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• (1540)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Before I call on our witnesses—Mr. Jenkins and Mr. Rasiulis—you'll notice that we are going to stretch the one hour into a bit more, so we should be able to get three rounds of questions in at a very minimum.

You'll notice that we are not dealing with the health study we had agreed to. That is in part because we were not able to get the witnesses lined up, and it's all Bryan May's fault.

Some hon members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Thank you for putting that on the record.

The Chair: On Friday, we will have the health study. The following Tuesday, the minister will appear with officials for two hours. On May 5, Parliament is suspended for a day. We will then resume our health study.

We also have some invitations. I think I'll go through those later, after we release our witnesses. It is a fairly packed agenda until the end of Parliament in June.

With that, I want to welcome an old friend, Mr. Rasiulis, to the committee. He is quite familiar with the way we operate here. We look forward to his five-minute statement.

Before we call on him, we'll call on Mr. Jenkins, who is the senior adviser to the president of RAND Corporation, for an opening five-minute statement.

Welcome, sir. We appreciate you making yourself available over the course of the next hour or so. We look forward to what you have to say in the next five minutes.

Mr. Brian Jenkins (Senior Adviser to the President, RAND Corporation, As an Individual): Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you very much for inviting me to comment on the war in Ukraine.

As you may know, I am responding on short notice, so instead of a polished briefing, let me offer some brief informal remarks. These are based upon a series of essays I wrote for the RAND Corporation. Mr. Wilson, your clerk, has the links.

I want to emphasize that I am not an authority on Ukraine or Russia. My field of research for many years has been political violence, irregular warfare and psychological operations. I also want to

make clear that these are my personal views and not those of the RAND Corporation or, of course, of the U.S. government.

My essays attempted to go beyond the battlefield and explore the potential strategic geopolitical and economic consequences of the war. Of course, we don't know how the war will turn out. In my essays I outlined seven theoretical scenarios ranging from a Russian takeover of Ukraine to a Russian military collapse. I think the more likely scenarios fall in the murky middle and include *engrenage*, which is a good French term for which there isn't an English translation that has the same impact. It is simply a continuing carnage. We could see a stalemate or a frozen conflict, or we could see a range of favourable to unfavourable negotiated settlements. We could also potentially see a continuing gradual escalation, which has been the pattern thus far.

Whatever the scenario, however, the status quo ante bellum will not be restored. The post-Ukraine war landscape will be different.

Russia's reputation as a military power has been badly tarnished. Its problems include strategic miscalculations, incoherent execution and the poor quality of Russian soldiering. Even if it prevails on the battlefield, Russia has been weakened.

The war has also exacerbated Russia's demographic crisis. It was fascinating to see the results of a recent poll of global strategists and practitioners, conducted by the Atlantic Council. It showed that a surprising 46% of the 167 respondents expected Russia to become a failed state in the next 10 years.

On the other side, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has, for the time being, strengthened NATO. However, continued western support for Ukraine may depend on its continued military success.

NATO's southeastern flank is soft. Hungary is pursuing its own course. Romania is very cautious. Bulgaria remains politically divided. Turkey's response has been supportive, but at the same time ambivalent and transactional. Such stresses are not new to NATO. The alliance has survived these kinds of things in the past, but it is always difficult.

Looking at the postwar global economy, the war has slowed the economic recovery from the pandemic. The effect in Europe will be more significant. The reconstruction of Ukraine will require a massive investment, which is estimated at \$350 billion. The willingness to invest in that reconstruction, especially by the private sector, will depend of course on the situation that prevails.

I believe that Europe's reliance on Russian energy is over. Russia will find and is finding new markets for its gas and oil, but reduced gas sales to Europe will affect Russia's political influence and state capture, especially in eastern Europe. We are seeing somewhat of a recreation of a divided Cold War economy in the world, albeit much more complicated than it was 40 or 50 years ago. I also believe that deep globalization pressures will continue, and global defence spending seems likely to surge.

• (1545)

The world is again a more perilous place. Naked military aggression is not ancient history. More than 30 years after the end of the Cold War, we may find these dangers hard to grasp.

Let me stop there. I'm happy to respond to your questions later on.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jenkins.

Mr. Rasiulis, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis (Fellow, Canadian Global Affairs Institute, As an Individual): Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to provide an update on the current situation in the Russo-Ukraine war.

As of today, the war may be described as being in a strategic stalemate. The last Ukrainian offensive action was last fall when Ukrainian forces pushed back Russian forces in the areas of Kharkiv in the northern sector of the front and Kherson, specifically Kherson city, in the southern sector of the front.

Thereafter, the Russians stabilized their defensive lines, and Ukrainian forces went over to the defensive. In January, the Russians began a slow, grinding offensive drive across various sectors of the entire front line. The main focus of the Russian offensive has been to capture the city of Bakhmut.

The battle for Bakhmut in the central sector of the front, within the oblast of Donetsk, has been the centrepiece of the Russian offensive drive. While there have been debates within the Ukrainian leadership, as well as among the U.S. military advisers to Ukraine, as to whether it would have been more effective militarily for the Ukrainian forces to retreat from Bakhmut and establish stronger defensive positions in two towns further west, the final decision taken by the Ukrainian government was to hold on to a tenacious defence of the town.

To date, the Russians have managed to push into Bakhmut with pincer movements, surrounding the town from three sides, with the Ukrainians holding on to one road to the west, which they use for resupply and the evacuation of casualties and refugees. That road remains under Russian artillery fire. The Russians have also managed to push into the centre of the town and appear to occupy much of the town, with the Ukrainians doggedly defending the western sections. The battle continues to rage, with the latest reports saying that Russian forces are continuing to advance westward in small, incremental steps by seizing building by building and street block by street block. Casualties on both sides have been very high. It's very much a battle of attrition.

Beyond the front lines, the Russians have waged a war of aerial bombardment, largely targeting Ukraine's energy grid throughout the country. The Russians have used a variety of weapons, from cruise missiles to drones of various types. Ukrainian air defence systems have been quite successful in shooting down large proportions of the incoming Russian ordnance.

The Ukrainian political military objectives and aims in the war have been clearly stated as the expulsion of all Russian forces from occupied Ukraine, including Crimea—essentially the Ukrainian borders of 1991. On the matter of Crimea, commentary appears from time to time about the potential of a diplomatic settlement on Crimea rather than through the force of arms. However, in the main, the Ukrainian position is to use military force to expel Russian forces from Crimea.

The Russian political military objectives may be broken down into maximalist and minimalist. The Russian maximalist objective has been to force a regime change in Ukraine through military action. The intent has been to install a pro-Russian government in Kyiv that would align itself as a close partner of Russia and reject the objectives of moving closer to the west through accession to the European Union and NATO. The minimalist Russian objective is to fully occupy, by military force, the four oblasts in eastern Ukraine that were annexed by the Russian Federation's Duma, while continuing to hold on to Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014. The four oblasts are Kharkiv, Luhansk, Donetsk and Kherson. The current front runs through these four oblasts, and they are controlled by Ukraine and Russia to varying degrees.

