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Chair

Mr. Stephen Fuhr

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.)): I would like to welcome everyone to today's discussion on the crisis in Ukraine and Canada's potential involvement in helping in that regard.

We have three people here to continue the discussion. Via video conference we have Dr. Taras Kuzio, non-resident fellow, Centre for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University. Thank you for joining us. We have Dr. Luciuk, professor, Royal Military College of Canada, department of political science, and we have Ms. Peggy Mason from the Rideau Institute.

Thank you for coming.

Just so there are no surprises, at some point during this proceeding, we may have votes, so if you see a light flash, I might have to stop you in mid-sentence and we might have to leave the building. That's so there are no surprises.

Last but not least, we're going to save 10 minutes at the end of the meeting to deal with committee business. We'll go until about 5:20, assuming that we're not interrupted by votes.

Having said all that, Dr. Kuzio, since you're via video conference and we have you loud and clear, we would like to give you the floor for your opening remarks. The floor is yours.

Dr. Taras Kuzio (Non-Resident Fellow, Centre for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University, As an Individual): I'd like to, first of all, say that there have been approximately five different explanations of the crisis in Ukraine.

The first one I would describe as blaming the west. This is a rather curious alliance of left-wing critics of U.S. foreign policy and NATO and right-wing realists. Both of them blame the EU, NATO, and democracy promotion as leading to a counter-reaction by Vladimir Putin and Russia. Both of these groups, realists and left-wing critics, support some kind of grand bargain, a second Yalta agreement as in 1945, between the great powers that would consign Ukraine to a Russian sphere of influence. They tend to ignore domestic influences.

The second group, I would say, describes the crisis in Ukraine as a product of the geopolitical tug-of-war, particularly between the European Union and Russia.

The third is what I would call empire building, where Putin is branded as trying to rebuild a mini U.S.S.R. as in the Eurasian Union and as a kind of regional troublemaker.

The fourth, which is something I think is quite pertinent, is that this is a product of a domestic-type regime inside Russia, particularly what western political scientists call a *mitocracy*. This is a regime run by the former KGB intelligence officers with a heavy dose of Russian nationalism.

My own personal favourite, which is, ironically, not really very much discussed in the west, is that it's a question of national identity. If Vladimir Putin were to wake up tomorrow and accept that Ukrainians are a separate people to Russians, that Ukraine is a sovereign country with the right to its own destiny and the right to decide its own future and where it wants to be, then the war would probably end very quickly. I think that aspect has not really had sufficient discussion in the west. There's a great quotation by Henry Kissinger, who said that he's never met a Russian who accepts that Ukrainians are a separate people.

National identity is very much at the root of the crisis in Ukraine and the inability of the Russian leadership to accept that Ukrainians are a separate people. Putin has repeatedly said the Russians and Ukrainians are one people; that the Ukraine is an artificial state, a failed state; that the Russian-speaking areas of Ukraine are really Russian and therefore were wrongly included in Ukraine; and—this is actually quite amusing, but it is what is believed in Moscow—that the Ukrainian people would love to unite with the Russians, but they're being held back by oligarchs and other corrupt elites who are in the pay of the west. This is what is actually believed.

This is why I say that Russia does not really understand the internal dynamics of Ukraine. In fact, I would say that western experts and diplomats have a better understanding of what is taking place inside Ukraine than those in Moscow do. In Moscow, they approach Ukraine with stereotypes and mythology.

The one thing they cannot understand in Moscow is that Russian-speaking Ukrainians are patriots of the country. That was certainly seen in 2014. The idea that you can be a Russian-speaking Ukrainian and a patriot of the Ukraine is beyond them. In the eyes of Moscow, a Russian-speaking Ukrainian should be pro-Russian and pro-Putin. That was not the case in 2014. It's not the case today.

I was to the front line a few times last year. There are many Russian speakers fighting for Ukraine on the front line. Something like 50% to 60% of the soldiers are Russian speakers on the Ukrainian side. Therefore, it's wrong that some experts and journalists, particularly in Moscow, describe the conflict as a civil war between two groups of speakers, Ukrainian and Russian speakers. That's certainly not the case because there are Russian and Ukrainian speakers on the Ukrainian side. It is not the way opinion polls show that Ukrainians look at this.

Ultimately, the problem lies in the fact that the Russian leadership does not accept that Ukrainians are a people who have a right to decide their own geopolitical destiny and, therefore, their natural home is in the Eurasian Union and the Russian world, and the type of person who should be running Ukraine is somebody along the lines of Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko.

• (1535)

The problem that Moscow has is that that kind of conception of Ukraine would not match reality up until 2014. Hence, we had a revolution—a popular uprising—and it certainly does not match the situation today. When you have conflict and war, that inevitably speeds up the formation of national identity. Today, when you have 75% of Ukrainians are negatively disposed towards Vladimir Putin.

I'll just go over the last line because I'm coming to the end. Looking to the future, I think that this conflict is very deep and therefore long term, because in every regional environment where you have national identity questions, these take a long time to change. The majority of Russians, and the opposition by the way, the so-called democratic opposition, support the annexation of the Crimea and very few of them are really critical about Putin's policies towards Ukraine.

If Putin were no longer to be the President of Russia tomorrow, I don't think that much would change inside Russia. Russia would remain on its course towards Ukraine, which is aggressively disposed and I think also anti-western. Russia views its war in Ukraine as part of its overall conflict with the west. Russian leaders are adamant and they believe that to be viewed as a great power and equal to the U.S., they need to dominate their environment and their neighbourhood. That includes Ukraine, in particular.

I think this conflict will be with us for a long time. I don't see it being resolved very quickly because I don't think these kinds of national identity questions change overnight. They take a long time to change and may be generational.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your testimony.

Ms. Mason, if you're ready, I will yield the floor to you.

Ms. Peggy Mason (President, Rideau Institute on International Affairs): Thank you very much for inviting me here today.

I apologize as I don't have a written text, but I did provide a copy of my notes to the interpreters.

I want to focus very specifically on what might be possible now. It seems to me that there is an urgent need to focus on the opportunity that has opened due to proposals from both Ukraine and Russia for a

UN peacekeeping operation in support of the Minsk agreement. Of course, they're differing proposals and they're a long way apart, but nonetheless, it is an opportunity for dialogue in support of the Minsk agreement.

I would note that very recently the Ukrainian minister of defence, President Putin, and Chancellor Merkel have all reiterated strongly there is no alternative to the Minsk agreement, so it seems to me that we, and I include in that Canada, but the west in particular, must urge both sides, that is, Russia and Ukraine, to do much more to arrange and implement local ceasefires, including humanitarian ceasefires. There is a terrible humanitarian situation on the ground, but there's a long UN experience—and OSCE, I might say, not as long as the UN but nonetheless important—with trying to facilitate and implement local ceasefires, including humanitarian ceasefires and, of course, negotiation of the last of the three agreed disengagement areas. That would improve civilian lives in the war zone, but it would also be a step towards addressing the grave danger that exists right now of the deployment of hostile forces and weapons systems close to the line of separation. There's no doubt that in the context of those elements discussion, good faith discussion, on a UN peacekeeping operation, its scope and mandate, can help in those areas.

In order for this fragile opportunity to bear fruit, it seems to me there is a need to avoid any escalatory actions, such as delivery of weapons, even defensive, which from all I can gather from my review of the commentary, provide little military advantage yet could undermine fragile prospects for progress. The escalation would result because each side feels it must respond to a show of force by the other. In this regard it seems to me that Canada should be guided by the caution that Europeans have shown to the prospect of weapons supplies to Ukraine.

Speaking of a Canadian role, despite the calls by some, regrettably in my view—and I speak to this with 20 years of experience in UN, NATO, and European Union peacekeeping training—I do not think that Canada can contribute to a potential UN peacekeeping operation due to our military role in Ukraine as part of NATO, which vitiates the requirement of impartiality, and also the potential passage of the Canadian version of the Magnitsky Act, which will only exacerbate our perceived hostility against Russia. I'll say more about that.

This act, and I speak as a lawyer with a long experience of how Canada has handled this in the past, involves, in my view, Canada adopting American unilateralism and extraterritorial application of its domestic law, which we have always avoided doing, except in a couple of cases, such as UN sanctions, UN arms embargos, and also, I think, child trafficking. I think those are the only areas where we have extraterritorial application of our domestic law. It involves adoption as well of American double standards when it comes to addressing gross human rights violations by friends and allies.

