

THE MAGAZINE OF THE MACDONALD-LAURIER INSTITUTE

# INSIDE POLICY

DECEMBER 2023

2023 Policy-maker of the year

## STEVEN GUILBEAULT

Ruthless, reckless and damaging

### Also INSIDE:

Saving mines  
in Indigenous  
communities

Undersea  
infrastructure  
security

Canada-Japan  
partnership

Hope for  
Russia  
after Putin





# INSIDE POLICY

THE MAGAZINE OF THE MACDONALD-LAURIER INSTITUTE

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# From the editors

In 2023 Canada's Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Steven Guilbeault, introduced four sector-destroying, economy-killing, counterproductive climate policies. He pushed through his agenda with ruthless efficiency. According to **Heather Exner-Pirot**, MLI's director of energy, natural resources, and environment, "No one else in Canada has been as influential, and... no one else has done so much damage." That is why Steven Guilbeault is MLI's Policy-maker of the year for 2023.

In this issue you'll also find **Ken Coates** and **David Silas** explaining that the now shuttered Minto Mine once brought prosperity and hope to the Selkirk First Nation. The closing of the mine is a stark example of the challenges Indigenous communities face in trying to establish economic and social stability.

In addition, **Josef Filipowicz** and **Steve Lafleur** explain how, even with the severity of the housing crisis across the nation, the federal government has done the bare minimum to improve inter-governmental coordination on housing.

**Chris Sankey**, pleads with Canadians to stop comparing Palestinians to Indigenous Canadians. Chris argues that Canadians should not project our politics onto a conflict half a world away. **Aaron Wudrick** and **Kaveh Shahrooz** jump into the discussion to explain the shifting sides in the battle for free speech in the aftermath of the October 7 attacks.

**Alexander Dalziel** and **Henri Vanhannen** explain that several recent events in the Baltic highlight threats to subsea critical infrastructure. Are broken undersea links evidence of 'grey zone' activities from hostile foreign actors? And in a further contemplation of shifting geopolitical realities, **Alexander Lanoszka** asks whether there has been a *Zeitenwende* (a 'changing of the times') in NATO. **Marcus Kolga** also jumps in to explain that a large segment of Russia's population has persistently voiced a desire for a democratic future and that Canada and our allies could help achieve their dreams.

In this edition you'll also find **Jeff Kucharski** examining the ways in which complementary strengths make Canada and Japan poised for a powerful economic partnership, particularly in the energy and critical minerals sector.

Merry Christmas and happy holidays from all of us at MLI!

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# Shuttered Yukon mine is a canary for resource-dependent communities

*To the Selkirk First Nation, the Minto Mine brought prosperity and hope.*

**Ken Coates and David Silas**

As accountants scramble to find new owners for the Minto Mine in central Yukon, which abruptly shut down last spring, the closure continues to cost the territorial government millions of dollars for water treatment and environmental protection.

It is also a stark example of the challenges Indigenous communities face in trying to establish economic and social stability.

For generations, Indigenous peoples have long fought for a place in Canada's resource economy. Having been largely denied the

economic benefits of mining on their land, yet saddled with the social and environmental consequences, they wanted fairness from the extractive sector. They won battles, but no guarantees of economic security.

Finding stability in an industry shackled to global market volatility is challenging. When a mine opens, the only certainty is that someday it will close.

In the Northwest Territories, Indigenous communities have been working for years to offset the planned closure of diamond mines. In Saskatchewan, the cyclical closings and reopenings of uranium mines

have disruptive impacts on First Nations and Metis communities.

When communities engage with mining companies – and many First Nations, Inuit and Metis communities do – they seek training, long-term jobs and financial returns for their communities. This can create thousands of jobs and support hundreds of businesses. But then, often with little warning, the mines close.

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Above: Selkirk First Nations chief and council touring Minto Mine.

(Selkirk First Nation via Minto Mine Socio-Economic Monitoring Program Annual Report 2015)



In Yukon Territory, the Selkirk First Nation, whose lands lie close to the mineral rich Tintina Trench and Yukon River valley, has long played modest roles in their region's small mining operations. In the 1970s a copper and gold deposit – the future Minto Mine – was identified near their main community of Pelly Crossing (population 316, about 40 per cent of the entire Selkirk First Nation). Thus began years of episodic surveying, exploration and early-stage development.

immediately left the site as the Selkirk First Nation and the Yukon government moved to understand the consequences of the closure and prepare for the new reality. The mine was thrust into the hands of the territorial government, as was responsibility for downstream environmental impacts and remediation. Local residents lost jobs, businesses lost a major income stream.

Lawyers, however, were busy. The Yukon government and Selkirk First Nation fought for, and secured, more than \$1.75 million

resource development. By being such a game-changing benefit to the Selkirk First Nation, the Minto story exposed the comparatively limited levels of engagement happening on Indigenous lands across Canada.