Where may the war go from here? The expectation is for an imminent Ukrainian spring and summer counteroffensive. In fact, some are arguing that the offensive has actually started. The centrepiece for this offensive is the latest reinforcement of western arms, such as main battle tanks, infantry armoured fighting vehicles, air defence and artillery systems, and large stocks of ammunition.

• (1550)

Most assessments are that this Ukrainian offensive has the potential to punch a hole somewhere in the Russian defensive line and secure an operational level success. It is expected that the Russian defence will be strong enough to prevent a strategic level victory, meaning the expulsion of Russian forces from all of occupied Ukraine. It should be expected that the Russians will, in turn, conduct their own counteroffensive to offset the Ukrainian effort.

The resulting effect of the upcoming spring and summer fighting may continue to be a strategic stalemate into the fall. Whether there will be a change in Ukrainian and Russian political positions to move toward a ceasefire and eventual peace talks is impossible to assess at present. It remains very probable that the war will continue throughout 2023 without a ceasefire or political settlement.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to your questions.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rasiulis.

Mrs. Kramp-Neuman, you have six minutes.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Thank you.

I'd like to start with Mr. Jenkins.

There's no question that the world has changed dramatically over the last eight years. You noted in your comments that you expect global defence spending to surge.

There's been limited political will to change this sad state of affairs, so I wonder if you could comment on the military deficiencies, be they personnel or procurement, that are becoming a liability for our security partners.

Mr. Brian Jenkins: That's a good question.

The reason I expect to see an increase in defence spending—and I think we're already seeing it—is that, first of all, the overt Russian invasion has, to a degree, galvanized NATO and pushed a number of the countries closer to meeting their pledges to increase defence spending to address some of these deficiencies. That's number one.

Number two, it is clear from the nature of the war that the consumption rates of artillery, drones and other forms of weapons and ammunition have been intense and indeed beyond what was, I think, anticipated by many. We're going back to World War II levels of consumption. Stocks have been drawn down to meet that. We don't have the production capabilities to maintain it. Therefore, we are seeing some new production facilities come online. Depending on the war in Ukraine...that will use more weapons and ammunition, and stocks will be replenished.

Number three, I would point to the general perception now that the world is, again, a much more dangerous place. I think many nations are looking to perhaps bolster their defences.

Overall, I think this will combine to see an increase in weapons acquisitions. The nature of those acquisitions, in addition to replacement, will be learning from the battles about what types of weapons, drones, air defence systems and so on are valuable and essential to war in the 21st century.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Do you mind responding to whether you have seen the Pentagon Discord leaks?

Mr. Brian Jenkins: I beg your pardon.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Can you comment with regard to the leaks from the Pentagon?

Mr. Brian Jenkins: No. I've been fascinated reading about some of that in the press. The investigation into how this took place is ongoing. I have no detailed knowledge of that investigation.

I think there is a personal view on this. We have a lot of classified material, and perhaps a lot of connectivity, that may not be necessary. I'm still trying to figure out how, in fact, the particular individual who has been named in the press came to have access to such a broad array of material, but all of that will have to wait for the investigation.

I have no other comment.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you.

Mr. Rasiulis, there's no question that the war is much more complicated than anybody would have anticipated. However, over a

year ago, you outlined that the war in Ukraine was the most "immediate threat" facing Canada and the CAF, and you shared that Canada should be front and centre on both the defence side and the deterrence side.

Over a year later, how do you feel Canada has responded to this call to action?

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: I think Canada has done everything it is in a position to do. Everything is relative. The strength of the Canadian Forces is a relative balance with Canadian government budgets, so it doesn't get everything it needs or wants.

As we have traditionally done, we have put our forces in what I call the front window. We have used everything we have. I think we have been very good at that throughout our history.

Today we have the lead in Latvia. We have promised to plus up from a battalion group to a brigade group. We're still waiting for the results of that. I'm sure there's a lot of work going on. Whether or not Leopard tanks will join our troops in Latvia is another good question. I'm looking forward to the Canadian government announcing what it's going to do.

I think everything is relative, but I think the Canadian Forces do everything they can. We're in the front window.

• (1600)

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Can you possibly comment with regard to your foreshadowing of the danger of burnout in our armed forces? Do you feel that Canada has invested in the necessary resources to avoid this burnout? As it appears that the war is going to be long term, has Canada created the capabilities to maintain its stamina?

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: Burnout is an extremely serious matter. As you well know, we're 10,000 personnel short. There's a rule of thumb for deployments. In Latvia, for example, it's one-third deployed, one-third training and one-third resting.

We are not in a combat situation in Latvia, unlike in Afghanistan, where we were in a combat situation. There, the burnout was extremely serious. Latvia is not the same case. Our troops do not have the stress of combat; they have the stress of training, so it's one step removed from that.

Again, given the shortages of personnel, I believe the Canadian Forces and General Eyre have been very conservative about deploying our forces in addition to what we are already doing because he's concerned, I'm sure, about maintaining the credible standing of the forces we have in place.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman.

Mr. Fisher, go ahead for six minutes.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thanks to both of our witnesses for being here.

Mr. Rasiulis, it's nice to see you again. A lot has happened since the last time you were at our committee over a year ago.

I'm going to quote what you said at the time: "The neutrality option for Ukraine is on the table." Again, a lot has happened. A very violent year has passed. From this perspective, it's difficult to have imagined that Ukraine was ever truly neutral as it pertains to NATO versus Russia.

You talked about "diplomatically"... You talked about Ukrainians using military force to expel Russian forces. I'm interested in your thoughts on what a post-conflict Ukraine would look like diplomatically. I'm also interested in what challenges you think this poses.

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: [*Inaudible—Editor*] huge. Let me just—

Mr. Darren Fisher: It's a light one to start you off.

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: Yes, a light one.

Just for historical accuracy, let me say that Ukraine had a position of non-alignment—not exactly neutrality—from 1991 to 2014. It was balancing off between the Russians and the west, but as of 2014 it really shifted, joining NATO and the EU firmly into its constitution.

The question is—and this is why there's war, from the Russian point of view—how the war will end. We don't know. Let's take the general speculation that there will be some kind of stalemate or some kind of deal. That deal, whatever it is, will no doubt have to have some measure of security guarantees for Ukraine.

One option is they are brought into NATO. Another option is they receive equivalent security guarantees, not just like the Budapest thing, which is a political guarantee, but a hard-core security guarantee that's legal, and not by NATO but by certain NATO members individually. You would have a group of NATO countries that sign up as individual states to provide security guarantees to Ukraine. It takes away the bogeyman of NATO as a whole, but you have the strength of certain key partners like the United States and so on. That's another option in there.

A complete neutrality and a demilitarized Ukraine, which is the Russian objective, I think is not really a strong card right now for the Russians to play.

Mr. Darren Fisher: I want to switch gears a bit and then maybe give both of our witnesses a chance.

I asked this question last week. When we think about China and we think about Russia, we think about the strange relationship they may or may not have. I'm interested your thoughts about what China's interests and objectives are and what Beijing hopes to achieve in the near and the long term by what looks like and appears to be deepening ties with Russia, notwithstanding the fact that they claim they want an end to this.

Mr. Jenkins, you can start.

• (1605)

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Jenkins.