I say adopting American double standards because does anyone seriously think we're going to apply this law to Saudi Arabia, which is routinely listed as one of the worst human rights abusers in the world? What about Israel for its actions in the Palestinian-occupied territories or Gaza? What about the question Russia asked: does anyone believe that Canada would sanction the U.S.A. for legalizing torture and unlawful detention in Guantanamo Bay and secret prisons in Europe? That's very topical again because the CIA has recently declassified information that reveals the vast scope and horror of those events beyond what we even thought we knew.

● (1540)

Unless there is a jurisdictional connection through harm to Canadians, the consistent Canadian approach in the past has always been to follow international law and multilateral approaches through the UN Security Council and Human Rights Council.

I want to end, because that leads me to the bigger problematic background to the crisis in Ukraine. It's really the main reason I wanted to have the opportunity, for which I'm grateful, to testify here today. It is in relation to the overall context in which we consider the Ukraine crisis.

I speak as someone who was very actively involved as a Canadian official during the Cold War at many multilateral and some bilateral tables. This is the new cold war, as it's being called, that is in many ways more dangerous than the original one.

Because the epicentre of the conflict is not Berlin or the third world, but directly on Russia's borders, this puts the urgency of progress on the Minsk protocol in very sharp relief. We have other fronts, and the possibility, with recent activities, of direct engagement between Russia and the United States in Syria. There is an unprecedented deterioration in Russia-U.S. relations. In the height of the Cold War, this was not the case.

There is the demonization of Russian President Putin in the U.S. A. in a way that was never seen during the Cold War. Commentators have noted that if this demonization had taken place during the Cuban missile crisis, President Kennedy would never have been able to take the steps he took to avert that crisis. Russiagate paralyzes Trump's ability to engage in any crisis negotiations with Russia.

The other aspect is that there's no anti-cold war media. During the original Cold War, there was a vigorous debate about the approach we should take with regard to Russia. There were those who wanted a hard line, and those who wanted a very different approach, and very often, Canada, of course, was taking the very different approach, as in the six-nation five-continent peace initiative by Pierre Elliott Trudeau in the height of the Cold War.

I end, regrettably, with a very interesting op-ed in *The Globe and Mail* today by former NATO Secretary General Anders Rasmussen. He was calling for Canada to play a kind of bridge-building role in support of the Minsk protocol and this discussion that's opened up on the kind of UN peacekeeping operation to help the OSCE monitor and verify the ceasefire. Regrettably, Bill S-226, if it passes, would effectively remove our ability to play that kind of bridging role, and it's really one that's needed very much.

Thank you very much.

● (1545)

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Luciuk.

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk (Professor, Royal Military College of Canada, Department of Political Science, As an Individual): Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to address the Standing Committee on National Defence today regarding the crisis in Ukraine. Please note that I'm speaking as an individual rather than as a representative of the Royal Military College.

When I was asked to do this, I decided the best way to address the committee would be by sharing with you some observations and reflections I've made over the years on the situation in Ukraine. I didn't have time to translate those, but I have provided the booklet to the clerk, and the clerk assures me that it will be translated in due course.

I want to speak very briefly to those commentaries, and then I will let the committee decide whether I was prescient or not in what I observed over the years. At the end I will add some prescriptions to the committee, which I think will be helpful for Canada in coping with the ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine by the Russian Federation, which is something that's been going on now for three years.

I was in Crimea in July and August 2010. At the time, I noticed a large number of secessionist placards and billboards plastered everywhere throughout the Crimean region, so several years before the illegal seizure of Crimea by Russian troops, the area was already being prepared for the takeover by Moscow. In Kiev, then President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich, who is currently a citizen of the Russian Federation, was doing absolutely nothing about it.

When Euromaidan came in 2014, that revolution of dignity, it was in part a revolution aimed at toppling a man who had become very much the satrap of Moscow, a man who was endorsing widespread corruption. His own son Alexander was known as the "king of coal", a dentist who became a multi-millionaire almost overnight. At the time, in the press here in Canada, I wondered when Ukraine would finally be free, when Ukraine would find its Moses, someone to lead the Ukrainian people to the promised land, which all of them at the time said would be Europe. I predicted that once they began that, they would be unstoppable. At the same time, I also wrote that the Kremlin project of restoring the Soviet empire was a humpty dumpty project not likely to succeed despite all the king's men and all the king's horses.

In March 2014, when Crimea was finally under occupation, I wrote about how President Yanukovich seemed to have forgotten the fact that on July 9—his birthday and mine—1997, Ukraine was given security assurances in return for giving up its nuclear weapons under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This was also a theme I touched on in November 1991 in *The Globe and Mail* with an article entitled "Moderation and neutrality—but hang on to the nuclear arms", in which I argued that Ukraine should not give up its nuclear weapons because it would lose its independence, and its territorial sovereignty would be violated. At the time I remember being called a warmonger. I don't think I was.

Excuses: Putin, of course, has claimed that he invaded Ukraine because there was a Russian minority under threat there by Ukrainian fascists. No one has ever been able to find these fascists, and certainly when he sent his troops into Crimea, the only fascists present at the time were Russian Unity movement thugs who burned Jewish- and Ukrainian-language books on the streets of Crimea. Nothing like this had been seen in Europe since April 1933 when the Nazis, of course, did that.

Some Russians, of course, claim that they have some kind of responsibility to protect the Russian minorities that exist in the Baltic states, especially in Estonia and Latvia. However, if we're going to argue that the Estonian and Latvian states, both NATO allies, can be dismembered because there are Russian minorities there, what about the Russian Federation itself? Chechnya, for example, is 95% Chechen. Tatarstan is 53% Tatar. Kalmykia is 57% Buddhist. If Ukraine or other states need to be dismembered because of minority issues, surely the Russian Federation should follow suit.

The west, of course, has many excuses for doing nothing. In May 2014, I wrote about Ukraine's passion and about how Ukraine had been betrayed by the west in return for access to Russian gas, oil, and money, while the blood of innocent Ukrainians being shed by the KGB man in the Kremlin, who is now the president in perpetuity, was ignored. Ironically, the Russian Orthodox Church refers to Mr. Putin as a miracle of God. I can't imagine a more inappropriate title for that man.

In September 2014, I wrote about what Canada should do, which is to act against the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Ukraine never invaded Russia; it was the other way around. No one was dying on Ukrainian lands until February 2014 following the invasion by the little green men. Ukraine continues to pay the price for having been naive and for having believed in western guarantees. I argued at that point, September 2014, that we should put Canadian troops on the ground to monitor the international border between Russia and Ukraine. Why would Mr. Putin object to that since he says he's for peace?

• (1550)

I note that my colleague just a moment ago referred to former Secretary General of NATO Anders Fogh Rasmussen's article in today's edition of *The Globe and Mail*, "Peace in Ukraine requires a 'carrot and stick' approach". I recommend it to the committee. I read it this morning and thought maybe I shouldn't show up today, because essentially we share the same view. I don't believe the ex-ambassador does.

There has also been a strong campaign of Russian disinformation directed primarily against Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland, and it has been echoed in some of the publications of the Rideau Institute, which has accused Ms. Freeland of being "Harpesque" in her treatment of the Russian Federation. I suggest that she's been acting on principle.

My own trip to Ukraine occurred in July of this year. I went to the front lines like my colleague Dr. Kuzio, and I went as a private citizen. I had the opportunity to speak with Canadian and American and other troops working in Yavoriv in western Ukraine and at Kamianets-Podilskyyi, the mining centre. I went as part of a delegation headed by General Paul Wynnyk. Overwhelmingly,

Canadian troops in Ukraine told me that their deployment there is beneficial for them. They told me that the deployment has allowed them to learn from Ukrainians, who are learning the hard way in front-line combat, what it is to deal with the Russians. The professionalism and pluck of Ukrainian front-line troopers was quite amazing to see.

There's a great deal of name-calling going on and some of it is kind of funny. I wrote about this. But the fact is that what Ukraine really needs today is defensive weapons to counter the offensive weapons the Russian Federation has already deployed against them. I believe that if given that kind of support, Ukrainians will win what I describe as a just war that has become a war of independence.

The last article I wrote about this—and I'm sorry I can't give it to you today—was published in several newspapers including *The Jerusalem Post*. It was about the death of a 20-year-old volunteer on the front lines. His real name was Maxim; his pseudonym was Okun. I met him on the 18th of July on the front line in Donetsk, and he died on the 19th in exactly the same spot where I took his last photograph, which is in the document I produced. As he told me before he died, he died defending Ukraine against the invading foe, and he spoke in Russian.