In a resource community, it is difficult to navigate the painful – but inevitable – closure of the mine, however the Selkirks are a resilient people. They have survived epidemic diseases, the Klondike Gold Rush, the post-war mining boom, and a lifetime of government paternalism. They will adapt again.



*Nationally, the Minto closure scarcely registered on public awareness. It lacks the scale of the oilsands, massive infrastructure projects, or Ontario's Ring of Fire.*

In 1993 the Selkirks signed the Yukon Umbrella Agreement, which included a self-government agreement with the Government of Canada. The Minto deposit is within their lands; the Indigenous government controls both surface and sub-surface rights.

The mine became operational in 2007, and for 15 years the operation provided substantial returns to the Selkirks. Training programs, supported by the company and by federal and territorial governments, prepared Selkirk citizens for jobs in mining, and local businesses engaged extensively with the company. Spinoff benefits included a piped water system and water treatment plan built by the mining company, while local youths received a royalty payment of \$21,000 when they turned 18.

While not massive like Voisey's Bay mine in Labrador or Baffinland in Nunavut, the operation brought major revenues to the First Nation. The community was eager for stability and growth, and the Minto mine provided both.

Until it stopped.

Last May, the Minto Mine abruptly declared bankruptcy. Stunned workers

in outstanding royalty payments, which was transferred to the First Nation. Those royalties, which had financed expanded cultural programming, local infrastructure and improved community governance, will be sorely missed in the coming years.

The future remains uncertain. With sufficient market demand a new owner could restore a profitable operation, but it is also possible the mine will close permanently. Mineral exploration continues, and another viable deposit could be found. If so, based on the slow development of Minto, the Selkirk First Nations could wait 20 years before a mine is functioning again.

Nationally, the Minto closure scarcely registered on public awareness. It lacks the scale of the oilsands, massive infrastructure projects, or Ontario's Ring of Fire. But to the Selkirk First Nation, the Minto Mine brought prosperity and hope. As future opportunities emerge, this experience has shown how royalties and other natural resource income helped a First Nation build their community and improve peoples' lives.

The closure also illustrates the benefits and risks of Indigenous collaboration with

Indigenous communities need leverage to achieve fair and strong returns from resource operations. For the Selkirks, the Yukon Umbrella Agreement meant they could employ hard-won treaty rights and ensure that resources being taken from their lands were improving lives in their community. The Minto experience made them better able to recognize and manage new opportunities, and they will continue to search for new ways to control their destiny and be a significant part of the Indigenous-led transformation of the Canadian North.

The Selkirks are actively engaged in discussions on the future of the Minto mine. Previously, a First Nation was not involved from the outset, but that has changed and now the First Nation will play a central role in determining the future of mining in their territory. ❄️

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**Ken Coates** is Chair of Yukon University's Indigenous Governance Program, and Distinguished Fellow at MLI.

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MLI's Policy-maker of the Year 2023

# Hon. Steven Guilbeault

*In 2023 Steven Guilbeault, Canada's Minister of Environment and Climate Change, introduced four sector-destroying, economy-killing, counterproductive climate policies. He pushed through his agenda with ruthless – and reckless – efficiency. That makes him our Policy-maker of the year.*

by Heather Exner-Pirot

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**T**he Liberals have been chided for focusing on communications over substance; for announcing policies rather than implementing them. But there is an exception to this rule: the ruthlessly efficient Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Steven Guilbeault. No one else in Canada has been as influential, and, in my view, no one else has done so much damage.


From an emissions cap to toxic plastic straws, and from Clean Electricity Regulations to the Clean Fuel Standard, Guilbeault has been advancing economy-killing and constitution-defying laws at a frenzied pace.

He was appointed Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada in October 2021. At the time of his appointment, Guilbeault appeared as the perfect villain: a caricature of the West-hating, anti-oil Liberal that has confounded the aspirations of Canadians west of the Laurentian corridor for decades. In the last two years he has disappointed few of his supporters and assuaged none of his critics' fears.

Dubbed the "Green Jesus of Montreal" by *La Presse*, the 2001 image of Guilbeault being walked off in handcuffs in his faux orange prison jumpsuit emblazoned with the Greenpeace logo, following a CN Tower-scaling stunt to bring attention to climate change, features frequently in the social media accounts of his more outspoken critics.

The Canadian oil and gas sector has had a rough decade – from the shale revolution that flooded North America with cheap oil, to the COVID-19 pandemic – but it persisted. The sector achieved record breaking production, and royalties for governments, last year. The coming-into-service of TMX and CGL pipelines promises to grant additional export capacity for Canadian hydrocarbons.