Mr. Brian Jenkins: Look, China is watching this, and certainly what happens in Ukraine will have some effect on Chinese decision-making. Right now, China is a beneficiary of the developments in Ukraine. It completely...not completely, but it distracts, and it's a drag on the ability of the United States to confront China directly, although the United States is doing so.

I don't see that China really wants to start a war over Taiwan. I know the Ukraine war and the Taiwan issue have been connected in the sense that if Russia takes over Ukraine, it is a green light for China to invade Taiwan. I think that's probably simplistic.

China is also benefiting from expanding its influence through soft power in Asia, in Africa and in Latin America. I think the war in Ukraine—again, having distracted the Europeans, the United States, Canada and everyone else—facilitates that process. I think China is a beneficiary of the now perhaps discounted energy supplies from Russia seeking a market.

In the relationship between China and Russia, I would say that clearly Russia right now is the needier junior partner in the relationship.

The Chair: You just have about 45 seconds left, Mr. Rasiulis.

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: I have no disagreement. China is seeing this as a.... It can position itself geopolitically vis-à-vis the United States. The United States and China are the primary antagonists. As our guest has said, Russia is the junior partner here.

The Chinese will not, in my opinion, allow the Russians to lose. They're not particularly interested in them winning, but they won't let the Russians lose. That's the key thing here.

The Chinese actually want the war to end. I think that overall it's disruptive for them economically speaking, so they would like to have a situation where Russia doesn't lose: no winners, no losers, a ceasefire, a demilitarized zone and economics return. Their economic interests will then be served by good, peaceful transactions economically with Europe.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fisher.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, the floor is yours for six minutes.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you to the two witnesses for being with us today.

First I have a general question for both witnesses. I will give you some context with the following quote, from Mr. Justin Massie:

The pressure is on Ukraine for the next counteroffensive. The west's support is falling short of Ukraine's demands. In spite of this, behind closed doors, the west is warning that Ukrainian failures could be followed by a ceasefire consolidating the territories conquered by Russia.

I would like to get your comments on the possibility of a ceasefire.

Given the current situation, is it valid to think that a ceasefire would be to Russia's advantage rather than Ukraine's?

Perhaps Mr. Rasiulis could answer first.

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: On the question of a ceasefire after the offensive that's coming in the summer, the question is, how successful will the Ukrainians be? The Ukrainians have been very skeptical about ceasefires. They see a ceasefire as a temporary recess for the Russians so the Russians can then get their act together and continue the war.

On the other hand, there may come a point in time—it may not be this fall, and it may be next year—where both sides, Ukrainians and Russians, are militarily unable to push each other any further. If you come to the point where further military action does not advance your political objectives, then the question is, why are you continuing to fight?

An example is 1953 in Korea and the Korean War. It ended finally when neither side could push the other and it was felt that a war of attrition had reached a level of exhaustion and therefore peace or a ceasefire. In Korea there's no peace. It's still a war, but it's a ceasefire.

On the question of the ceasefire role in the Russia-Ukraine war—it's not exactly the same situation—a ceasefire would come when it serves the interests of both the Russians and the Ukrainians. They both have to want it more than the war, and there are no guarantees that it would be a continual ceasefire.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Jenkins, do you have any comments on that?

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Jenkins: I agree with Mr. Rasiulis's remark that it depends on the outcome of these projected offensives and how they occur. Right now, I don't believe that either side would see a ceasefire as being in its interest.

I believe Russia is strongly committed. The propaganda it is projecting at home and abroad is that it has the resolve to continue this at whatever cost, for as long as necessary. Albeit at a huge cost in casualties, the Russians have made very modest gains. Right now, I don't see them being interested in backing off. I think the Russian government may be confident that it can crack the western alliance and ultimately, through fear and fatigue, persuade NATO members to begin to trim their support of Ukraine.

I don't think a ceasefire right now is in Ukraine's interest. I agree with my fellow panellist here that much will depend on this forthcoming offensive. A ceasefire, a stalemate or a frozen war that allows Russia to renew the conflict at any time is a disadvantage to Ukraine.

I go back to my previous comment that rebuilding Ukraine and getting the investments to make that happen are not likely to take place under the guns of the Russians and under the shadow of potential renewed wars. Therefore, absent some kind of firm security

guarantee, there is no advantage to Ukraine in a ceasefire, at least at this time.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: In the same vein, since a ceasefire is currently not in Ukraine's interest and since it's likely that the next offensive will be crucial, to what extent would you say that Ukraine is waiting on increased support from the west before launching a counterattack?

Are there other factors, like weather—snow was mentioned earlier—that would get in the way of a counteroffensive?

How crucial would increased support from the west be for Ukraine to mount a counterattack?

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: Western support has already been factored into this offensive in the sense that the Ukrainians have been waiting and receiving, and are now integrating, the tanks, the artillery and the ammunition.

The calculus is that this offensive has a reasonably good prospect, at least at the operational level, because of the western weaponry and the training that has gone into it. However, this will be expended. Then this question comes: After both forces have used up their energy at this level, what happens in the fall and what happens, as you said, as winter comes?

These are the calculus. That's four or five months from now, after a major battle. It's very difficult to guess what will happen, except that the calculus is always this: “What's my advantage to continuing the military action?” versus “What's my advantage in a ceasefire?” Both sides will do that.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Normandin.

You have six minutes, Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you both for appearing today.

Mr. Rasiulis, I think you said that Canada has done pretty much what it can, and it's done it well on the defensive side.

Can you talk about deterrence? Have we done everything we can on the deterrence side? Where do you see that we could do more?

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: NATO has the deterrence. The deterrence has come from article 5 applied to NATO territory. There was no NATO or Canadian deterrent put in to defend Ukraine. In fact, before the war started, President Biden said very clearly that NATO would not go to war and the United States would not go to war against Russia over Ukraine. Ukraine never had a deterrent. It always had to defend itself, with western support.

Deterrence is really linked to nuclear weapons. You have conventional defence and nuclear deterrence. NATO functions like that. It has the two.

All NATO territory has the benefit—like the Baltic states, so Poland and that area—that should Russia attack, the initial defence would be the conventional forces. However, NATO has the right at any point in time to use nuclear weapons to defend itself should the conventional defence fail. That's where the nuclear deterrent comes in.

• (1615)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Is that despite UN treaties?

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: Well, there's nothing in the NATO doctrine that is in violation of the UN treaties.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: That's true, but ultimately they've signed on to UN treaties on non-use.

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: The first use or no first use of nuclear weapons does not in and of itself violate, as far as I'm aware, anything in the UN charter. I mean, the Cold War... That policy has been in place since the early fifties.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: In terms of the international arms trade treaties we have signed, certainly the United States and Russia have backed away from those agreements.

Maybe you could talk about that. There have been long-term impacts of that, of course, but how do we find a way back to planning for more progress?

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: It's about arms control, and with arms control, yes, there is very little left of all of the agreements. I myself was part of the conventional arms control discussions in Vienna back in the 1990 period. That's all gone.

START has been suspended. START is for the strategic level nuclear forces. The Russians have not abrogated it, but they have suspended it, which means no inspections—none of that stuff. It's just barely hanging on. With the arms control comes confidence building. You go visit the other side, inspect and so on, and that builds confidence. That's all gone.