What are my prescriptions? My prescriptions are quite simple and fairly obvious. I believe we should maintain the presence of Canadian troops in Ukraine and in the Baltic states aiding our NATO allies and aiding Ukraine for training purposes. I believe we should maintain or perhaps increase the economic sanctions we have against those responsible for the current war in Ukraine. I think we need to continue to refuse to recognize the illegal military occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. I think we need a call for the withdrawal of all Russian armed forces from the occupied portions of Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions. We need to provide defensive weapons to Ukraine to counter the offensive equipment the Russian Federation has already deployed. We need to continue to share with Ukraine whatever political or military intelligence we can in order to allow Ukraine to continue with its defensive war against the Russian Federation.

Finally, after we withdraw the Russian forces from Luhansk and Donetsk, which Mr. Putin has said he wants to do, we need to deploy Canadian peacemakers on the international border between the Russian Federation and Ukraine to prevent further incursions of Russian armed forces into the territory of Ukraine and to stop Russia's resupply of criminal and terrorist elements that may remain active on Ukrainian lands after the Russian forces have been withdrawn.

Thank you.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We'll now go to our first round of questions. Mr. Robillard, you have the floor.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions are for Mr. Luciuk.

What types of tactics have pro-Russian separatist groups used against Ukraine's armed forces in the Donbass region?

Which components of the Minsk I and Minsk II peace agreements have Russia and pro-Russian separatist groups in Ukraine not implemented? Why have they not been implemented?

What is Russia's long-term objective in the Donbass region?

To what extent are Russia's actions in the Donbass region part of broader ambitions for territorial expansion?

In short, what lessons have been learned from the conflict in Ukraine to date?

[English]

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: I missed the first part of the question, but essentially my understanding of the so-called pro-Russian groups in Ukraine, particularly in Donetsk and Luhansk, is that much of this has been fabricated by the Russian Federation; that is, there were legitimate minority language issues that needed to be addressed. Some were addressed and some were not. That is clearly an issue that Ukraine needs to deal with in the future. There was no persecution of Russian speakers anywhere in Ukraine. In fact, Russian speakers enjoyed widespread freedoms, the same as any other Ukrainian citizen.

The invasion of Ukrainian lands by the Russian Federation was, in my view, an attempt to destabilize Ukraine, where the popular national will was for a turn toward Europe; where that was blocked by President Yanukovich, leading to some of the violence you saw in the Euromaidan, and leading then to the invasion of portions of Ukraine, including the occupation of Crimea; where a referendum was then staged under military occupation, the results of which no country in the world accepts—except, of course, the Russian Federation. There was subsequently the illegal annexation of Crimea into the Russian Federation, which again is something that no western country accepts.

As for the purpose of this, I agree in part with my colleague Dr. Kuzio. He outlined five theories, or views, on the war in Ukraine. I think a combination of all of those is at play, but certainly one of the major issues is this unwillingness on the part of many Russians, including Mr. Putin, of course, at the top, to give up the archaic notion that somehow Ukrainians and Russians are one people, “people of one blood”, as they would say. This is a fantasy concocted by Moscow many centuries ago and which has been perpetuated through the Soviet period and now in the post-Soviet period. The shock many Russians felt in 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed and Ukraine declared its independence, and the notion that Ukraine might be a legitimate state in Europe, is something that many have not been able to cope with.

Putin, on the other hand, by his aggressive measures directed against Ukraine, has perhaps rallied his own nation but certainly has also rallied Ukraine. I noticed among Russian-speaking Ukrainians not only an intense patriotism but a certain and positive desire to ensure that all Russian invaders are driven from their lands. So, Putin, ironically it has sometimes been claimed has almost created the modern Ukraine in this war of independence. As for the long-term goals to destabilize Ukraine to keep a large and potentially prosperous country out of the European Union and keep the Russian

imperial project alive, and that is that humpty dumpty project I referred to.... Where I will disagree with Dr. Kuzio is I don't think the Russian project is succeeding; in fact, I'm fairly sure it will fail, although at great cost.

• (1600)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Robillard: What is the probability that Ukraine can reform its Ministry of Defence by the end of 2018, and achieve full military interoperability with NATO members by 2020? Is the target date of 2020 for Ukraine's NATO membership feasible?

What has been Russia's reaction to NATO's support and involvement in reform efforts in Ukraine?

[English]

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: I know from personal observation that there is a great interest in joining NATO. I know that the professionalism of the Ukrainian front-line troops and of the National Guard of Ukraine, which in some ways is better equipped, even, than the front-line troops, is such that they are on par with western standards.

The degree of interoperability is a slightly different question, and that is something that is being worked on, but I don't believe it would be ready by 2018 from what I saw. That said, the Ukrainian military is more than capable of handling its own man for man, as I saw on the front lines. The professionals who are there are very competent and capable and are learning lessons fast. They told me—and I can only refer to what I was told by Ukrainian Spetsnaz troops and military intelligence troops—that against their equivalents in the Russian Federation it's man for man. Against Russian conscripts they will win the war.

The Chair: That's your time.

Mr. Yurdiga, you have the floor.

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the witnesses for participating in our study, which is very heart-wrenching for many of us who are of Ukrainian descent.

A lot of things have happened since 2014, but I understand that Ukraine and Russia have opposed UN peacekeeping. Can you comment on both?

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: I am going to turn to Ambassador Mason and Dr. Kuzio to help with this.

My understanding is that both the Russian Federation and Ukraine were originally opposed, but in recent months, I believe, Ukraine has called for international peacekeeping troops on the international border between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, not on the line of separation. Putting peacekeepers or observers on the line of separation might suggest to some that this is the legitimate border, when it's actually a territory under occupation, a separation line that I literally stood beside and was nearly killed on. This would be recognizing somehow an illegitimately acquired territory.

The issue, and I believe this was referred to in the *Globe and Mail* article today, is how to define where these peacekeepers or observers would go. From the Ukrainian point of view, they should go on the original international boundary, a boundary, by the way, that the Russian Federation agreed would be inviolate when it supported the Minsk accords and the Budapest agreements. That was supposed to be the border. The territory of Ukraine was supposed to be sovereign. Crimea was occupied—the first violation of sovereignty—and now Donetsk and Luhansk. I think the Ukrainian position is, “We’ll go back to what it was like before the war, and then we’ll talk.” The Russian position, obviously, is, “We’ve acquired this territory.”

I can also add one point. Many of the people from the other side—I’ll call it occupied Donetsk and Luhansk—travel across the border every day. It’s almost bizarre to meet these people at the equivalent of Starbucks, 50 metres behind the lines. You’re talking and having a coffee, and you’re asking what it’s like on the other side.

There has been very little reconstruction, very little attempt to repair the damage done by both sides during the war. As a result, the people on the other side, in occupied territory, are truly suffering—there is no doubt about it—whereas the people on the Ukrainian side don’t seem to be, other than right along the line of demarcation. Back of that line, life goes on quite normally. I visited schools, churches, and private homes, and I saw people living their lives, as best they could with the understanding that occasionally artillery rounds come over.

I think both sides have called for peace; both sides have called for observers; both sides have called for some kind of international force. It’s just a difference of where they go. I believe that the former secretary general said exactly the same thing.

•(1605)

Mr. David Yurdiga: Thank you very much.

I’d like to hear from Mr. Kuzio on that topic.

Dr. Taras Kuzio: Going back to the question that was raised about Minsk—because this is all related to Minsk as well—in my power point slides, which I sent this morning and which I think the committee has, the second-last slide is all about Minsk. When people say there’s no alternative to Minsk, the problem is that nothing of Minsk has been implemented, and Russia, the west, and Ukraine have very different ideas of the steps that need to be taken.

The Russian proposal is to go first with political changes/political reforms and then with security. The west and Ukraine say security first, and then political reforms. That’s because Russia doesn’t want to incorporate the Donbass of eastern Ukraine into Russia. It wants to use this region as a leverage point vis-à-vis Kiev to give it some kind of veto power over Ukraine’s domestic and foreign policy in a kind of balkanization of Ukraine.

When you say there’s no alternative to Minsk, well, nothing had been implemented on Minsk. Between Minsk I and Minsk II, i.e., 2014 to 2015, Putin, during this immense process, built up the various militia groups into one of Europe’s largest armies. Today, the separatists, or Russian proxy forces, number 35,000. With Russian forces of 5,000, that’s 40,000. That’s bigger than half of the armies in NATO.