But, like the final boss of a video game, Guilbeault is proving to be a formidable challenger to the country's most important economic sector, even as the country struggles under declining productivity, persistent inflation and an affordability crisis. What Texas, Vladimir Putin and OPEC could not undermine, Guilbeault is poised to do. This is intended as criticism but I expect Guilbeault would be pleased with the acknowledgment.



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In this year alone he has advanced four sector-destroying policies, as part of the federal government's much derided “pancake” approach to climate policy: stacking increasingly suffocating and

incompatible regulations on Canadian industry to meet our Paris Accord commitments.

Carbon pricing schemes have broadly been accepted within heavy industry across Canada, if grudgingly. But with voters unwilling to accept a price per tonne of GHGs high enough to meaningfully address emissions, the Government has had to resort to additional, bespoke, mechanisms.

The Clean Fuel Regulations (CFR) came into effect on July 1, mandating reductions in the carbon intensity of transportation fuels through various methods, such as blending in biofuels. The Parliamentary Budget Officer found that the CFR are broadly regressive, impacting poorer households the most. The four Atlantic Premiers in particular contested the CFR on the grounds they would disproportionately hurt their residents, calling them “unfair and offensive to Atlantic Canadians” and demanding they be delayed. But Guilbeault blamed any price increase on refiners rather than his regulations, saying “there is simply no reason that they need to push costs onto consumers.”

While imploring refiners to decarbonize their product at a loss, Guilbeault also tacked on a ZEV (zero emissions vehicle) mandate to ensure any investments made in clean fuels today would have an ever-shrinking market and timeline to recoup costs. In other words, Guilbeault is asking refiners to invest in cleaner fuels while promising to ban their products before they could make back their money. The final regulations, mandating a 100 percent zero-emission vehicles sales target by 2035, were announced on December 19.

Such a move requires dramatically more capacity in the country's electricity

grid, up to 25 percent by some estimates. But, unbothered by the laws of physics, Guilbeault went ahead and introduced draft Clean Electricity Regulations (CER) in August. The CER will impose obligations on electricity generation to achieve net zero emissions in the grid by 2035 and will necessarily take large swathes of Canada's existing generation capacity offline. In practice this means a phase out of coal, which is happening; and natural gas, which cannot realistically happen - particularly in the cold Prairie provinces of Alberta and

tive, expensive, and both economically and politically self-sabotaging. There is no limit to the punishment Guilbeault is willing to impose on the energy sector, regardless of the collateral damage to the rest of the Canadian economy.

Guilbeault's accomplishments do not end at stymying Canada's upstream and downstream oil and gas sector. It's been a fractious time for federal-provincial relations, and a challenging one for the Canadian constitution. On a list that included Danielle's Smith's

eral government's labelling of all Plastic Manufactured Items (PMI) as toxic was both unreasonable and unconstitutional. Again, Guilbeault was undeterred, and announced on December 8 that the federal government would appeal it.

It appears that, in Guilbeault's view, federalism is an inconvenient and unacceptable barrier to accomplishing meaningful progress on climate change. For an ideologue like Guilbeault, the constitution was not designed for, and is not up to the task of, addressing the



## *Guilbeault's accomplishments do not end at stymying Canada's upstream and downstream oil and gas sector.*

Saskatchewan where hydroelectric generating capacity is limited, nuclear is years away, and intermittent wind and solar are unsuitable. The CER prompted Alberta Premier Danielle Smith to launch a national ad campaign protesting that "No one wants to freeze in the dark".

More sober western voices have also warned against the CER. The CEO of SaskPower sent a letter arguing that while the utility was "on track to meet our commitment to reduce GHG emissions by 50 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030", the CER are "not possible from technological, financial and logistical perspectives." But Guilbeault has remained adamant that there will be no special carve outs for any province.

The crowning achievement of Guilbeault's economy-destroying climate policies was announced on December 7: an emissions cap, and cut, on one sector only, Canadian oil and gas. The announcement was not made in downtown Calgary, amongst those most affected, but in Dubai at COP28. Such a cap is counterproduc-

*Alberta Sovereignty Act* and Scot Moe's *Saskatchewan First Act*, and invocations by Ontario, Quebec, and Saskatchewan of the notwithstanding clause, it was not one, but two of Minister Guilbeault's laws that were declared unconstitutional by Canadian courts this year.

In the first instance, the Supreme Court of Canada determined the *Impact Assessment Act* - previously known as Bill C-69, or the *No More Pipelines Act* - to reach far beyond federal jurisdiction, granting Parliament "a practically untrammelled power to regulate projects *qua* projects, regardless of whether Parliament has jurisdiction to regulate a given physical activity in its entirety." The vast majority of sections within the IAA were deemed unconstitutional.

Guilbeault doubled down, saying that the federal government would "course correct", but that it would be unlikely to change the outcome of the IAA process for projects.