As our guest Mr. Jenkins said, we are in a perilous situation. This is one of the most difficult times since the bad days of the Cold War. I would argue that yes, we need to rebuild arms control and need to rebuild confidence and security-building measures, but we need to establish a peace first, or at least a ceasefire, and that's a way—

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: It's chicken and egg.

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: It's chicken and egg, but on the other hand, when you're physically at war, it's very difficult to construct confidence-building measures.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Some of the conversations we've had at this committee have been along the lines of taking everything away from Russia in terms of having conversations, ensuring they're no longer continuing on with conversations as part of the Arctic Council and that we're pushing them out.

Can you talk about that and the problems that may cause? Is there any way around that? What would you suggest?

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: Well, I'm one of those who believe in diplomacy and diplomatic linkages, because all wars end in some kind of negotiated settlement, or at least even a ceasefire.

There was no negotiated end to the Korean War, but there was a negotiated ceasefire to the Korean War. That all happens ultimately through diplomacy, and at the end of the day, the diplomatic lifeline needs to be maintained.

In the Cold War, there were times when we basically had one lifeline, through the mutual and balanced force reductions talks that were going on. That was the only time when diplomats were actually meeting and talking, but at least we kept that going.

It's very important to keep the dialogue going. In the 1973 October War, Kissinger, the Americans and the Soviets worked very hard to keep the Israelis, Syrians and Egyptians from setting off a nuclear weapon that Israel had. They always kept the dialogue going.

Anyway, I'm giving you a long answer to say that diplomacy and dialogue are critical, regardless of the fighting that goes on. Yitzhak Rabin once said that you don't make peace with your friends; you make peace with your unsavoury enemies. However, you need to talk to them to do that.

The Chair: You have about half a minute.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I want to talk about what could come out of the Vilnius conference and what you hope will come out of that moving forward.

• (1620)

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: Well, from what I'm aware of, for the Lithuanians, who are hosting it, the big thing is to get everybody to plus up to 2% GDP. That is the Lithuanian position.

I know they are pounding on the doors here in Ottawa to try to get Canada to plus up to 2%. They would even say that 2% is a floor not a ceiling. That's the Lithuanian agenda. They want to go hard on strengthening that. They also want to make sure that for the eastern flank, the plus-ups to go from a battalion group to a brigade group are actually in place.

As the Lithuanians drive it, that's where they're going. They really want to push the hard defensive positions.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

Mr. Kelly, you are next for five minutes in the second round.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Thanks.

Mr. Rasiulis, you talked about the strength of Canada's contribution. You praised the effort to date and characterized it as applying the maximum capability possible. However, the recent American leaks indicated that our allies, including the United States, are skeptical or concerned about Canada's ability to maintain NATO battle groups while aiding Ukraine.

How sustainable is the present deployment? How have failures to increase personnel numbers jeopardized our ability to maintain even the current commitments we have made or enable Canada to up its contribution to ensure that Ukraine ultimately prevails?

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: My understanding of the leaks you referred to is that they're saying Canada.... The concern of some allies is that we cannot take on another operational assignment other than what we have now. That's the issue, and yes, we can't. That's why we didn't go to Haiti, I assume.

The question is really about the battalion going to a brigade-level group in Latvia. That is the real question. We have not yet seen the Canadian government come forth with its plans. I understand that there is planning under way for that and discussions are under way for that, but that's the litmus test to come. I suspect or I'm guessing that maybe the Canadian government will announce it at Vilnius.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Then you think there is capacity there. It's not a—

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: My understanding is that we, the Canadian military, will work toward establishing, as a lead nation, a brigade group, but again, we are not the sole providers of forces for that brigade group. I'm sure that we are going around the NATO circles thinking there is another group of countries with us in Latvia and that they are plussing up as well. We're negotiating on how we all, together, get to the brigade.

Mr. Pat Kelly: I'll go back to something you said about China. You said that you thought China's goal is to ensure that Russia doesn't lose. What does Russia not losing even look like? The minimalist positions of both sides don't leave room for a compromise solution, or at least I don't see one.

Go ahead. I'll let you take that on.

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: Losing is going back to the 1991 borders of Ukraine, including the Russians losing Crimea and losing the Black Sea fleet in Sevastopol. That's something they've always had. Even in 1991, when Ukraine became independent, the Russians had a lease arrangement with Ukraine to keep the Black Sea fleet in Sevastopol. From the Russian point of view, that would be an existential defeat.

The Chinese, I believe, do not want that to happen, so it would be something short of that. Then you have other scenarios—a return to the February 24, 2022, line, for example, and the Minsk II lines and so on. Those are options that are being discussed.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Those would mean Ukraine losing, to the Ukrainian side.

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: Everyone loses. There are no winners and no losers, you can say.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Okay.

I have about a minute left, so maybe I'll go to Mr. Jenkins for productivity capability and the expenditure of basic artillery shells and ammunition. I'm not talking about smart or sophisticated guided ordnance but just plain artillery shells.

How can western countries, in particular Canada...? Perhaps you can comment on Canada's productive capability. What needs to be done to ensure that Ukraine just flat out doesn't run out of shells?

• (1625)

Mr. Brian Jenkins: If we're talking about artillery shells and not smart weapons...because smart weapons are more complicated. The pieces to them involve more than a single country, and manufacturing is very, very complicated. If we're talking about old-fashioned artillery shells, then this is a matter of manufacturing capability.

Years ago, decades ago, we had this capacity. It has understandably atrophied over the years without a Cold War push behind it. I think military services have been understandably.... I don't want to

say they've been mesmerized, but certainly they've been attracted to the more high-tech weapons. The idea of artillery tubes and old-fashioned 155 shells was not the most exciting thing. As it turns out, in this particular type of war they have proved to be critical.

I don't think it's a matter of any country's individual capacity. I think it is a matter of NATO planning and in a sense parsing out who can do what to bring up the overall level of production. Defence budgets for the production of weapons tend to be geared a great deal toward the national industry, and—

The Chair: Unfortunately, we'll have to leave Mr. Kelly's inquiries there. He's very cleverly turned five minutes into six and a half.

We have Ms. Lambropoulos for five minutes, please.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to begin by thanking both of our witnesses for being here to answer our questions today.

I don't mind who answers me first. They're general questions that I'd like answers from both of you on, if possible.

I'd like to know what your take is on the consequences of Ukraine losing this war. I know that in the beginning—and from the beginning—NATO stated that it would not go to war for Ukraine, as mentioned previously. Of course, NATO is trying to support in whatever way that it can with military equipment. What are the consequences, in your view, of Ukraine losing this war?

We've also heard a bit about the different opinions or the divergence that could occur between NATO allies. What are some of the ways that you believe we can stop that from happening? What are some ways that Canada, for example, could play a role in keeping countries together and on that right path?

Mr. Brian Jenkins: Let me start off with that.

First of all, if by “losing” you mean that Russia succeeds in regime change in Ukraine, I think that would have a major impact. Even though NATO leaders have said they're not going to go to war with Russia in Ukraine, a great deal of western credibility is on the line in how this turns out.