The problem with the peacekeeping operation is that in Ukraine there’s zero trust, not surprisingly, with Putin. It’s not just because of what’s happened in Ukraine; it’s also because of—let’s remember—Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and elsewhere in the former U.S.S.R. Russia has been doing this kind of thing in the past, where it’s created a conflict and frozen it in its favour with its own peacekeeping forces. Ukraine would never accept Russian soldiers as part of that peacekeeping force. As Dr. Luciuk said, the peacekeepers should be on the Ukraine-Russia border, not on the ceasefire line.

The most important goal for Putin here in proposing this is to be seen as a peacemaker and therefore to get Europe to drop its sanctions against Russia. That’s his goal. We shouldn’t allow him to get away with this, because he has no real interest in peace.

Thank you.

Mr. David Yurdiga: I’ve had many conversations with a number of people. There’s a sentiment out there that if the Ukrainian army had been more heavily equipped and had had more of a presence in Crimea prior to the 2014 invasion, this crisis would have been averted. Could I have a comment on that?

•(1610)

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: I think the Ukrainian army and military were gutted during the Yanukovych regime and as a result were not prepared to deal with the crisis when it occurred, particularly in the NCO ranks. Also, then, at the most senior levels of the military, there was a large number of leftovers from the Soviet period, who have hobbled the efforts of the younger generation of officers to do their jobs.

What I heard at the colonel level, and sometimes even at the lower major-general level, is that they’re all very competent. They’re all very capable of taking on the Russian army, but they’re not supported from above by the hangers-on, and they don’t have a sufficient NCO cadre to transmit their orders going down. That’s a big problem, and they admit it.

Mr. David Yurdiga: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to our witnesses for appearing today.

I want to focus on the diametrically opposed testimony of Mr. Luciuk and Ambassador Mason with regard to supplying weapons to Ukraine at this time. I guess there are two aspects to this. One is what the impact would be on the conflict. The other is that there have been some allegations that Ukraine has already been involved in some less than savoury arms deals with other partners: allegations that they may have provided missile parts to North Korea and allegations that they have provided weapons to states in Africa that are behind arms blockades.

I will start with Mr. Luciuk and then go to Ambassador Mason. Can you comment on the immediate impact of inserting more weapons into the conflict, and second, on the end use of possible exports?

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: The immediate impact would be making the Ukrainian military more capable, more competent, of defeating the invader; it's as simple as that. I suppose, frankly, there would be more Russian deaths. That's what war is.

Ukraine has corruption problems in the military and in civil life. There's no denying that, but it's improving. It's certainly far less corrupt than the Russian Federation. Mr. Putin is a billionaire. How do you become a billionaire on the salary of an ex-KGB man and a man who is president in perpetuity of the Russian Federation? Okay, he makes a good salary, but how does he become a billionaire? So, talk about corruption.

As for the weaponry, a story was circulated...I think it's part of a disinformation campaign against Ukraine. There's no evidence that Ukraine provided nuclear weapon support of any kind to North Korea. Ukraine has a very large armaments industry—that's very true—and some of the front-line troops were complaining about that. Why is stuff made in Ukraine being sold on international markets? But that's part of the process. Governments everywhere sell weaponry. Canada does that. We've sold weaponry to Saudi Arabia, which Madam Ambassador has bemoaned. The reality is all countries tend to do that. If Ukrainians have done it, and I don't know the specifics of that, it's unfortunate, but it's particularly unfortunate for the front-line troops who could use that armament.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Ambassador Mason.

Ms. Peggy Mason: Thank you very much.

I just want to reference the statement about no alternatives in the Minsk agreement, and just note that I was quoting the Ukrainian minister of defence, who stated that in May, and also President Putin and Angela Merkel, who said there is no alternative to the Minsk agreement.

On the second point, the impact on the conflict, there's been a lot of careful study of this, and I would point to very respected independent expertise in the international crisis group. They have been extremely active in analyzing this conflict. I think anyone reading it would see that they have been very impartial and given criticism where criticism is due. They go back and forth, and they did a huge number of interviews with various military advisers and diplomats as to what the impact on the ground would be, and canvassed all the arguments. They came out with the view that because the dynamic on the ground is that each side must respond to a perceived military action by the other—and we're talking defensive weapons here and that's all the former NATO secretary general recommended. He said they would give no really meaningful military advantage, but they would be seen as a military step. Therefore, the separatist forces would respond and then we would have an impact on escalation, which would be exactly the wrong direction than the one we want to go in.

I also want to come back to the comment that you couldn't have peacekeepers on the line of separation, which of course is set out in the Minsk agreement, signed by all sides, because that would somehow legitimize it more than the Minsk agreement does. That just shows a fundamental misunderstanding of what the peacekeepers are supposed to be doing. Of course, I hasten to add that this is not the only place they need to be, but if they're going to move from a ceasefire to a more meaningful agreement, then they have to

be able to make sure they can verify that everyone is living up to the Minsk agreement. That means they have to be where the forces are. This is in fact what the OSCE is supposed to be doing, and everyone has agreed to that, but they just don't have the capacity to protect themselves while doing it. That's why this whole proposal about the UN peacekeeping operations is so ingenious, because it is to provide the security and protection so the OSCE monitors can do their job.

I want to come back on a point that our other witness said about not wanting to get into a situation of frozen conflicts, and I could not agree more. No one, I think, is suggesting, or no one should be suggesting, that Russian forces would be involved in this at all. That's why, of course, I say there couldn't also be Canadian forces because a proper UN peacekeeping mission has impartial forces. I think we have learned a lot from the frozen conflicts, and I think that's what we're trying to avoid here.

Thank you.

• (1615)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Ambassador Mason, you said that Canada couldn't play the role of peacekeepers. We are contributing to the OSCE mission, and Canada, as we learned, has not fulfilled its full commitment to provide observers.

Do you believe our position would allow us to contribute additional materials to the monitoring mission?

Ms. Peggy Mason: Of course, the OSCE mission, if all... I should step back and say that a key element in the choice of forces for a UN peacekeeping operation is that they are acceptable to all sides. So, yes, if we became acceptable to all sides, then we could. In the OSCE context, because of our long history and work there, they're obviously comfortable with us. But that's the key element. What guides the formation of all UN peacekeeping operations is that all elements of it are acceptable to all sides.

The Chair: Mr. Fisher, you have the floor.

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

Thank you very much to all you folks for your testimony. It certainly adds to the complexity of the issue when we hear the three differing sides.

I think we all agree that Russia's aggression towards Ukraine is more than just the fact that it sees Ukraine as being within its Russian sphere of influence.

Dr. Kuzio, you mentioned Ukraine's interest in EU and NATO, and you had three interesting terms that I jotted down: geopolitical tug-of-war, empire building, and national unity. Those are all things that I think of as well that might have led to the aggression—mostly the first one, the EU and the NATO.

You commented that in Moscow, they feel that the Ukrainian people would love to be back in the—for lack of a better term—arms of Mother Russia. Certainly, we know that's not the case, but I'm interested in Russia's absolute great ability at information warfare and how that may or may not be impacting the feeling of the people in Ukraine, especially along the borders.

Do you feel this is having some impact? I'd just like to know your thoughts on that.

Doctor, I'm going to turn my spare time after your answer over to my colleague Mr. Wrzesnewskij. I have more things I'd like to ask, but I'd love to hear from Mr. Wrzesnewskij as well.

Dr. Taras Kuzio: The war and conflict, as in every war and conflict, has fundamentally changed Ukraine, and opinion polls show that, without any doubt. If there were a referendum held today in Ukraine on NATO membership, 78% would support NATO membership. That has jumped massively from about 30% up until 2014. It's the same with the European Union.

The idea that Ukrainians want to go back to Mother Russia is a fantasy in Moscow. It's not reflected in opinion polls in Ukraine. The pro-Russian, shall we say, political camp is either today outside of Ukraine's borders in occupied territory or is being completely marginalized because of the Yanukovich era.

The information war is a very good point. I think the reason that protests against the Euromaidan revolution in Donetsk turned into a violent insurgency was partly because of the information war. People watched Russian television, social media, and the like. Ukrainians who supported the Euromaidan were depicted as fascists. If somebody is a fascist in the sense of World War II, then they can be subjected to inhuman treatment, executed, and such like, which is actually what happened. That information war was the softening up and the mobilization of people from protest to actually taking up arms, which was then supported by the so-called little green men, the Russian special forces that came in, in April 2014.

The information war is very important here, particularly because there's a long legacy of that in the Soviet Union, and people tend to forget that. They think that Putin invented all this in 2014. Well actually, no. Disinformation was part of the Soviet experience and there was always a massive Soviet information campaign against so-called Ukraine nationalism and Ukraine émigrés, including émigrés in Canada. That information war built up on that, and in the eyes of Moscow, you were either a good little Russian who supported the Russian world, or you were a fascist who supported Ukraine's integration with the west.