Just one month later, the Federal Court of Canada held that the fed-

existential threat posed by fossil fuels. But that is no reason not to try. He will continue to seek new avenues to restrain industry and the provinces; he will just have to tighten up the language.

No amount of tweaking will prevent the Clean Electricity Regulations and oil and gas emissions cap from facing challenges from Alberta and Saskatchewan. The federal government will rely on its criminal law power to see them through. He has suggested that violating the Clean Electricity Regulations, for example running coal fired plants beyond 2030, would be an offense under the Criminal Code. The joke in the Prairies is that he wants his western counterparts to have orange jumpsuits that match his own.

Guilbeault is seen as a true believer. His mission is to save the planet from climate change, and to save oil and gas producing apostates from themselves. Nothing will persuade him he should moderate his efforts. But I would be remiss not to point out that Guilbeault has shown the ability to tolerate pragmatism in his own cabinet.



The first instance was with nuclear energy. Long a lightning rod for 20th century environmentalists, Guilbeault has historically been opposed to nuclear. In the Liberals' Green Bond Framework, released in March 2022, nuclear energy was excluded alongside sin industries like tobacco and

This could not have been easy, and I applaud him for evolving his views in line with the evidence.

But he was not convinced enough to directly advocate for nuclear technology at COP28. On December 2 in Dubai, 22 states including Canada signed a landmark

telling the Canadian Press in an interview on November 6 that he would not stand for any further concessions:

"As long as I'm the environment minister, there will be no more exemptions to carbon pricing...It's certainly not ideal that we did it and in a perfect world we would not have to do that, but unfortunately we don't live in a perfect world."

Guilbeault is a threat to Canada's prosperity, and to our allies' too. Germany, Japan, Korea and others have come asking for more energy exports, only to be told there was no business case. The federal government's own policies are making it so.

But more to the point his climate policies, committed though they may be, are destined to fail.

It is often said that if you want to go fast, go alone; but if you want to go far, go together.

Guilbeault is very far ahead from industry, the provinces, Canadians, and increasingly his own caucus. He is alienating voters who are concerned more about affordability and housing. There will likely be a backlash. As far as Guilbeault has swung the pendulum to the left, it will come swinging back at him and the Liberals the other way. The energy transition is a marathon, and Guilbeault is a sprinter.

One could almost admire Guilbeault's unwavering commitment to his principles – his willingness to advance his goals in the face of criticism, resistance and alarm. But through his actions, Guilbeault has treated the fact that Canada is a democracy, a market economy, and a federation as inconveniences to be overcome.

Canadians that care about these things will find many reasons to be concerned with Steven Guilbeault's efforts this year. His impact on the nation's politics and economy will be felt long after his policies have been overturned. ❄️

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Heather Exner-Pirot is the director of energy, natural resources, and environment at MLI.

*But more to the point we believe his climate policies, committed though they may be, are destined to fail.*



Guilbeault at the COP28 declaration on nuclear energy (that Canada supports): missing.  
(IAEA Imagebank via commons.wikimedia.org)

alcohol sales, arms manufacturing, gambling, and fossil fuels. After public opinion evolved, and in the face of successful nuclear refurbishments and new reactor developments in the GTA, the Liberal government reversed its decision. Guilbeault duly ate his humble pie, saying in April 2023 that:

"In the past I haven't been the person who supported the most the development of nuclear energy. But when you look at what international experts like the International Energy Agency or the IPCC is saying, they're saying, to prevent global temperatures from reaching 1.5 degrees Celsius, to achieve our carbon neutrality targets, we need this technology."

declaration committing to triple nuclear energy by 2050. Minister Guilbeault seemed to be everywhere at COP28, but he was not there for that announcement, missing the traditional 'family photo' of world leaders signing the nuclear declaration.

Likewise, Guilbeault had to accept with great reluctance the Liberals' political gambit of exempting heating oil from carbon pricing. Their coalition must combine urban environmentalists and Atlantic Canadian townsfolk to win the next election. In the case of heating oil, the Atlantic caucus carried the day. But Guilbeault made clear it was a ploy not to be repeated,

# The poor effort to improve coordination on housing

*On balance, the federal government shows little interest in tying the demand side of Canada's housing equation to the supply side.*

**Josef Filipowicz**  
**Steve Lafleur**

Housing policy is typically thought of as a local government issue. After all, municipalities largely control the number and types of dwellings ultimately allowed to be built across Canada. They also, generally speaking, have the most control over the supply side of the housing market of any order of government – and supply hasn't been doing too well for decades now.

If there's one area of housing policy where municipalities can be excused, it's in their (in)ability to project housing demand. The blame for that lies with the federal government. Let us explain.