A true loss—a dramatic loss—would question the credibility of the alliance. The strength of the alliance has always been, of course, that it was intended initially to deter a massive Soviet invasion of western Europe. Alliances deter. When they actually get to war, it becomes a lot more complicated.

If there was a loss, we would see two things happening at the same time. We would see some fragmenting and some fracturing of the alliance. Some of the countries that I've already indicated are in the less enthusiastic, wavering category. They might find ways to, if not remove themselves from the alliance, in a sense slide into a kind of soft “self-Finlandization”, if I can say that, where they attempt to avoid provoking the wrath of Russia.

At the same time, I think for some countries—for example Poland or the Baltic republics—we would see a desperate redoubling of effort so that Russia would not be lured by perceptions of victory in Ukraine and a weak, supine NATO into pushing further and attempting to advance, whether it's into Moldova, the Baltic republics or somewhere else. That certainly has been the long-term objective that has been outlined by President Putin himself.

• (1630)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Before we get an answer from our other witness, could you comment on the next question and then we'll go back?

A lot of public opinion in some western countries is that there may be too much spending on this particular war. I guess the general public may not see a need to continue spending. Maybe they don't necessarily know what the implications or the consequences could be if it goes in one way and not another.

Do you believe that public opinion has any way of swaying the government, in the United States or on our side in Canada, to make a different decision or to change the way we're doing things?

The Chair: You have 20 seconds or less, please.

Mr. Brian Jenkins: I think the public opinion on the street initially has been pushing the government. The valiant defence put up by the Ukrainians has been inspiring to many and has perhaps persuaded some governments to go further than they had imagined they would at the outset. At the same time, if we look at elections coming up in this country and if we look at political developments in the European countries, 2024 will be very interesting in terms of how the divided sentiments you point to will play out in elections.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lambropoulos.

Colleagues, if we're going to get to a third round, which I think everyone wants because it will include all members, I'll have to run a harder clock.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, over to you for two and a half minutes.

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

My question is for Mr. Jenkins, but Mr. Rasiulis can also respond afterwards.

We keep discussing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, and Russia and Ukraine, but we sometimes seem to forget about certain other countries, like BRICS, including Brazil and India. In addition, we seem to skip over the countries that decided not to take sides, the “wait-and-see” countries. In fact, a good article was recently published entitled “In Defense of the Fence Sitters”.

Can you tell us about the countries watching from a distance that do not necessarily take a stand?

Should we be more concerned about them? Should we be keeping a closer eye on them? Should we make sure that we support Ukraine better so those countries do not pull their support or cross over to the wrong side?

We also keep talking about Africa, among other places where Russia has already sunk in its claws, so to speak.

I would like you to comment on the other countries—the ones that don't come up as often.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Jenkins: The idea of fence-sitters, especially in a developing world—in Africa, in Asia and in Latin America—is not a new one. Remember, going back to the years of the Cold War, we referred to these countries as third world countries, meaning “third world”, as opposed to being clearly in the Soviet camp or in the western camp. Those attitudes have not always fundamentally changed.

I think there has been an erosion of diplomatic efforts in many of these countries, that is, efforts by the United States and by the European countries. I don't want to include Canada, because I don't comment on Canada. There has been a neglect of diplomacy in these areas that both China and Russia have, in some circumstances, taken advantage of.

There still is a long hangover from the colonial era from the behaviour of some of the European countries, and especially from the behaviour of my own country, that is off-putting, if I can use that mild term, to many of the countries in these continents that you have identified. There, it is really about more serious diplomacy, and we're going to have to battle diplomatically, as well as support military efforts, to deter Russia from further aggression.

• (1635)

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Normandin.

Ms. Mathysen, you have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Mr. Jenkins, I want to build on some of the lines of questioning that Ms. Lambropoulos was discussing.

You've done a lot of writing about Russian disinformation campaigns in the United States. I would like to hear about whether you see any impact of that in the United States. How can it impact support for Ukraine? What have you seen? Just expand upon what I think you were trying to talk about before.

Mr. Brian Jenkins: Look, Russia can win in Ukraine in one of two ways. Either it can win on the ground militarily or it can win by cracking the resolve of the western nations that are supporting Ukraine.

It has devoted a great deal of effort and attention, especially given the lack of progress on the ground militarily, to its continuing information warfare and influence operations. These include both overt efforts at propaganda and taking advantage of pre-existing divisions, especially in the United States, where Russian information operations take both sides of any kind of debate and attempt to drive them further apart and intensify that debate.

That's not traditional propaganda, but it's enabled by the kinds of communications technologies we have. We see that going on, and, again, as a consequence of our existing partisan divide in this country, exacerbated by Russian exploitation of that, we really have major divisions on this issue. As I said, we will see in the coming elections how this plays out.

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

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

First of all, Mr. Rasiulis, does the west have a clear strategy or even a plan to end the war in Ukraine?

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: The answer is no. The west's position is that Ukraine will drive it.

Does Ukraine have a plan? Yes. The Ukrainian plan is to expel all Russian forces from all of occupied Ukraine, including Crimea. That is the Ukrainian plan, and the west backs it.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Jenkins, how far do you think Putin is willing to go to maintain his foothold in Ukraine?

Mr. Brian Jenkins: An old intelligence hand once told me that when your analysis is reduced to the remote psychoanalysis of what someone will do, you're in trouble. I can't claim to know what's inside of Putin's head on this issue, but certainly he is attempting to signal resolve.

I think his brandishing of the nuclear issue is a useful way for him to create fear and alarm—essentially, a strategy of terror in the west. He's suggesting that if faced with a loss he'll use nuclear weapons. It distracts from Russia's military shortcomings in the field. It gives humanitarian cover to those who say the war must be halted. It may discourage the west from providing certain kinds of weapons that would allow Ukraine to escalate the war. It allows Russian hawks to indulge in all sorts of bellicose fantasies.

I'm not sure the actual use of nuclear weapons would bring a significant military advantage, although Russia could destroy Ukrainian cities. It's not just propaganda, though. Putin does not have to convince his adversaries that he will use nuclear weapons. He simply has to create enough uncertainty that they don't want to run the test to find out.

I think that's what we're seeing here. We're seeing a shaping of perceptions, which are as important as battlefield progress in contemporary warfare.

• (1640)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: You don't think, then, that Putin sees this conflict as an existential threat to the existence of Russia.

Do you see any changes in the way that Putin is adapting? Also, is he adapting quickly enough to the way Ukraine is conducting its defence?

Mr. Brian Jenkins: Certainly, the units in the field, even if they were thrown in as poorly trained soldiers and disorganized... There's a very cruel learning process in war. Even inexperienced soldiers become savvy veterans after a certain amount of fighting if they survive. Otherwise, they don't survive.

Yes, I think we are seeing some operational improvements from what we saw in the initial days of the war. Russia has organized itself to provide more weapons and more personnel, and throw them into the war.

I think again back to information warfare. There has been an interesting change in the nature of internal Russian propaganda, which is basically informing the Russian people that this is an existential struggle for which they have to be prepared to make long-term sacrifices. That's the message.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Rasiulis, what do you make of the PRC's envoy to France and his comments over the weekend claiming that former Soviet states aren't sovereign nations? Was he just speaking out of line, or are they giving us mixed messages from Beijing?

