charter of the United Nations;
- b. the illegal invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in 2014 and the illegal annexation of Crimea and occupation of eastern Ukraine; and,
- c. President Putin and the Russian Government for these hostile and provocative violations of international law and on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

In addition, the Committee calls on Canada, its allies, and the international community to stand resolutely in defence of the rules-based international order, human rights, and democracy in Ukraine and around the world.

● (1550)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fisher.

I'm assuming that everyone is in agreement with that and there's no need to call for a debate.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fisher, for your work.

Colleagues, thank you for that show of solidarity in a much-needed moment of solidarity.

With that, Mr. Fisher, you're on for six minutes.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you very much.

Thank you so much to our witnesses. I'm sorry for that little delay.

Professor Popova, I don't have a quote right in front of me, but you talked about how Putin wants to rebuild the Russian empire and how he's trying to bring the other parts of the Russian empire back, I think you said, into the fold. If that's the case, then we have a really big problem looming. We can't have an international collective.... In 2014, the world yawned when we saw this Russian aggression. We're seeing a totally different response now.

What's next? Either you or Admiral Hawco talked about Putin. I think you both mentioned a legacy. I think Admiral Hawco was the one who said that only Putin really knows what he's trying to accomplish.

Where are we going, if your belief in this is accurate? There are an awful lot of countries out there, some of them NATO members now, that were part of the former Soviet Union. If he's thinking about a legacy, we have ourselves a real problem on our hands.

Ms. Maria Popova: We really do. I think there is no doubt that he is going for restoration, as much as he could achieve.

As I already mentioned, Ukraine is under attack, but Belarus is de facto now controlled by Russia. What we saw in January was Russian troops going to Kazakhstan to support the President of Kazakhstan to suppress popular demonstrations. Putin and Russia are becoming more and more interventionist in the area that used to be the Soviet Union.

If this brazen invasion of Ukraine succeeds and the west lets Putin take Ukraine, we can expect the non-NATO members that are former Soviet countries to be next in an assault. I mean Georgia and Moldova, probably. We should expect that this restoration... What Putin has demonstrated with this invasion is that he is done with pretending to co-operate in any way with the west. He is now on an expansionist mission. He will try to get as much territory as he can, and he is prepared for another confrontation with the west. If it goes back to another cold war, so be it. I think he is already in that state of mind.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Professor, we're seeing already that Russian people are becoming victims of Putin's hostility and aggression. We're seeing tens of thousands of Russians speaking up and standing together in protest of these despicable actions. You mentioned that the Iron Curtain will close shut after this.

Can you explain a little more about what this will mean for average people in Russia? What will life look like after this?

• (1555)

Ms. Maria Popova: Well, it depends on how it ends. If Russian society mobilizes to stop this war, it would be hard to do it by making Putin give up on this war. The more likely scenario—which is early to be predicting, for sure—is that if the Russian people manage to stop this war, it will be through Putin's replacement by elites, somehow, who are not willing to go that far and bear the costs of these sanctions, or by some kind of popular mobilization that, again, forces the hands of elites to replace Putin with someone else.

If that happens, then the Iron Curtain's falling is averted, but we do not see that yet. Yes, we see some mobilization in Russia, but keep in mind that Putin has consolidated a very repressive regime over the last 10 years. He has been in power for 22 years, but it's in the last 10 years that he has really consolidated a repressive authoritarian regime. In that regime, it is very hard to protest. Russian people may be brave, but they may not be that brave.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Putin has ostensibly had a couple of years to prepare for sanctions and to have some type of a buffer. Will this pressure from his own people, from within, be something that might have more an impact on him than some sanctions would, when he sees protests and unrest among his own citizens?

Ms. Maria Popova: Russian citizens are very resilient. They lived through a really deep economic depression in the nineties. If his propaganda works domestically, Russian citizens may be willing to take on a lot of economic hardship.

I think it is more likely that for the sanctions to be effective, it will take some combination of protests and elite action. Elite action against Putin is more likely to stop this war.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fisher.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, you have six minutes.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much to both of our witnesses.

I would like to start with a review of the information that we have discussed in various places, including the Standing Committee on National Defence and the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association.

I remember that, in December, we were barely talking about what was going on in Ukraine. We knew that troops had gathered along the border, but it was as if no one was really paying attention.

Over time, the Standing Committee on National Defence started questioning whether aggression could occur, but the consensus seemed to be that Russia might use rebels in the Donbass to indirectly annex Luhansk and Donetsk. In the end, we were all caught off guard to see Russia launch an outright attack on Kiev.