Housing demand – that is, the number and types of dwellings desired in Canada – is the result of factors like incomes, credit, and, probably most importantly, population growth. Municipalities, in their defence, control none of these.

Incomes are determined by market factors (and, to an extent, by federal and provincial taxation), while the strongest credit levers lie with the Bank of Canada or other national entities. Population growth, for its part, is no longer primarily driven by births and deaths. Canada-wide, it is almost exclusively determined by federal immigration policy. To wit, Statistics Canada reported that roughly 98 percent of the growth in the Canadian population from July 1, 2022, to July 1, 2023, came from net international migration, with 2 percent coming from the difference between births and deaths.

In other words, local governments have the strongest levers affecting the supply of

housing, while the federal government has the strongest levers affecting the demand for housing.

But, as we discussed in a recent report for MLI, the three levels of government (federal, provincial, and municipal) don't coordinate all that much when it comes to housing. The decisions guiding population growth, such as medium-term immigration targets, immigration eligibility criteria, and temporary residency policies, don't take critical factors like the number of homes available across Canada into account. In fact, at the time of our report's publication, in March 2023, none of the federal-provincial agreements that guide immigration planning even mentioned the

word "housing." Adjacent terms, such as access to settlement "services," "activities," or "requirements" are mentioned, implying a possible link, but none explicitly mention the need for a quantitatively or qualitatively adequate housing supply.

Meanwhile, the processes local governments use to guide future growth, including infrastructure needs (e.g., sewers, roads, water, schools) and zoning bylaws, don't reflect the magnitude of housing demand. For example, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, which guides how cities in Canada's largest urban area (anchored by Toronto) should grow over the long term, was first drawn up in 2006 and wasn't updated until 2019/2020.



Josh Olalde



This means that any changes to population projections occurring after the plan's enactment were not taken into account when planning for the many homes needed to accommodate a growing population.

So why is this a problem?

Canada's population growth has reached historic levels. 2022 was the first year where Canada grew by more than one million people, and 2023 appears to be on track for similarly high growth. This level of growth was not anticipated in the population projections that inform local growth plans. In fact, the Ontario government's own set of 10-year growth targets on larger cities, imposed in 2022 in an attempt to short circuit lagging local projections, are already largely obsolete. Why? Because the federal decisions determining growth can change from year to year – and in recent years the feds have consistently augmented the number of permanent and temporary migrants coming to Canada. Put another way, the population estimate goalposts appear to move further out every year, preventing local governments devising adequate plans on how to reach them.

The picture here is bleak, as any efforts to adequately house a growing Canadian public quickly become obsolete. Local governments undertaking years of preparation and public consultation to enact their growth plans might even find themselves in a situation where their projections are outdated before the ink even dries. This must be deflating, as it undermines the entire process by which Canadian communities do their best to grow at a steady pace while balancing the interests of many stakeholders.

Is there any good news?

The short answer is 'yes.' The federal government appears to have acknowledged the mounting chorus of commentary criticizing its lack of consideration of basic elements such as housing needs and capacity when setting medium-term immigration targets. The latest targets, announced on November 1, 2023, hold

the annual number of permanent residents steady at 500,000 per year starting in 2026, while also committing to "take action over the next year to recalibrate the number of temporary resident admissions to ensure this aspect of our immigration system also remains sustainable."



*2022 was the first year where Canada grew by more than one million people, and 2023 appears to be on track for similarly high growth.*

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada – the ministry responsible for setting targets and eligibility – also released a report outlining some planned changes to immigration policy. Notably, the report includes a section dedicated to the development of "a comprehensive and coordinated growth plan," including a commitment to "seek to integrate housing and health care planning, along with other important services, into planning Canada's immigration levels." Somewhat more specifically, it commits the Ottawa to "explor[ing] options to develop a more integrated plan to coordinate housing, health care and infrastructure between federal government departments, and in close collaboration with provinces, territories and municipalities."

But that's about it. No specifics on local housing capacity, or on predictable numbers of non-permanent residents, both of which

are necessary to ensure balanced growth. Unfortunately for local governments trying to adequately plan for growth, it looks like they'll have to wait and see as the federal government determines whether and how it might make Canada's rate of population growth more predictable.

So what can be done?

The federal government appears reluctant to meaningfully diverge from its traditional approach to immigration policy in the near term. However, a greater willingness to engage with other levels of government is a positive development. Local and provincial governments are well placed to determine their capacity to plan for and build housing, as well as other necessary infrastructure to support growth. Further, they already have a role in drafting the agreements that guide medium-term immigration plans. They should make the most of this opportunity by ensuring that all departments and ministries directly involved with the delivery of infrastructure and housing play a direct, leading role in drafting input guiding immigration policy. Specifically, their input should include hard estimates of communities' capacity to increase housing and infrastructure development, helping frame future immigration targets, criteria, and strategies.