The Chair: Answer in 20 seconds, please.

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: I think he was speaking out of line, because the Chinese government has basically said it was a personal view. He was postulating things, saying there was no international treaty that validated the independence of the post-Soviet states. I don't think that really has any credibility.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Gallant.

He said a lot of dumb things when he was here too.

Mr. May, you have five minutes.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I've talked about this a bit in previous meetings, but I want to take us back to before the conflict began and to some of the theories of what was going to happen—whether or not it was going to happen at all and whether it was going to be a very quick redrawing of the map or a complete takeover of Ukraine all the way up to the Polish border. Obviously, none of that has happened.

We also were told in those early days that it had to be that way, because the Russians could not sustain a longer offensive. They couldn't afford it. They didn't have the finances to do it.

A lot has been said about this and how wrong the establishment got this conflict.

I'll start with you, Mr. Rasiulis. What lessons can we draw from this conflict so far? In terms of the future of warfare, what types of capabilities should Canada and its allies be looking to develop and acquire?

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: Those are two fundamental questions.

On the point of the war not going the way people on either side thought it was going to go, wars generally tend to do that. World War I started in 1914 with one concept and ended in 1918 with a completely different concept.

Yes, this war was going to be a short, snappy one. The Ukrainians and the Russians were still meeting in March 2022 to discuss the Minsk II variation of a settlement—well into the war, a few months in. We don't know where this is going to end up now, but it's certainly nowhere near what anyone thought. Intelligence had it wrong on both sides, as it often does.

On the lessons learned, we're learning that modern warfare is, in some ways, taking lessons from the last year of World War I, when there was a strategic stalemate and what are called storm troopers. I don't mean the Nazi thing. I mean the small units. Canadians were very innovative, as were the Germans, in having small units that would try to break through the stalemate and advance on each other. What the war is showing us is that with modern technology, if you move, you're seen and you're killed. Therefore, you have to figure out ways to advance your position without being seen and killed, and that means small unit attacks.

That's why when people say Ukrainians may be starting this offensive, they may be but we don't know about it, because there's not going to be a big wave over the top, like there was in the early part of World War I.

• (1645)

Mr. Bryan May: Mr. Jenkins, do you have any thoughts on the preconceived notions that we had prior versus where we are now?

Mr. Brian Jenkins: I think we regularly get things wrong in net assessments of the strength of the two sides. We can count troops, look at weapons systems, look at economies and come to conclusions. Those are things that we can count. We tend to miss what we can't count.

The will to fight has made the difference. The Ukrainians put up an extraordinary and, to be sure, unexpected defence on both sides. That defence in turn inspired international support, which it would not have done had Ukrainians been quickly defeated. Despite all of the modern technology weapons, it does come down to the will to fight and perceptions.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you.

I'm not sure I have enough time for a proper question. I'll just say thank you to both of you for being here today.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. May.

[*Translation*]

The next speaker has the floor for two and a half minutes.

[*English*]

I'm sorry; that completed that round.

Mr. Bezan, you have five minutes.

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

I want to thank both of our witnesses for being here.

We're having this conversation about all wars ending at the negotiating table. I know from my conversations with Ukrainian officials that they fully appreciate that fact.

As Mr. Jenkins just said, the will to fight, the valour and the dogged determination of the people of Ukraine have to be brought into the equation here, as does their right to self-determination. Essentially, President Zelenskyy has turned into a modern-day Winston Churchill in how he's conducted himself and inspired not just Ukrainians but the free world.

Ukrainians, rightly so, are mistrusting of the peace process. Minsk I and Minsk II were disasters and ultimately ended up in the war we have today, so there's no trust. Maybe we're still not at a place, at the negotiation tables, of trying to find a peaceful resolution.

We know that Ukrainians are going to keep on fighting. We know that the weapons systems they have are, surprisingly, matching what Russia has brought to bear. Maybe what's more surprising is what Russia hasn't been able to accomplish with what's supposed to be one of the greatest militaries in the world.

My question is about the resiliency of the alliance and the support of our citizens, as alluded to earlier. We are seeing an erosion of the willingness of Canadians, Americans and some of our European allies to continue standing with Ukraine. A lot of that has to do with the success of Russian information operations and their dissemination of disinformation, misinformation and outright lies.

How do we counter that to ensure that Canadians—taxpayers—and our military, as well as our allies, like the the United States, aren't being distracted by fake news?

• (1650)

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: I'll go first.

The challenge is that it's essentially a war of attrition, but there are various dynamics. We have to see where the Ukrainian offensive will go now and how dynamic it will be. That dynamism will, in fact, affect public opinion in and of itself.

Political leaderships in the west are fully on board with Ukraine. The issue, as you correctly pointed out, is the population. There are various polls in various countries that suggest it's not a uniform thing. Certainly political leadership is uniform, but the people are not necessarily so. I don't want to make specific points on countries, but generally, as you move further west away from the Russian and Ukrainian borders, support among the populations tends to soften a bit in certain areas.

I think the United States—I put the finger on Mr. Jenkins on this one, and he can pick it up—is the biggest backer of Ukraine, but the willingness politically of the American people and Congress to support the president, whether it's this president or the next president, to sustain this effort in what will still be some kind of attritional warfare is right now uncertain. I think we're in a very interesting situation. The support is there now, but we know that elements of the Republican Party are not supportive.

We can leave it at that for now. I don't know where it's going to go.

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

Mr. James Bezan: I want to ask this question, especially with Mr. Rasiulis's experience dealing with arms control and nuclear weapons: With Russia now moving warheads into Belarus, how do you see that playing out, especially with Putin continually rattling the nuclear sabre as a deterrence measure?

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: I'll be very quick.

This is a key component, and Mr. Jenkins has mentioned that. It is part of Russia's other side. There is the conventional war going on, but there's the nuclear deterrent aspect and the nuclear threat aspect.

Putting nuclear forces in Belarus is very consistent with the escalatory rhetoric that Russia is now doing. They are actually putting forces into Belarus to back up their rhetoric. There is tactical and then there is strategic nuclear—the thermonuclear stuff—and I'll just leave you with these comments. Medvedev, the chief of the Russian Security Council, has stated very clearly in the last month that Crimea is existential and Russia will use “all...weapons”—that's not just the tactical stuff; that means thermonuclear—to defend Russia. He doesn't want to use this stuff, but he wants to threaten so as to dissuade and deter Ukrainians, with the American pressure on the Ukrainians, from attacking Crimea.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bezan.

Mr. Sousa, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you both for your presentations. You really paint a bleak picture. There's a prolonged war, and there are going to be constant tensions regardless of peace or ceasefire. There will be constant tensions as we go forward.

There is a geopolitical alliance that Russia has, possibly, with China and other regions. Of course, NATO has its risks. We've just heard from a number of others about the concern we have with public opinion in the United States, especially if it starts to soften. What will that do?

Is there any chance of a carnation revolution in Russia? I can't fathom how they can continue, or how the military can conceive of using nuclear weapons against their neighbours in a situation where, regardless of the propaganda, they have to know there is something unfathomable about doing this continuously.