That said, I wonder how crazy it is to think that there could be a scenario involving a direct attack against a NATO member country.

I would also like to know Canada's state of preparedness to participate in a joint effort with other NATO countries.

[*English*]

The Chair: Did you address that to Vice-Admiral Hawco or to Ms. Popova?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I would like to hear from both witnesses.

[*English*]

VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco: Thank you.

First, the calculus would have what we call conditions-based elements to it. Putin would look at what the situation looked like. When Russian Federation military action is contemplated, they do a very thorough red teaming, as they call it. There are a lot of layers of assessment about what the probability and outcomes are going to be. It's multi-departmental. It's not just a military calculus, speaking to our point about sanctions that a previous questioner had raised.

The question is, was it foreseeable in some way? I think the answer is yes. I would wager that those who had the intelligence were well aware or were reasonably aware of the increased probability. Of course, you never know when they're massed on the border, because they've been massed on the border on many other occasions, during snap exercises and the like, which, arguably, is what they do these snap exercises for in the first place.

To the thrust of the question about whether it's possible that they would attack a NATO ally, it is hard to imagine, except in some sort of in extremis situation or miscalculation, that something like that would happen. If you just look at the Baltic countries, pretty much every ally has people there. If people were killed in that situation, everyone would respond. Everybody would, without a shadow of a doubt. That kind of situation only has one or two endings, and neither of them is really good for Mr. Putin, as an individual, or for the country, the Russian Federation, writ large.

Would Canada reply? Have we ever not replied? Yes, we would reply.

• (1600)

Ms. Maria Popova: If I could jump in here, in terms of the predictability of this attack on Kyiv, everybody who is familiar with both Russian and Ukrainian politics knew and was trying to say early on that an attack only on the Donbass region makes no sense to Putin. He does not need the Donbass; he already controls it. It was clear a long time ago that the calculus is whether they attack or do not attack. If an attack was going to happen, it was going to be on Kyiv.

That's related to the likelihood of an attack on NATO. I agree with the vice-admiral that an attack on a NATO country is not likely, because he has bigger problems to solve with controlling Ukraine. Even if he manages to take over, it's going to be really hard to control a very hostile Ukrainian population. He would just not have the political or manpower capacity to immediately turn to a NATO country. The chances of an attack on a NATO member are very low right now.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: The “right now” scares me a bit.

Professor Popova, on the issue of sanctions, since you spoke about them, we are seeing that the Russian oligarchs are starting to rant and complain about the sanctions.

How much impact can their involvement have? To what degree is this an indication that the sanctions are working?

[*English*]

The Chair: You have one minute.

Ms. Maria Popova: Sanctions are the goal. That's the hope, that oligarchs—one of the pillars of Putin's regime—could be his downfall if they calculate that not only sanctions but a longer-term, cold war, iron curtain type of situation will basically cut them off from their assets in the West. This is, right now, the goal.

The problem, though, is that the second pillar of the Russian regime right now is the security service, the former KGB. That pillar is less affected by sanctions because they don't have the sizable assets. I'm sure they have mansions abroad as well, but their loyalty to the regime has a different source. It's not the regime allowing them to enrich themselves, which is the source of loyalty for the oligarchs.

It would be harder to break and to crack that part through sanctions. The conditions—

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

I apologize for cutting you off, Professor.

Ms. Maria Popova: Sure, there's no problem.

The Chair: It seems I have a talent for cutting off professors.

Madame Mathysen, you have six minutes, please.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Not just professors; you cut us all off.

The Chair: Yes, I'm multi-faceted that way.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I want to ask, again, about sanctions. We know, and we've been told, that Putin has quite a lot in reserve. As we've put forward all these sanctions, how long do you think he can survive on those reserves?

The question is for both witnesses.

Ms. Maria Popova: The reserves are there, but we are already seeing the effects of the sanctions. As I mentioned, the ruble is in free fall. The stock market didn't open because of where it would be and how hard the crash would be.

I think he cannot last very long. He has diversified his economy somewhat and tried to make it less reliable on the dollar, probably thinking that the U.S. would be pushing him the hardest, but he diversified into euros, and now the EU is pushing him very hard.

I don't think he can last a very long time.

• (1605)

VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco: I'll defer to the specifics of time, but I completely agree with Maria. What I will add is that, generally speaking, a more integrated economy exists today than existed 15 years ago, and that causes greater issues.