That's the simple world that was portrayed on Russian TV. So the information war, in the way it was done, killed people and subjected a lot of people, including Ukraine soldiers, to inhuman treatment.

•(1620)

The Chair: Mr. Wrzesnewskij.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: Thank you to my colleague for passing some time over to me.

Ms. Mason, you referenced 20 years of experience that's informed your statements. Have you ever worked on projects on the ground in Ukraine?

Ms. Peggy Mason: I haven't worked on projects on the ground in Ukraine, but I have trained Ukrainian military, and I have been in Ukraine dealing with other issues, namely, the nuclear weapons issue, which was referenced by my colleague.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: So you don't actually have on-the-ground experience within Ukraine. Have you worked with any pro-democracy or pro-human rights organizations in Russia?

Ms. Peggy Mason: No, I have not. That is not what is informing my comments. I indicated training in UN and NATO peacekeeping on the ground in a range of places—that's what I stated—as well as a lot of diplomatic engagement, including in Russia and in Ukraine—

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: Thank you.

Ms. Peggy Mason: —and with Russians and Ukrainians.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: Thank you.

You spent a bit of time criticizing the House's unanimous passage of Bill S-226. All five parties, in a rare show of unanimity, passed this legislation, global Magnitsky legislation against gross human rights abusers.

I'd like to follow your logic. You said the passage of this bill precludes us from doing some of the work that we're discussing today here in Ukraine. Would it also preclude us from doing work in Venezuela and Myanmar? If we follow the opposite tack, if we're not to enact legislation that would sanction gross human rights abusers wherever they're found, and for a country that is militarily invaded and has territory annexed, something we haven't seen in Europe since the 1930s, that country is not to be provided with defensive weapons, and we're not to support human rights people who stand up against dictators and corrupt regimes for basic human rights, isn't that the definition of diplomatic appeasement?

The Chair: I'm going to have to hold that there. I have to yield the floor to Mr. Gerretsen. He's welcome to continue that response. We'll have time to circle back, but I'm going to have to yield the floor.

•(1625)

Ms. Peggy Mason: Oh, come on.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to apologize for just getting in. I was at another meeting, so I did miss the opening comments. I apologize in advance if I'm repeating or asking witnesses to repeat.

Mr. Luciuk, it's nice to see you again. I have a question for you as it relates to Canada's role in Ukraine. We're there to help train and assist the Ukrainian troops. During our recent visit there, the stark difference between the leadership and the way that the leadership from both the Ukrainian and Canadian armies operate differently could not have been any more clear. It seems that there are real cultural differences to the structures. How can Canada play a role in trying to educate and transform the way that the Ukrainian military and their structures operate, in particular, from the top down?

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: I'm assuming you were at the Yavoriv training base in western Ukraine, or at Kamianets-Podilskyi. These are the two main places where Canadian troops are currently training their Ukrainian counterparts, and it's done from the ground level up, battalion by battalion, sergeants and corporals training sergeants and corporals, and so on, all the way up the ranks. They are bringing a certain amount of commonality to the way in which soldiers in both armed forces deal with the same kinds of issues. There are Ukrainian officers training at Fort Frontenac in Kingston, in your own riding, right now.

There is that process of education and training, and it is, as I mentioned before you came in, something that both the Canadians soldiers I spoke to, including ex-RMC graduates who are now deployed in the field.... Our people are learning from the Ukrainians and the Ukrainians are learning from the Canadians. It seems to be a mutually beneficial.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You'd say that, based on your judgment, it's working.

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: I'd say it's absolutely working, and I'm quoting a Canadian officer who was stationed—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: It was fascinating. One night we had dinner with the troops, and I ended up sitting across from a Ukrainian soldier. He didn't know where I was from, and he said, "Oh, I went to this place called Kingston in Canada for training." It was a really interesting connection to make in eastern Europe.

Mr. Kuzio, I want to ask you a question about the corruption. I think it's safe to say that there is a certain level of corruption that exists in Ukraine. I found it extremely fascinating how, at the political level, there still seemed to be this level of corruption in terms of how people are elected, how people move through government.

However, at the grassroots level, in Kiev we met with the new chief of police—who couldn't have been much older than 30—who told us about the reforms and how they've changed the police. They basically said that anybody who's over the age of 30 is no longer allowed there. If they're under the age of the 30, they can reapply. They've changed and tried to wipe out this corruption at the grassroots level, yet at the higher level, at the political level, or the executive level, for lack of a better expression, the corruption still seems to be so entrenched.

In the last minute or so that I have, can you explain how those two worlds are going to survive together? What's the outcome? How can Canada help with that?

Dr. Taras Kuzio: Thank you for a massive question.

In a very quick way, since 2014, what has been created with the support of western partners—IMF and such, the European Union—is that all of the institutions are required to combat corruption. The next one that's on the horizon is the special anti-corruption court. That's all in place. That's not really a problem.

The problem is getting people to go to jail—convictions. I think that's what Ukrainians want. They want to see justice. They want to see accountability for ruling elites, which has not existed, ever, in that part of the world.

What you have, which makes Ukraine different from the rest of the former U.S.S.R., is a very vibrant civil society, as you mentioned, very active young people, very good journalists doing great investigative work. You can sit in a taxi in Ukraine and the taxi driver will tell you everything there is to know about corruption in politics. People are far more interested in politics in Ukraine than in a typical western country.

The biggest problem is that with the huge amount of information, which doesn't exist in Russia or somewhere like that because there's no free media there—in Ukraine, you have a free media—about abuse of office, nothing really happens in terms of people going to jail.

● (1630)

The Chair: I'm going to have to stop you right there, Mr. Kuzio, and yield the floor to Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

This is my first question on the defence committee, so please bear with me as I'm trying to learn this file.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Welcome to joining us cool kids.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Yes, exactly. It's a little different from trade, that's for sure.

One thing we're trying to do here is to understand what Canada can do to help Ukraine's defence capabilities, so they have the resources. I guess I'm trying to get around, first of all, the fake news aspect of it and the PR game that's being played on both sides, outside the region and inside the region.

Mr. Luciuk, can you give us some examples of fake news? Can you give us some ideas on how to separate what's real and what's fake? Do you have any advice on that?

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: There's one that I made reference to in Crimea in 2010. The billboards that were being put up everywhere suggested that the people of Crimea saw their future prosperity in the Russian Federation, and separatist posters, placards, were being completely ignored by the government in Kiev because the government in Kiev at the time was basically in cahoots with Moscow.

More important is the disinformation campaign and the defamation campaign that's been orchestrated in the west. I'm not a specialist on American politics, so I won't talk about that, but I can speak specifically to what happened to our Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chrystia Freeland, when she was accused, on the basis of a spurious story, that somehow she was a closet fascist because her grandfather may have been a Nazi collaborator in the Second World War. It's as if the sins of the father should be vested on the daughter. Even if we believe that, there's no evidence of that. In fact, I interviewed one of that man's colleagues completely independently back in the 1980s. I had no idea of who Chrystia Freeland was in the 1980s. I interviewed a colleague from *Krakowski Visti*, the newspaper that was being referred to, and asked him how he could work under the Nazi administration. He said it was a cover for a Ukrainian nationalist organization. Simple. You have to believe him.

There's that kind of disinformation that Professor Kuzio talked about as well, about Ukrainian fascists running around in Kiev. Yes, there are some right-wing people in Ukraine. There are some right-wing people in the United States, as we all know. So what? They are a tiny minority. Some of those people, yes, did rally to Ukraine's defence in 2014, picked up their hunting rifles, and went to the front lines and were brave soldiers, minutemen if you like, of the war of independence. However, the vast majority of front-line soldiers are now all professionals. The disinformation about Nazis and fascists running the Government of Ukraine is just that; it's a myth that the Russian and Soviet propagandists have been playing since the fifties, since the first Cold War.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I'm sorry, I only get five minutes, so we have to be very quick in our questions and answers.

As we look at what we can do, one of the things we were doing before is providing support through RADARSAT, and the ability to use the intelligence gathered by the satellite information.

Do you think that's something that should be immediately happening? I know Mr. Poroshenko asked for that immediately when he came here a couple weeks ago.

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: The simple answer is absolutely, yes.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Is there anything else? It ties into the fake news. If you're not getting good data and good information, how do you make good decisions? Is there anything else you see that we should be adding into that—

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: I'm going to defer to Professor Kuzio on that. I think he's better...