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: You have asked two questions. One is about the Russian internal situation, and then there's the nuclear thing.

Let me put the nuclear thing in one way. I don't believe they would be considering limited nuclear war. I think most deterrence strategists believe that there is no such thing as limited nuclear war. If you're going to threaten, you're going to threaten thermonuclear.

The best historical example I can give you of that is John Kennedy in the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. He didn't expect to use the things, but he went to Defcon 3, which is a level of alert next to nuclear war, to make the point to the Soviets and to Khrushchev that he was serious. Basically, he got what he wanted with that threat. The internal situation in Russia, though, is that Putin continues to maintain control. He maintains a very stable situation.

He has issues. He has the ultra-nationalists. They are giving him more problems than the so-called liberal democrats—guys like Navalny, who's in prison, or Kara-Murza, who's just been sentenced to 25 years in prison. In the Russian system, these people are politi-

cal outliers. The mainstream people are the technocrats who help Putin run the government. Basically, they don't have an alternative other than to keep going.

The ultra-nationalists are pushing Putin to do more, not less. Putin's problem is that he's actually fending off people who say that he should be fully mobilizing, that he should be trying to take out the government in Kyiv and that he has to go west. That's what Putin is trying to manage all the time.

• (1655)

Mr. Charles Sousa: Mr. Jenkins, would you agree that a counteroffensive should be an offensive by the west and we should really build it up?

Mr. Brian Jenkins: Look, I certainly agree with my partner's comments on his analysis.

First of all, we don't have a good understanding of what the level of opposition is to Putin in either his immediate circle or the public at large. Putin is in control. We don't have evidence of any popular uprising against him. I think a change of regime to a more democratic regime is probably a long shot. If anything, we could see a change to an even more bellicose leadership in Russia.

We are in a very perilous time. This does not end with Ukraine. With whatever happens in Ukraine, we are back, I think, in a long-term global contest that can easily move in an existential direction. It is extremely difficult for current generations, especially given the current media, Internet and social media, to grasp what that means, but we are facing a long-term struggle and we have to be prepared for that.

The details of this offensive by the Russians or by the Ukrainians in Ukraine are, to me, interesting details, but this doesn't end in Ukraine either way.

The Chair: You have less than 15 seconds, but I think that's it for you Mr. Sousa.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Come on. I have 15 seconds.

The Chair: Yes, I know. I owe you. You have to be of a certain age to know what Mr. Jenkins is talking about and I think I qualify.

Madame Normandin, you have two and a half minutes, please.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

My next question is directed at both witnesses, but I'll start with you, Mr. Rasiulis.

We often hear about the Russian army's weaknesses, but not so much about those of the Ukrainian army. Thanks to the leaked Pentagon documents, we did learn that munitions supply was one of its main weaknesses. Are there any others we should be worried about, particularly in the long term, so that we're able to fix them right away if we can?

[English]

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: The principle weakness of the Ukrainian forces is people power. The west can supply the ammunition, and yes, there's a shortage, but at the end day you can bring things in. The Russians have supply problems too, but they can manufacture it and they are bringing it in.

The people issue is a factor that the west is not going to supply because we, the west, are not going to go to war in Ukraine. That means the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian people have to do the fighting. There are only so many Ukrainian men and women who are prepared to go and able to go compared to the Russians.

The question is, are there more Russians than there are Ukrainians who can actually go to war and do the fighting? Right now, the situation suggests that the Russians are able to sustain themselves. They have not yet fully mobilized. They've done limited mobilizations. They could do more. Putin is trying to avoid that right now. He's balancing, but he has the potential. Ukraine has no more potential to increase. It is doing everything it can.

• (1700)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

Mr. Jenkins, do you have anything to add?

[English]

Mr. Brian Jenkins: I certainly agree with that. The issue here is a matter of human resources and, again, the will to fight.

We're making a lot of references to World War I in this conversation, which is fascinating. Going back to World War I, Russian forces were advancing successfully in 1917 in a great Kerensky offensive, and then the military simply collapsed. I would not rule that out. That's not a optimistic forecast. I'm simply saying that we have to consider the possibility that the Russian forces in the field, at a certain part, suffering certain levels of casualties, could collapse.

On the Ukrainian side, I agree that they don't have the human resources that Russia has, but the determination really suggests that they will continue. In fact, I would hazard a guess that, even if there was a regime change in Kyiv—a Russian takeover—we would still see a continuing armed resistance movement in Ukraine.

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're going to have to leave it there. I don't think we'll have to charge extra for the history lesson on World War I, World War II, the Cold War and the Korean War. I think we've pretty well covered everything so far in the last hour and a half.

Ms. Mathysen, you have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: To just build off that conversation, I'll ask Mr. Rasiulis to weigh in on what was just said by Mr. Jenkins. In the last panel we had this last week, we were asking about Russia's biggest weakness, and a witness said that it's training and morale. That feeds entirely off what Mr. Jenkins was saying.

Mr. Rasiulis, do you want to add to that?

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: Yes. He was referring to the Brusilov offensive, which I fully understand. That's because things were really

bad in Russia back home. The Russian army was not being properly supplied and they collapsed, and the Russian Revolution was starting.

We're not at the point yet where there is a Russian revolution starting. The Russian military, while not having 100% supplies, is still being supplied, so it's not the way it was in 1916 and 1917. Could it become that? It could. We just don't know. However, right now—

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: What about sanctions?

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: Again, the sanctions haven't done everything they were supposed to do because the Russians have done workarounds. I'm not an economics specialist, but I will say from my understanding of history that the only time sanctions have actually worked and you get the political effect was in South Africa, where the apartheid sanctions took place. Apartheid ended because of sanctions.

The Americans have had sanctions on Cuba since 1959 and they keep going. For Iran, North Korea, you name it, sanctions do not usually effect the political outcomes the people putting on the sanctions want.

The Russians have done workarounds. They are able to have their internal economy.... They have actually strengthened their internal economy. The Russian ammunition factories are working around the clock. There's a Russian tank factory in Siberia taking old T-62s and remodelling them constantly. They're running around the clock, and they're putting them into the front line.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I guess they're the ultimate benefactors of the war.

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: Yes, the merchants of death and all that sort of thing.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

Colleagues, we are in the third round and we're at the last two questioners. Mr. Bezan, you have the final five minutes for the Conservatives, and Ms. O'Connell, you have the final five minutes for the Liberals.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We talked about the comments made by the Chinese ambassador to France. We had recent comments made by the South African ambassador to Canada, who criticized us for not being the soft power that he envisions us to be and for being too closely aligned with Ukraine.

I'm just wondering if those are appropriate comments to be made by so-called diplomats—to be more engaged in bilateral relationships with the countries they're stationed in. Is this part of a greater strategy to undermine western support and to question the resiliency of the alliance, particularly here in Canada? Essentially, I think some people have described it as “wolf” diplomacy.

• (1705)

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: I think we've spoken about the Chinese factor, and we know that's not the Chinese position. However, South Africa is an interesting one, and Mr. Jenkins has alluded to the colonial histories and so on. We just spoke about apartheid. The Soviet Union in the Cold War was very much supportive of the anti-apartheid movement, and they are the ruling party so they remember that.