Germany's decision about Nord Stream and then its decision in relation to diversifying its energy needs base are things long discussed. Germany only imports roughly 15% of its energy from Russia, but it's still notable. Those are long-term concerns.

The Russian Federation would have gamed what they thought the sanctions would be, what they could do and what they could withstand, but these are another level that we're seeing than what maybe had been predicted.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: The Ukrainian Canadian Congress has asked for Putin to be named as a war criminal. The International Criminal Court has now said that there will be investigations.

It doesn't necessarily stop Putin at that stage, but in a longer-term thought process and in the conversation we had about targeting Putin himself, he is the one. If he's removed internally—I think you talked about this—he is simply replaced by yet another oligarch and we have the same situation, potentially. If he's replaced externally, could you talk about the ramifications of that, either in criminal court or what have you?

Ms. Maria Popova: To be honest, I cannot imagine a scenario in which he can be removed externally, because of Russia's nuclear capacity. Even if he is removed internally, I very much doubt that Russia would be willing to send him to the International Court of Justice. I cannot see that happening either.

In terms of the question of whether he is replaced internally by another figure who does the same thing, I think we have to be realistic that if he is replaced by another figure, we don't expect that Russia will suddenly become a democracy, become friendly, and co-operate with the west. The goal is to replace him with someone who has a more realistic view of the neighbourhood, who realizes that countries are now attached to their independence, and who switches to a policy where they attempt to influence the neighbourhood through other levers, not by taking countries over.

I think that's a realistic chance. He could still be replaced within an authoritarian coalition and a largely authoritarian government, but with someone who does not have such expansionist goals.

VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco: I would just offer that the GRU, the SVR and the FSB have a different loyalty complex in play than others, so they're the internal security apparatus that is directly responsive to Putin. The likelihood of an external change, absent some sort of a "colour revolution", is less likely because of those entities. It's more likely that it would just get really complicated for Putin, and he ultimately gets replaced for all the reasons that Maria outlined.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I'm not sure how much time I have left, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We would gratefully receive any donation.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: What you were talking about, Dr. Popova, in terms of the KGB stance as well, goes hand in hand with what Mr. Hawco just said in terms of that loyalty, that transition to somebody else. It doesn't just happen that way. That's not how you get at them. Is that correct?

● (1610)

Ms. Maria Popova: That's right. But I think it is still possible that at some point the KGB, the FSB, the security services will just come to a conclusion that he is now a liability and may replace him with someone from their circles as well. Think of the defence minister, Shoygu. He's not going to be a dove, but we can go back to dealing with the Russia of the late 2010s rather than the current Russia.

The Chair: Okay, we have to leave it there.

Colleagues, we're down to about 15 minutes, and we have 25 minutes' worth of questions here. I'm going to cut it back to three minutes each, and one minute for the NDP and the Bloc.

Starting with that, we have Mrs. Gallant for three minutes.

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

Vice-Admiral, you mentioned that RADARSAT is not really sufficient in our eyes. It doesn't see under water, ice. We have no submarines that go beneath the ice and we cannot count on icebreakers. We're studying the threats to Canada. How does Putin's invasion of Ukraine impact Canada's security, including countries that may wish to take an opportunity to exploit the fact that we have a distraction and perhaps even lay claims to our Arctic natural resources?

VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco: I guess the root of my answer is going to be that European security is a national interest issue for Canada, in the sense that it's part of a deep, rules-based international order fabric. What we're seeing in terms of the Russian Federation in Ukraine is a challenge against Westphalian structure and system. It's going to galvanize, and if the international community or the rules-based international order doesn't look to assert itself to rectify those kinds of situations or outcomes, then it's of national interest to Canada, and therefore has national security implications. That's the straightforward answer.

I think the Russian Federation's claim to the Arctic sea base underneath the floating ice cube, if you will, right to Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark's economic exclusion zone is indication of Russian interest in the Arctic in the context of the 25% or so of the global resources that have been unidentified and reside there.

I think those are somewhat separated. That's a really long-term issue. I wouldn't see it as a direct challenge to Canada's economic exclusion zone and Arctic sovereignty claims, but it does have implications for our United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea application to the Arctic base.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Professor Popova, we heard Putin make the nuclear threat.

In your opinion, would he launch a nuclear strike over freezing access to his financials and the fallout we're seeing?

Ms. Maria Popova: It's a really difficult question. It's the million-dollar question, right? I think this is more of a bluff for him right now and a signal that he wants Ukraine really badly and is willing to threaten nuclear escalation if the west doesn't yield on Ukraine.