Dr. Taras Kuzio: This is an interesting question, because it's come up already during these hearings. Certainly, the provision of intelligence would be very important for Ukrainian forces on the front line. When we talk about the supply of weapons leading to an escalation, there's been an escalation throughout the last three years. Daily, soldiers and civilians are getting killed. It's not as though there has been peace in the last few years.

I'd like to broach something that is slightly delicate, but it's on this question. If we are proposing—and I think it is a good idea—this exchange of intelligence and exchange of information between Canada and Ukraine, I'd like to highlight something for the committee. There seems to be a discrepancy in Canadian government policy. One arm of the Canadian government is supporting the reform of Ukraine's police, armed forces, and security service through NATO or bilaterally, but another branch of the Canadian government believes that the security service of Ukraine is a threat to Canadian national security. I'm working with a lawyer at the moment in Montreal on this question. We can supply the committee with this information. There seems to be a discrepancy. One arm of the Canadian government says one thing, that we want to work with these Ukrainian forces, but another arm says we should stay away from them because they're basically a threat, and maybe a potential espionage threat to Canada. Which is it? There should be one policy, not two on that question.

•(1635)

Mr. Randy Hoback: I'll go back to you, Mr. Luciuk. On these security assurances and their impact, there were assurances given to

Ukraine that if they signed on to this they would be protected. What's the feeling? Obviously they haven't been protected.

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: That's right.

There's a very strong feeling among front-line troops that I spoke to and among a younger generation in Kiev and Lviv, whom I also spoke to in the pro-democracy movements, that they were betrayed.

Mr. Randy Hoback: If they wouldn't have given those assurances, do you think we'd be in this boat now?

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: Yes, I think they still would be because I don't think the Russian Federation's plans had very much to do with western guarantees one way or another because I think the Russians understood from day one that it was bogus, or certainly that it was.... We have to be very careful. These weren't treaty obligations. These weren't legally binding. These were, "Don't worry, we'll take care of you" kinds of statements. The Ukrainians naively believed that.

I can tell you one thing. My students and others have always asked me why they aren't like us now. They've had 25-plus years of independence since 1991. Why are they still like this? I always tell them the answer. Think back to the good book. Think of Moses leading the Israelites out of bondage. It took them 40 years of wandering the desert to get to the promised land, and even Moses didn't get there. Ukraine needs its Moses, and Ukraine is looking for that kind of assistance to find the promised land, which for Ukrainians is in Europe, but it will take perhaps 40 years, so until 2031. It's going to be a while yet.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Robillard, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

What were Russia's communication strategies for its activities in Eastern Europe and Ukraine? Have those strategies been effective?

Conversely, what were NATO's communication strategies for its operations in Central and Eastern Europe? How could they be improved?

[*English*]

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: My understanding from having been in Ukraine several times in 2010 was that the NATO message was not getting out, that it was ineffectual, that it was limited, and that it was not being heard. There was at that time a considerable proportion of the Ukrainian population that was very anxious to join the European Union but quite reluctant by and large to join NATO. This was because of the perception of NATO propagated by the Russian Federation and its supporters abroad that NATO was somehow an offensive alliance, that it was the battled west from the Cold War period. There was a sense among many Ukrainians that they would like to be in the economic zone with Europe because that brought with it all sorts of obvious benefits; the NATO thing, less so.

There was always a small percentage of Ukrainians that wanted to be part of NATO from 1991 on, but that was limited, I would say, probably until 2014, as Professor Kuzio has said. Nowadays, I'm not sure. He said 78% of Ukrainians would be delighted to join NATO. My understanding was that it was closer to 75%, but we won't quibble. I'll go with the higher number.

The Chair: Did you want to pass your time on, Mr. Robillard?

Mr. Yves Robillard: Yes, I will pass it to Jean.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Thank you.

My thanks to the witnesses for being here.

I went to Ukraine last summer. From what I understand, the conflict there may last a long time.

Mr. Luciuk, my understanding from your presentation is that, if more capacity was provided to Ukrainians, we would probably be able to make the pro-Russian forces retreat all the way to the border. In fact, the presence of those pro-Russian separatist groups in the Donbass region stems from Ukraine's lack of capacity. Did I understand correctly?

● (1640)

[English]

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: The provision of defensive weaponry would help the Ukrainians make the Russian incursion into Ukrainian lands costly, continually expensive, both in terms of materiel and manpower. I don't think the Russian Federation is prepared to go much further than they've already gone.

They would like to maintain a destabilized, frozen conflict, a Ukraine that's sort of teetering between stability and instability. As for the so-called separatists, I actually reject that description of them. Certainly, there may have been some people of that sort, but the vast majority of those who are involved in the conflict today are essentially criminal elements. I won't use the word "terrorists" because it's overused. These are individuals who have been mustered and brought together by the Russian Federation, very heavily equipped with weaponry that the Ukrainian professional army doesn't have, and stirred up into this conflict.

I think that if Ukrainian troops were provided with the defensive weaponry they need—this is what they tell me—they would be able to defeat those proxy armies in the field and make it very costly for them to continue operating. Perhaps that would then lead to a Russian withdrawal. I do not think the Ukrainian army today, with the resources that it has available, could drive the Russian military out. That would be a very uneven contest. However, holding their own, improving their position against their opponents, and causing the Russian Federation great cost are already happening.

The Ukrainian army today, as you may have seen—some of you have been there—is incredibly professional. I was able to see how effective they are, particularly their better units, with the Canadian educational and training programs that we're giving them, essentially on peaceful things such as demining. Kamianets-Podilskyi has a beautiful demining centre. This saves lives, everyone's life. Training soldiers to be better in first aid and medical things saves lives, and also making them professional soldiers able to defend the territorial integrity and sovereignty of their country.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Do I still have time?

[English]

The Chair: That's the time.

I think we'll have time at the end to circle back with whoever else wants a question and didn't get one, but at this point, I'm going to give the floor to Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you, Chair, and I want to thank our witnesses for presenting today and knowing how important this study is. For those of us who have been to Ukraine many times and those of us who have Ukrainian heritage, it's something we're quite passionate about. As the sponsor in the House of Bill S-226, I'm proud that all parliamentarians of all parties supported the bill unanimously in the House of Commons, and I'm sure similar results in the Senate. I think this sends a message to all human rights abusers around the world that Canada will not be a safe haven for their money that they've been able to garner through abuse of authority and by treading on the rights of their own citizens.

I want to come back to the idea of making sure Ukraine gets the weapons they need to defend their territory. Professor Luciuk and Professor Kuzio, both of you who are students of eastern European history, if we look at military studies and their impact on the future, do you believe that diplomacy is gained through strength of negotiations because of a powerful military?

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: Professor Kuzio.

Dr. Taras Kuzio: Since 2014 Ukraine's military has become one of the strongest militaries in Europe. Today it's about 300,000 strong plus the National Guard. Officially, Ukraine spends 5% of the GDP on defence. That's a huge amount of money. In that sense, because of Putin's aggression, Ukraine has had to invest in military...reform of the ministry of interior of Ukraine with the help of Canada, the police, and such like.

To me the most important reaction to the sending of military equipment—probably the first country to do that would be the United States and then maybe followed by other countries, Canada, Britain, Poland, for example—is that it sends a signal. That's a very crucial thing. It sends a signal to Moscow that, if need be, Ukraine is going to be supported by the west.

Ukraine today is a place that can provide lots of experience for western and NATO troops, including Canadian, because it's a country that's suffering from hybrid war. I think as Dr. Luciuk said, Ukrainian troops actually helping...it's a two-way process in that sense. I think sending the signal is as important as actually beefing up the defensive side of the equipment. Plus, we should not underestimate what Dr. Luciuk has said, which is that the Ukrainians do believe that the west has a moral duty to support them because of the nuclear weapons question.

Ukraine inherited the third largest nuclear weapons stockpile in the world from the collapse of the U.S.S.R. It gave it all up between 1994 and 1996. In return for that, it did get not guarantees but assurances, and surely at this time of need, Ukraine should receive some strong support from the West.

NATO has a choice—and Canada here as well. Either there's a conflict with Russia on Ukrainian soil or it's in the Baltic states.

● (1645)

Mr. James Bezan: I agree with you 100%.

Professor Luciuk, on the issue of adding Ukraine to Canada's automatic firearms country control list, do you believe that should happen? You've been to the front and you've seen Ukrainian troops and the military they have. What type of defence weapons would they be interested in? What more can Canada be doing through the Canada-Ukraine military defence and co-operation agreement?