What we get from South Africa, and we've had this for months now.... The Chinese navy, the Russian navy and the South African navy have been exercising. In fact, they were doing it around the anniversary of the war in February.

Mr. James Bezan: They're doing it right now.

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: They're still doing it right now.

The point is that South Africans have a historical legacy, and they're speaking to that. That's where they're coming from.

Mr. James Bezan: The Chinese ambassador made the comment that the former Soviet states don't have any way to be recognized internationally. Can the same argument then be made about Russia, especially given their never accepting the UN charter and never passing a single resolution in the Duma to recognize the UN charter or provide them the ascension to the UN Security Council? It perturbed me greatly to see, just a couple of days ago, Sergei Lavrov chair the UN Security Council meeting.

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: The point is that international states become legitimate when they have international recognition. That's really not even 100% based on the United Nations.

When the Soviet Union came apart, it was individual countries.... For example, Canada was one of the first to recognize a number of the countries involved, such as Ukraine and so on. It's about the actual states' recognition.

The United Nations is an umbrella organization, but it is not a world government. It's the actions of individual states that count. Individual states have recognized certain countries, and that's what counts.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Jenkins, you recently wrote, "The longer the war drags on, the more risks Putin might be willing to take." The question I have for you is this: When we talk about resiliency in Canada and the U.S. and among our citizens, how much longer are the people of Russia prepared to sacrifice their young men and women in this war?

Mr. Brian Jenkins: I would love to be able to answer that. We have no way of providing an answer to that.

I certainly agree with my partner here that we have no evidence of a significantly strong anti-Putin movement in Russia—

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Jenkins, we did see a lot of Russian men flee the country to escape conscription. Is that starting to play out among the populace, as they do not want to be sending their sons, daughters, husbands and wives to the front?

Mr. Brian Jenkins: I think that was significant. In fact, given that those individuals are probably the best educated, well trained and, therefore, most likely to find employment in other countries,

that represented a significant loss. At the same time, it probably reduced some of the sources of internal pressure on Russia.

A lot of the recruits for the Russian forces are coming from distant provinces, different towns. They're not sending the sons of the elite middle classes in St. Petersburg and Moscow into this war yet. That would change things, possibly.

One aside I want to make here very quickly is that we're talking about human resources and trained human resources. Finding a way to usefully employ and exploit that exodus from Russia is something we should be paying very close attention to. These are people who have made personal decisions to avoid the draft. They have pulled up their roots and left the country. That is a potential resource. I'm not talking about giving them rifles and sending them into the front in Ukraine, but that is a significant resource that could be useful to the west.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jenkins and Mr. Bezan.

Ms. O'Connell, you have the final five minutes.

• (1710)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you both for being here today. It's been very interesting to hear your perspectives. Certainly, tying it back to the past and sometimes not reinventing the wheel, we can see what's playing out.

One of my questions alludes to what was already said, but it's for both of you if you'd like to chime in.

With regard to the misinformation piece, I find it very interesting that especially in the U.S. you see Republican right-wing commentators now talking about their support for Putin. Never did I think I'd see the day when members of the Republican Party would support Putin outright and share very clearly Kremlin-type lines or Russian media lines.

I have two points or questions. With regard to misinformation in the west, we probably even see it on all of our social media. If you ever post in support of Ukraine, all of a sudden you get all of these anti-Ukraine messages. How critical is misinformation in the west in terms of the overall public support for us as Canadians to continue to support Ukraine?

As to the second point of this question, in the U.S. political sphere, how solid are the institutions? If there were a change in leadership, do we risk the U.S.'s support of Ukraine not being as strong? Let's be honest. The U.S. contribution to supporting Ukraine is significant, like Canada's, but that would be crucial.

I know that was a long preamble, but could you speak to any sort of change or concerns with regard to the U.S. political situation right now?

Mr. Brian Jenkins: Since you mentioned the U.S. so many times, let me go first very quickly.

First, I am ferociously non-partisan, but that doesn't mean I'm not aware of the political situation. The partisan divide in the United States has been growing deeper over the years and is so deep now that in fact it has projected deep into the realm of the national security and foreign policy of the United States. That accounts for a certain amount of the criticism of U.S. support for Ukraine. It's because of who is in the White House right now and because of the attitudes of the previous occupant of the White House.

In addition to that, there's a further layer, in that Russia portrays itself as being a defender of certain values against certain liberal decadence in its propaganda of transsexual predators and things of this sort. That resonates with an extremist portion of our population, so we're talking about a values issue as well. That's in addition to the very traditional people who are determined to promote peace and who approach it from the other side of the spectrum.

I honestly watch this carefully. I don't know how this is going to play out in 2024, but I would say that it is certainly going to be part of the political discussion in this country going forward.

Mr. Andrew Rasiulis: Speaking not on the U.S. thing but in general and to your question about misinformation, the antidote to misinformation is education. If people are not being educated—and there has to be self-education in this as well—there will always be people who get duped.

If you watch the information spaces—the experts do—you can start to pick up pretty quickly what is generated misinformation versus the valid information, and you can make your own.... However, you have to be an educated person to actually watch the stuff, and you can see after a while what's fabrication. It has an artificiality to it and, of course, it's inconsistent over time if you watch for that.

Education is really the antidote, and I think there's a universal acceptance by people that that's how you have to deal with it. There's been a lot of that in the Baltic states and in Finland. They have worked hard to do that by educating the population. There is no magic answer other than education.

• (1715)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Unfortunately, we'll have to bring our time to an end.

On behalf of the committee, I want to thank both of you for extending your time and for being very informative and very thoughtful.

Some of us on the committee have just returned from Taiwan. Probably one of the most impressive sessions we had was on how the Taiwanese deal with misinformation and disinformation. Their standard is to have a response within two hours. Their regular practice is to have it within an hour. We could learn a lot from the way the Taiwanese deal with misinformation and disinformation. We're not nearly as coherent as they are.

With that, thank you for your presence here. It's been very helpful.

Colleagues, before I bring the gavel down, I want to make note that the Latvian Minister of Defence will be here on May 9 and 10. Unfortunately, she's not available during committee times. She is available on May 9, from 8 to 12, or on Wednesday, May 10, from 12 to 5:30. If you could indicate to the clerk your preference—

An hon. member: I'm sorry. Could you say that again? Who's not available?

The Chair: The Latvian Minister of Defence can't meet during committee time. She is available Tuesday, May 9, from 8 to 12, or Wednesday, May 10, from 12 to 5:30. Just give an indication to the clerk of what you'd like.

You know about the April 28 meeting on health and transition. On May 2, it's the minister. May 5 is cancelled. On May 9, 12 and 16, it's the health and transition study. May 19 is cancelled. On June 1, it's the French embassy, and presumably we're going to get invitations for June 1. The Polish deputy minister of defence is coming on May 8. We're awaiting confirmation of the room and services.

Go ahead, Mrs. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Would the clerk please put that down on a calendar for dispersal among all the members?

The Chair: Yes, absolutely.

With that, the meeting is adjourned. Thank you.

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