On balance, the federal government is still showing little interest in tying the demand side of Canada's housing equation to the supply side. Nevertheless, its recent changes to immigration policy offer a sliver of hope to local governments struggling to anticipate future growth needs. Provinces and municipalities should make the most of this opportunity, helping bring both sides of the housing equation a little closer to one another. 🍁

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**Josef Filipowicz** is an independent policy specialist focusing on urban land-use issues including housing affordability, taxation and municipal finance.

**Steve Lafleur** is a public policy analyst who researches and writes for Canadian think tanks.

# Stop comparing Palestinians to Indigenous Canadians

*Canadians should not project our own politics onto a conflict half a world away.*

**Chris Sankey**

**L**ike millions of people around the world, I woke up to the devastating news from southern Israel over Thanksgiving weekend. Hundreds of innocent civilians had been murdered by Hamas terrorists, carried out in the name of the complete and total destruction of the State of Israel. My mind went immediately to my friends in the area. I could only hope, powerlessly, that they were safe.

I could scarcely imagine then that, within days, I'd witness pro-Hamas demonstrations take place openly in my own country. Vile chants like "off with their heads" (in reference to reports of Hamas beheading babies) and calls for further violence against Israel have filled the air over the past two weeks. Islamic Jihad and Taliban flags have even been spotted at protests. This is not freedom of expression or protected speech.

Why are our leaders letting this happen in OUR country? Where is the *Emergency Act*? The prime minister, who did not hesitate to label Freedom Convoy activists as Nazis and a threat to democracy, is now nowhere to be found while hundreds of hate-filled protestors flood the streets advocating violence against Jewish people.

The Liberal government, with the support of the NDP, invoked the *Emergency Act* to shut down peaceful freedom convoy protests last year – the most egregious thing those protestors did was honk their horns. They were nevertheless lumped in with terrorists and hate groups. Yet today, when Hamas sympathizers utter chants invoking

the ethnic cleansing of seven million Israeli Jews in the very same streets – nothing!

Even the CBC, Canada's trusted national broadcaster, has failed in its duty to properly inform Canadians on this matter. Emails show that the broadcaster's Director of Journalistic Standards, George Achi, instructed his reporters not to use the word "terrorism" when reporting the horrific attacks of terrorism by Hamas militants against innocent babies, women and children. Achi essentially asked his staff to lie to Canadians and showed that he doesn't even have the decency to condemn cold-blooded murder. He must be held accountable for his cowardice.

*But what has troubled me the most has been the frequency with which my peoples' struggle for reconciliation has been invoked to justify the bloodshed.*

But what has troubled me the most has been the frequency with which my peoples' struggle for reconciliation has been invoked to justify the bloodshed, often by so-called 'experts' in the academy. This is an absurd and, frankly, offensive comparison as Indigenous Canadians and Palestinians stand worlds apart.

We've had our challenges and past struggles here in Canada but have nevertheless been able to make substantial progress on reconciliation through non-violent means. Indigenous communities have signed billions

of dollars' worth of agreements with governments and have regained control of thousands of hectares of our traditional territories through legal land transfers. Our communities now stand on the cusp of a real and sustained rebirth. While there's still a long way to go, the progress we've seen in recent years should nevertheless be recognized.

As an Indigenous Canadian and someone who has spent decades working at various levels of Indigenous government, I was appalled by these lazy comparisons to the plight of Palestinians. While I do not ignore deny our devastating history – from residential schools, to lingering intergenerational

trauma and the dispossession of our lands – I believe we are on the right path to self-determination as a sovereign First Nation. Our history is our own story to tell because it happened to us and has taken many years to overcome – and there are still more years left to go before we finally put the past behind us and move forward.

Sadly, there are some in my own community who are all too willing to play along with this ruse. At a recent panel hosted by UBC professor Naomi Klein, Kanahus Manuel of the Tiny House Warriors and



Molly Wickham of the Wet'suwet'en Nation openly called on anarchists to team up with Indigenous people to cause civil unrest. In doing so, they not only embarrassed themselves, they brought shame to their respective communities and embarrassed all Indigenous Canadians.

Both Manuel and Wickham claim that Indigenous elected leaders do not speak for hereditary house groups on any issues outside our communities and that no hereditary leaders are elected to our governing bodies. They assert elected chiefs and councils are just another arm of the federal government. If they truly understood why we work toward real independence from the government of

*Are Easy To Shut Down* and *How to Paralyze a Country*. They and others were also inspired by Andreas Malm's book *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*, which offered a set of instructions on how to do so. This is what some academics appear to embrace.