I would just ask also, what industrial complex is available in Ukraine for developing their own weapons, and what partnerships might be available to Canadian companies in participating in the development of defensive weapons?

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: There are several questions there. One is, I think, for a list of the kinds of things that Ukrainians are asking for now, I would just refer you back to the *Globe and Mail* article today, because former Secretary General Rasmussen actually lists them there. I'm not going to repeat them here.

Also, I think Ukraine does have an industrial capacity. Kharkiv, for example, is one of the major cities for the production of tanks and armoured personnel vehicles. There is that capacity. There is that ability. If I could just go back to what Professor Kuzio said a moment ago, I think what the committee needs to think about very carefully is that there's a very new generation of Ukrainians, in their thirties, who are European in heart and soul, who want to be part of the western civilized world and do not want to be part of a Eurasian federation, who nevertheless feel a sense of betrayal because they have learned "on their own skin" as we would say in Ukrainian what believing, promises, assurances, whatever you want to call them, was. You don't want to lose those people. You don't want to lose Ukraine.

The Chair: Ms. Alleslev.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you very much.

As a former student of yours, Dr. Luciuk, it's a pleasure to have you here. I'll leverage some of what my colleague was saying and ask some questions similar to what I asked 25 years ago.

It looks like this is a stalemate. It looks like we need something to break through where we are. As parliamentarians, it's our job to make a recommendation on the next steps and to try to prioritize where we go from here.

You've given some recommendations, including defensive weapons, sharing intel around RADARSAT, and, of course, deploying peacekeepers. We also understand that there is a war from within in terms of hearts and minds, in terms of information warfare, and in terms of the military and how it's potentially undermining some of the assistance we're providing.

Also, on the judicial structure, is there an advantage to providing some support there? I'm looking to Ambassador Mason on that as well, because she listed a number of things that she doesn't think Canada's role should be. Perhaps it might be supporting and enhancing the rule of law.

What should the priority be? Should it be external defensive weapons, internal support to the structure and the rule of law, or information warfare? Does it need to be a combination of all of the above? How would you prioritize that, and where would you put the emphasis on the next steps?

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: Ukraine is at war, so if I have to answer that and prioritize, I would say the first thing is to provide them with the defensive weaponry they need. That's what they would say.

That said, Canada has a distinguished, very positive, and very welcome record of supporting democratic reforms and civil society development in Ukraine, and that is undeniable and very welcome as well. There is a large number of Ukrainians and American Ukrainians who have gone to Ukraine and are working there now. The minister of health, for example, Ulana Suprun, is doing an excellent job of reforming the health care system, not without push-back, but she is doing her best.

We can support people like that, and we can support judicial reforms as well.

The comment was made that the trouble is that you can find the corrupt ones fairly easily. Any taxi driver will tell you, as Professor Kuzio said, who is stealing what from whom, but the trouble is getting them into jail. That certainly is a problem, but before we support Eliot Ness and that kind of effort, I think we need to help Ukrainians in the front lines, in the political arena, to save their country from this unprecedented attack on national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

It's all about the war. If I can put it into a nutshell, it's about the war. It's not a war Ukraine started. Ukraine didn't do anything to deserve this. Ukraine anticipated being a normal country in Europe. Yes, there was corruption. Yes, they were lagging behind in all sorts of areas, but they were moving in the right direction.

Quite frankly, and I want to be very clear on this, so were many Russians. We forget because the bogeyman here, the bad guy, is the Russian Federation. But it's not the Russian Federation; it's Mr. Putin and the KGB cronies around him and that corrupt criminal element in Russian society that controls the media and has taken the Russian nation down the path of war, to what end? Let's say that they win the war, so they have a devastated Luhansk and a devastated Donetsk, and the Ukrainians hate them, for what?

• (1650)

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Thank you.

Ambassador Mason, what would you prioritize?

Ms. Peggy Mason: Thank you very much.

Well, I certainly would agree with the comments about judicial reform, governance in general. Canada has a great deal of experience in helping with judicial reform and building capacity there. I think that's something we're doing all the time, and we could certainly do it there, so I would certainly support that.

But going back to the Minsk agreement, I have to point out that, in fact, Ukraine is not at war. It has signed a ceasefire agreement. There are problems on the ground with the local—

Ms. Leona Alleslev: But, Ambassador, with 852 breaches of a ceasefire on a regular basis, perhaps it redefines "ceasefire".

Ms. Peggy Mason: Yes, well, neither side has walked away from the agreement, and that's the point. I would certainly hope that the first ones to walk away from the agreement are not Canadians, if in fact we want to go forward.

I come back to the fact that it was the Ukrainian minister of defence, as well as the other key parties to this agreement, who said that is the only way forward. Do we want to help them or not?

If we do, then it seems to me.... The only area on which I disagree with former NATO Secretary General Anders Rasmussen, is I disagree with him on the defensive weapons, and it's only defensive, not anything on the automatic firearms control list; it's only defensive—night goggles, and so on—that he's recommending. I disagree with that because of this problem of escalation, but I completely agree with bringing greater support to the Minsk agreement.

Let us not forget that Russian aggression in Ukraine was met with wide-ranging western sanctions. The removal of those sanctions is now, by agreement, tied to the implementation of the Minsk agreement, so this agreement is central to how we go forward.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Unfortunately this afternoon we've seen something which I hadn't seen in this Parliament before, which we saw frequently in the previous Parliament, and that was when government members don't particularly agree with testimony of individuals before the committee, there's an attack on their expertise or their integrity, and it's timed so that they're not allowed to reply.

I have some other questions I'd like to ask, but I would like to give our distinguished former ambassador for disarmament from 1989 to 1995, I believe, and someone who's worked on disarmament demobilization and reintegration of troops at the UN, a chance to reply to the attack on her credentials today.

Ms. Peggy Mason: Thank you very much. I do appreciate that. I share your disappointment at what transpired.

What I would say, and I'll provide my notes after, is it is not about not sanctioning gross human rights abusers; it's about how we do it.

What I'm arguing for is the consistent approach that Canada always followed in the past. Where there was not a legal jurisdictional connection to Canada, then we would follow international law and multilateral approaches. That stood in stark contrast to the United States, which has generally preferred unilateral approaches and seeking to impose its views on the rest of the world.

The Cuba arms embargo is a very good example of the difference between Canada and the United States during the Cold War. It wasn't that we didn't think there were human rights abuses that were of grave concern, but we thought there was another way to handle it. I referenced the Human Rights Council but also the UN Security Council, because that's really where the sanctions have the most bite if the UN Security Council agrees to those sanctions.

The problem we have is that we have countries at the UN Security Council who have vetoes, and they only allow those sanctions against certain countries and not others. That's why I regret so much that Canada has taken this approach. It's hard as parliamentarians, and I know that, to stand against what to the average person just seems

like a no-brainer. Of course, we're against human rights abusers. Let's go after them.

I come back to the point of Saudi Arabia. It is consistently listed as among the top 10 worst human rights abusers every single year. Is this committee really going to recommend that Canada's version of the Magnitsky Act be used to go after Saudi Arabian money in Canada? I think not.

The methodology is not a good methodology to be effective, because if you're discriminating some countries and not others, it undermines the entire integrity of the international human rights machinery.

Thank you.

• (1655)

The Chair: That ends the formal rounds of questions.

We haven't heard a bell, which I'm surprised, but we may hear one in the next 20 minutes or so. We have about 20 minutes of questions left before we go in camera, so I'd like to begin with three more questions of five minutes each. I'm going to divide it up fairly, so everyone gets five minutes. I'm going to go Liberals, Conservatives, NDP. I'm going to give the floor to Ms. Young. You have the floor, or you can split your time of up to five minutes.

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair. I will be splitting my time with Mr. Gerretsen.

I appreciate all of you coming today to appear before this committee. I'm just subbing in today, so this is the first chance that I get to talk about this very important topic.

Dr. Kuzio, I want to go back to something you said about the length of time you expect this conflict to last. Dr. Luciuk, you also mentioned that. It's very discouraging to hear you talk about generational....

Do you say that no matter what the west does?

Dr. Taras Kuzio: No, I think the west can do a lot more than it's doing. For example, we've just been talking about the export of dirty money, shall we say, from various countries. Here, the Europeans have been terrible, and I say that as a European. The EU consistently complains about corruption in Ukraine and at the same time, where does this dirty money from Russia and Ukraine go? It goes to western Europe. Cyprus is a money-laundering machine. It goes to "Londongrad", the nickname for London, and Austria, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland, etc. If we really want to hurt them and try to bring Putin to his senses, we could hurt them very strongly by hitting his pocketbook.