I doubt that this is over the sanctions, per se. I think he is signalling that Ukraine is really important to him. Ultimately, I think it's a bit of a bluff and there are others around him who may not be as willing to go that far.

The Chair: That's not a million-dollar question. That's a \$200-billion question.

Ms. Lambropoulos, you have three minutes, please.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to both of our witnesses today.

For me, it's more a question of.... Currently they're in Ukraine. I understand that he wants it extremely badly. He's doing whatever he can and threatening whomever he can so that there's no external involvement.

Would you say that this is also an effort to destabilize Europe in general and NATO? What is the likelihood that if he were to conquer Ukraine, he would go into Poland or an actual NATO country to see whether or not NATO would react if he is threatening nuclear responses?

● (1615)

Ms. Maria Popova: I think it is definitely a bigger issue than Ukraine. He does want to challenge Europe as a whole, but I think if he can take Ukraine, the next targets would be other post-Soviet states that are not members of NATO. He has those to bring back into the fold before he turns to NATO.

Of course, if NATO basically allows this.... That's why it's in the interest of Europe and why we're seeing this huge reaction from Europe. This has to stop now, because the long-term implications are really significant.

VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco: I take a similar view, but with a different slant. I agree that this is as much about European security and the place of the Russian Federation in the world as it is anything. Of course, Ukraine is a passionate issue for the Russian Federation, as Maria has mentioned.

I don't see it as likely that the Russian Federation would take offensive action against any NATO country, because the moment blood is spilled, it changes the level of issue dramatically.

The issue of nuclear weapons and raising alert states is not atypical when you see the establishment and movement of NATO troops toward Russia. It wasn't dissimilar in 2014 or in response to the establishment of forces in the Baltic countries. It's kind of a relatively normal calculus that says, "Hey, let's just be calm here", from the Russian Federation point of view.

The Chair: Ms. Lambropoulos, you have 15 seconds.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: No problem. Thank you.

The Chair: Madame Normandin, you have one minute.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

I understand that we are quite certain that no attack will be made against a NATO member country. However, we don't want to be like Mr. Putin, who was visibly surprised that he didn't quickly achieve air supremacy. Therefore, shouldn't we envision the worst-case scenarios and plan for them?

[English]

VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco: The NATO alliance absolutely has the suite of plans and the resources necessary to deal with an issue at strategic scale. I'm sure the very high readiness joint task group commanded by France right now is getting ready. Those 5,000 troops are going to move.

You're seeing individual nations increase their troop contributions outside of the alliance-specific direction. I'm very sure that the NATO response force is being accelerated in terms of readiness, based on colleagues.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Quickly, is Canada a serious ally in the current context?

[English]

VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco: Yes. You've seen, in reporting, deployments of ships and readiness of aircraft. I'm aware of conversations with colleagues in that regard about NATO readiness posturing, following all the requirements directed by the alliance.

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Mathysen, you have one minute.

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: There are some countries that are aligning themselves with Russia; they're siding, certainly. Canada has put forward several sanctions against Russia and against the oligarchs, and so on. Does it make sense for Canada to do that against some of the allies to Russia? Is it a place for us to go? Is it effective?

Ms. Maria Popova: Which Russian allies do you have in mind, Belarus?

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I'm thinking of the list of countries that have been in support. I want to say Israel. There were....

Ms. Maria Popova: They were just not very quick to condemn, but I wouldn't go as far as to say they're supporting. I think Russia is quite alone right now.

Belarus is, for sure, participating, but it has basically been taken over by Russia, de facto.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Okay.

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

Mr. Motz, you have three minutes, please.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses, and thank you, Admiral, for your service.

Admiral, I'm just curious to know your view of the state of the NATO alliance and our military forces. Is Canada still considered to be a gold standard in that alliance?

• (1620)

VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco: You know, I think just a very short anecdote will cover that off and then we'll preserve some time.

As Canada's military representative, I had a NATO country come up to me and say, "Yeah, but we're not a big country like Canada." We have this view of ourselves as being a small country, but we have strategic mobility. We have fighters. We have a submarine force. We can talk about whether we're satisfied with it, but that's because we want to get 95% on the test. If you're talking to a country like Croatia, Lithuania, Belgium, the Netherlands or Norway, we're an enormous military with all the capabilities and capacities, including cyber and so on.

I do think Canada has and maintains its reputation, which is why we were asked, as one of the framework nations, to set up in Latvia to start with.