University of Toronto professor Chandni Desai recently published a paper in the *Journal of Palestine Studies* called "Indigenous Intifadas and Resurgent Solidarity from Turtle Island to Palestine". The article likens the Wet'suwet'en land sovereignty struggle to a series of Palestinian terror campaigns. Desai, who is neither Indigenous nor Palestinian, also teaches a course on so-called 'anti-colonial resis-

The Israelis gave Gaza to the Palestinian people and left Gaza in 2005. There currently over two million Arabs living in Israel, the vast majority of whom are citizens who are entitled to the same legal rights as their Jewish neighbours. There are Arabs in the Israeli Defense Forces. Arab Israelis are also police officers, belong to political parties (including the United Arab List), and participate in governments as members of the Knesset. This is not to say that they face no discrimination, but Arabs in Israel arguably enjoy greater democratic and civil liberties than they do anywhere else in the region. By contrast, there are signs on the road to the Palestinian-controlled West Bank that warn



*Comparing us to Palestinians robs both us and them of our respective histories.*

Canada, they would have never set up blockades. We participate in these negotiations to secure sole-source revenues so we do not have to rely on government handouts.

My own community of Lax Kw'Alaams and communities like it have no problem electing hereditary leaders. Every single individual I served with is a part of our hereditary system and held high-ranking titles and positions. We are striving to work more inclusively. We recognize that we are stronger together. The elected body holds land in trust so that no one individuals can take advantage of the lands by the sale of fee simple or status lands, which are tax exempt. When Manuel and Wickham call for civil unrest, they undermine the progress of their brothers and sisters.

Manuel and Wickham are supported by the likes of Franklin Lopez, a staple figure in the Canadian anti-authority far-left for years and founder of multimedia company sub.media. Over the years, he's produced seditious films like *Oil Pipelines*

and *Are Easy To Shut Down*. This is a deliberate misconstrual of history that ought to be revised or not taught at all.

Other notable academics like Wilfrid Laurier University Social Work Professor Jessica Hutchison and McMaster University's CUPE Local 3906 asked their colleagues to show support for Palestinians after the mass murder of innocent Israelis, claiming Palestinians are righteously taking back their land.

Seriously? Israelis have 3,000 years of history on that land. The State of Israel, even with notable flaws, is one of the greatest examples of indigenous reclamation in the world. In fact, it is known they are indigenous to the lands since 1,200 BC, nearly two millennia before the Arab occupation of Syria and Palestine in the mid-600s (AD). The Jews were there long before the Arabs and Muslims. Jerusalem is their capital and has been for three thousand years. The Jewish are not colonizers nor are they occupiers. Canadian professors and academic support staff need to get their history right.

Jewish people not to enter the area. Today, no Jewish people live in Gaza.

Comparing us to Palestinians robs both us and them of our respective histories. I cannot imagine living in a society where war is normalized in order to keep the peace against terrorism. It is unfathomable to me and does not give any one of us the right to compare First Nations' experiences with those of the Palestinians – or any other subjugated peoples, for that matter. That is their story to tell.

Israelis have a right to defend themselves and Palestinians have a right to be liberated from Hamas – a terrorist entity so consumed by hatred that it has no qualms about using Palestinian children and hospital patients as human shields. We can only hope for peace, resolve and unity. It's not our place to project our own politics onto a conflict half a world away. ❁

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**Chris Sankey** is a former elected Councilor for Lax Kw'alaams Band, businessman and Senior Fellow for MLI.

# Undersea, under threat

*Recent events in the Baltic highlight new threats to subsea critical infrastructure.*

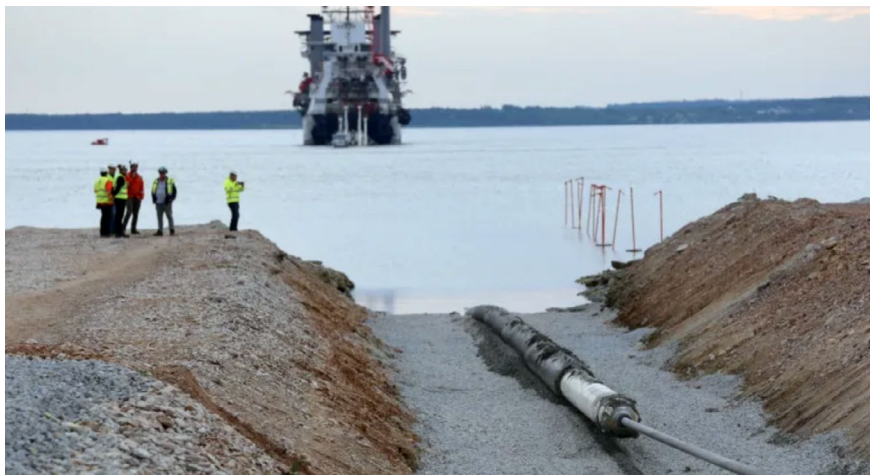
Alexander Dalziel  
Henri Vanhanen

In the past few of months we've seen undersea infrastructure damaged under suspicious circumstances in the Baltic Sea. NATO allies – including Canada, with its own critical undersea links – must accordingly recognize the emerging threat to their own national critical infrastructure and step-up efforts to counter a new class of murky threats to their security.