As Dr. Luciuk said, it is a mafia regime; this is what the U.S. has been calling Russia in diplomatic papers since 2010. It relied on the massive outflow of dirty money. That dirty money ends up either in western Europe or the Caribbean and Panama. We want to hurt them. We want to bring them to their senses, shall we say, on the eastern Ukraine. The big difference in Russian eyes, between the Crimea and Donbass is that the annexation of the Crimea was very popular in Russia, including among the opposition; whereas Putin's actions in eastern Ukraine are not that popular. That's why Putin hides a lot of what's going on there and why Russian soldiers killed in eastern Ukraine are buried secretly at night as the Soviet soldiers killed in Afghanistan were.

We do have more leverage than we think we have and one of them is certainly hurting Putin where it hurts the most and that's in the money he's stolen.

• (1700)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you.

I want to pick up on the discussion that Ms. Alleslev was having with Professor Luciuk.

In particular, when we talk about the—quote, unquote—“cease-fire” that exists, and I think she said 800 points of contact, the truth of the matter is that the contact line, at least as it was described to us, at some points is literally one side of the road versus the other. It makes it extremely challenging to uphold this ceasefire when the troops are literally so close to each other. They are at a stalemate and nothing seems to be helping.

What is the next step? Do they need a buffer zone? How are they going to work that out to make real and productive change toward some kind of resolution? Or do you not even feel that this is really what they're after?

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: I think the place I was at in Donetsk and then travelling up to Luhansk, the separation area, the no man's land, was much more than a wide street. Nevertheless, there were violations while I was on the line. Literally, Russian artillery pieces were firing at our position or very close to it when we were there and we had to beat a hasty retreat. There are multiple violations as was mentioned. Separating the warring parties will take some effort obviously, and probably the notion of saying to Mr. Putin and Mr. Poroshenko that they both called for peace, for peacemakers. I think where the issue is—and this is where I disagree with the ambassador—is where do you put those peacemakers? Do you put them on the line of separation or on the international border? Clearly, in my view, you don't reward aggression. You put them on the international border.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: I just want to point out that in the committee room today, we have a number of Ukrainian interns who are here working with members of Parliament. They are the faces of the Revolution of Dignity. This wasn't a military coup that happened on the Maidan. It was these youth standing up for their rights, their freedoms, and their aspirations. I'm glad they're here listening to the testimony today.

I'm going to share the rest of my time with Mrs. Gallant.

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

About a year ago at this time, a number of parliamentarians and members of NATO countries were meeting and we were quite seized with our companions who were from the Baltics as well as Ukraine. They told us that they were moving nuclear weapons into Crimea. Has this been verified and if so, what would be the rationale to having these weapons, where they purport them to be in their own country, Russia?

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: The rationale for deploying tactical nuclear weapons, because that's what it would be, into Crimea and into Königsberg, where I believe they already exist, in Kaliningrad, the exclave of the Russian Federation, is to of course have an advantage over the NATO alliance and to dominate the Black Sea. The Black Sea...with the potential for a southern flank that the Russian Federation might have to face against NATO deploying these things forward gives them leverage against the independence of Ukraine. It gives them, in the north, leverage against the NATO states and the Baltic states. It is simply a geostrategic move.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Is there any verification that they still indeed are there?

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: In Kaliningrad, yes. In Crimea, I don't know.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: In terms of cyberwarfare, we know that Ukraine has experienced two attacks, but the notch-up that they seem to be taking and using as an experimental cauldron for the rest of the world is that they are now going after the infrastructure, not just the Internet but the Internet of things. What can you tell us about the progress they've made in using Ukraine as their experimental lab for cyber-attacks?

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: I can't answer that question. That's not an area I would feel comfortable responding in, but perhaps Dr. Kuzio can.

• (1705)

The Chair: Yes, go ahead.

Dr. Taras Kuzio: The interesting thing about the cyberwarfare aspect is that this is nothing new. The first cyber-attack that Russia undertook was against NATO and the EU member Estonia in 2007. I think there was a lot of wishful thinking about Russia. There was an attempt to do a third reset under President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. A lot of what was happening in Russia was ignored. Russia has been doing these kinds of activities for a long time.

In the case of Ukraine, the cyber-attacks had been, as you said, primarily directed against utilities in particular and to gather information by hacking into various government web accounts. It was similar to what was taking place in the U.S. during the presidential elections of last year. I don't think there is that much difference. This is all part and parcel of Russia's hybrid information and other types of warfare. It's part and parcel of Russia's or Putin's view that he is under attack. We should understand this. Putin believes that he is under attack from the aggressive west and he is just defending Russia against this. This is the mindset, this kind of siege mentality mindset, that you have in Moscow today. But this is nothing that new. It's been going on for at least 10 years. During the Orange Revolution—never mind the Euromaidan—in 2004, Russian so-called political consultants were active in Ukraine at the time doing many of the fake news types of things, fake nationalists supporting Yushchenko, as well. A lot of this has been going on. It's now come to a head in particular because of what happened in the U.S. elections last year. I think with the U.S. elections, the way I see it, the west woke up to Russia's antics and to Putin's antics last year, but it's taken a long time.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to go back to the question of Ukraine's arms exports. We know that President Poroshenko announced in 2015 that he wanted to make Ukraine one of the top five arms exporters in the world. In 2016 they achieved I think it was 11th position. Certainly, when you look at who they sell arms to, it's not always countries that would be high on the human rights list, like Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda. In fact, it appears that the largest amount of Ukrainian military goods are actually continuing to go to Russia through third party deals, despite the official boycott of sales to Russia.

I'm going to ask Ambassador Mason, with the largest experience in disarmament, again, about the question of end use. If the decision were made to sell lethal weapons to Ukraine, what guarantees do we have that these would not be exported or their substitutes exported to other countries around the world?

Ms. Peggy Mason: First, of course, I would note that the information that the majority of the goods are ending up in Russia really underscores the hard economic reality in the fact that there's an interrelationship that cannot be denied. In fact, that's what the Minsk agreement recognizes.

I also want to go back to the point about where the UN peacekeepers should be deployed. Of course, it's up to the parties to determine that in the negotiations over the mandate, but if the proposal that both sides have accepted is that the UN peacekeepers would be in support of the Minsk agreement, if the UN peacekeepers are in support of the Minsk agreement, then they have to be able to verify the Minsk agreement. Therefore, they have to be able to verify whether the ceasefire is holding. Therefore, they have to be able to monitor the line of separation. This is UN peacekeeping 101.

To come back to your question about the end-user certificate, that really ties back in with the question about governance and about how Canada can help in terms of strengthening the capacity of Ukraine because that would be required. It takes a pretty sophisticated system to ensure that there isn't leakage and that there isn't diversion. I don't think Ukraine is anywhere near there yet. That would be a capacity that would have to be built up over time and that we could help with.

● (1710)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Professor Luciuk and Professor Kuzio, what about this allegation that the main buyer of Ukrainian arms is still Russia, despite the official boycott?

Dr. Taras Kuzio: It's not true.

Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk: I don't think it is actually still true. There was a period when Ukraine was, yes, exporting arms to the Russian Federation because of the natural, long-lasting relationship that had been built up in the Soviet period and continued post-1991. I'm going to defer to Professor Kuzio on this because I know he has studied that subject more than I have, but my recollection is that it is no longer the case.

Dr. Taras Kuzio: There was never an export of arms from Ukraine to Russia. There was co-operation between different branches of military industrial complexes. Ukraine produced some parts; Russia produced other parts. That, together with a lot of other aspects of Russia-Ukraine trade, ended two years ago at least. The idea that Ukraine is somehow exporting military goods, first, it would be a new thing for them to do that—they never did—and that's certainly not happening. I could go back to the question of North Korea. I'm happy to send the committee documents to show that that was a completely biased and untruthful article in the *New York Times* that set this off, based on some research by a London-based think tank, and this was completely disproved. So, the North Korean angle....

With regard to the question of arms from Ukraine going to countries with bad human rights records, as Dr. Luciuk says, most western countries do that, including my own Great Britain.

The Chair: Given that I'll need a few minutes to prepare the room for an in camera portion of the meeting, I want to thank all of you for your testimony today.

This conversation is really important as we can sit here and talk about the truth and reality of what's happening in Ukraine. We will also debate about what are our best efforts going forward. There's some disagreement there, but we'll work through that. I'm sure we'll come together on some good recommendations to the Government of Canada.

Thank you very much for coming. We are very proud of our relationship with Ukraine, and we stand proudly with them as our allies.

I'll suspend now for the departure of our guests.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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