Mr. Glen Motz: That's fair to the smaller countries. What about the Five Eyes? Are we viewed by them, in that alliance, in the same light as the smaller countries? What can we do to be better in our military capacity and in our acquisitions?

VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco: There are three weight classes in the Five Eyes, as a function just of the size of the GDPs and the size of the countries. I think it's fair [Technical difficulty—Editor]. Your question would be.... Of course, we're not going to compare ourselves to the United States. Of course, we would pause at comparing ourselves to the United Kingdom, although we compare favourably in many places, in many ways. It has 2.3 times the size of the population of Canada, and not the same level of infrastructure issues and nuclear deterrents and all that.

I would say we absolutely compare favourably to the Australians; and clearly New Zealand, as a country of four-point-something million, would not compare itself to Australia or Canada. We still have the same range of capabilities and the same capacities, notwithstanding a lot of the hyperbole around AUKUS.

Mr. Glen Motz: Would we be a better partner if we had committed more of our GDP to defence?

VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco: Yes, absolutely.

In the context of national security, I think the German chancellor's perspective is instructive. He recognized that whether you can argue the 2% pledge has lineage and rational economic thought behind it, it's the number that's being used.

In terms of investments in national security capacities, which are significantly military but not just military, I think of Mr. Fadden's testimony a little while ago about what GAC needs, what the Communications Security Establishment needs, what the service needs. It's a much more complicated discussion than just investments in the military.

However, is the military in need of additional resources, and is the new Westminster system in need of a bit of a process shift in terms of the enablement of the spending of resources towards military capability? Yes.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Motz.

Mr. May, you get the final three minutes.

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Vice-Admiral, as NATO modernizes, what kinds of contributions should Canada be looking to make, not now but in the coming decades? I'm going to give you an opportunity to give us some insight into the future. How should we prioritize, and what contributions...? In your mind, what does that look like for Canada?

VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco: I'll approach it from three brief perspectives: a policy lens, a management lens, and a capability [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

The alliance is realizing a need for rapid decision-making capacities and capabilities, the ability to come to consensus quickly on crisis issues or near-crisis issues. That's a place where Canada has played and needs to continue to play a role at the government level by saying that we need to get past discussions about why a European issue is a European issue versus a NATO issue, because there is a lot of tension between the EU and NATO. Canada has a place and a role to play in that, and it does.

On the management side, Canada does a lot of work in the corners in terms of the cyber-readiness of the alliance and the fiscal management of the alliance. It carries a lot of water in that particular space, and we need to continue to do that.

On the capability front, we are seeing that the nature of warfare is changing. We see an increasing issue of action inside the democratic institutions of Germany, the function of elections and interference by Russia, etc., and also the change in warfare where it is

no longer about heavy weapons and the like; it's really going to be about smaller capabilities, slighter forces, less targetable from beyond-line-of-sight weapons and all that sort of stuff.

There is a lot of thinking that we need to collectively make sure that we remain interoperable so that the ones and zeros between all the countries are able to continue to be exchanged, be meaningful, and be able to be moved quickly.

Europe is big, but it's not that big. You should be able to place and move, place and move, and have the posture and the logistics necessary to sustain missions at pace for a long period of time. Canada has contributed and continues to—and needs to continue to—contribute to that dialogue about the force capabilities the alliance needs.

• (1625)

Mr. Bryan May: Is there anything we should be changing in our defence position to help us fill those roles as needed?

VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco: I would say, one, we're in North America, so we have to get there. We have to recognize that we have to get there if there is ever an issue related to European security. There is a sealift component to that, so we need to think through that. Either it's contracting.... Probably that's the smart way to do it, if you don't have vessels that are able to move your stuff. That's one area, that we have to get there.

Another is that you just have to be ready all the time. If you're not ready all the time, then you're going to get caught short. There are resource implications of training, of lift and of national procurement. We're talking hundreds of millions of dollars, Mr. May, that need to be added to the national procurement lift, and, I would argue, we need to tackle procurement. We've heard that from other speakers, and I have thoughts on that, which I could share separately.

These are areas we need to deal with.

The Chair: We're going to have to leave it there, Mr. May.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you very much, Admiral Hawco.

Thank you to all the witnesses.

The Chair: Thank you.

I want to thank Professor Popova and Admiral Hawco for continuing this excellent series on threat analysis and readiness in response to those threats. I have to say that, when we began this study, we did not anticipate that we would be on the verge of a World War III. That will change the perspective of the committee, to say the least.

Again, those were excellent contributions, and I want to thank both of you for them.

With that, colleagues, we'll suspend for a minute while we go in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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