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The most recent series of incidents (at the time of writing) took place in early October. On the 8th, the Balticconnector underseas natural gas pipeline and a nearby telecommunications cable linking Finland and Estonia were both damaged suspiciously. On the 17th, the Swedish government announced that another cable, this one between Sweden and Estonia, had experienced minor damage at around the same time.

Finnish President Sauli Niinistö immediately stated that “external activity” was the likely cause of this damage. Subsequent investigation has shown that



Above: damage on the Balticconnector natural gas pipeline between Ingå, Finland, and Paldiski, Estonia, October 2023; the pipeline as it is pulled into the sea in Paldiski, Estonia in 2019.

(Finnish Border Guard; Samuli Huttunen / Yle, Mapcreator, OpenStreetMap via yle.fi; Elering/handout via aljazeera.com)

an anchor drag, extending over tens of kilometres of seabed, was the culprit.


Investigators have identified the Hong Kong-flagged *Newnew Polar Bear* container ship as their prime suspect, determining that the movements of the vessel match the timing of the damage on the Baltic Connector and data cables. Other elements of its voyages activities, including a docking in Russian Kaliningrad, are also being investigated, as are the vessel's ownership and crew. The most recent information that the operator of the vessel has shifted from a Chinese entity in July to a Russian-registered company in Moscow and Shanghai in October of this year.

between mainland Norway and its Arctic archipelago Svalbard was severed. The following September, an intentional explosion destroyed an undersea segment of the Nord Stream natural gas pipeline linking Germany to Russia via the Baltic Sea.

It is a sign of our times that “external activity” immediately suggests, as a contending hypothesis, a hostile foreign act. The leading suspect is often Russia, well known for its adroit “hybrid” warfare: that is, disguising acts of aggression and interference so as not to invite a reciprocal response. These often take the form of campaigns, where a pattern emerges only later that a malicious, coordinated intent was

various security and military organizations, especially in the Russian Navy and the Main Directorate for Deep Sea Research (GUGI is the acronym form of *Glavnoye upravlenie glubokovodnikh issledovaniy*). GUGI, for example, is known to operate surface ships that nominally act as research vessels to gather intelligence. The various components of Russia's overall maritime sabotage capability pose multifarious challenges to undersea telecommunications cables, natural gas pipelines, wind-farms and other critical infrastructure in Europe and North America.

Events in the Baltic-Nordic region underscore the challenge of securing critical



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Interestingly, this is not the first time the vessel has been in the papers. The ship made headlines in early October for completing a Europe-Asia roundtrip via the Arctic Northern Sea Route.

Right now, it remains difficult to attribute the intentionality and state links of the ship. Sources in the marine sector described an anchor drag of this distance and duration as unusual, if not unprecedented, but nonetheless an accident and poor seamanship remain potential explanations. As Estonia, Finland and Sweden are among the most transparent democracies in the world, reliable conclusions about what happened are likely to materialize in the coming months. So far, Chinese authorities are cooperating with the investigation, per Finnish sources.

These are the third and fourth suspicious incidents in the region since the start of last year involving subsea critical infrastructure. In January 2022, a telecommunications cable

involved. The goal is to make incremental strategic gains and sow confusion and mistrust among those it deems unfriendly. Finland, NATO's newest member, has joined Russia's list of ‘unfriendly’ nations; Sweden was already on it, and Estonia has long resided there.

China, too, is active in the use of such “grey zone” techniques that fall below the threshold of open warfare but can bring about strategic gain – notably in advancing territorial claims in the South China Sea. In the case of the recent incidents, it is harder to discern what a Chinese strategic interest might be in disrupting Nordic-Baltic critical telecommunications and energy infrastructure.

In recent years, Russia has invested in capabilities that would allow it to threaten Europe's critical infrastructure – an approach that has been central to its security logic since the Soviet era. Maritime special operations are tools of Moscow's

infrastructure. Should it be determined that Russia, or for that matter any state-actor, intentionally caused the damage, the question will be how to respond.

International agreements provide a basis to counter suspicious maritime activities. For example, the *UN Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS) permits countries to limit the activities of civilian vessels conducting surveillance relevant to economic exploitation within their exclusive economic zones. The UNCLOS also provides a basis for limiting the activities of Russian auxiliary ships while remaining within international law.

As a first response to the events, NATO has decided to increase patrols in the Baltic Sea. Additional measures include enhanced surveillance and more frequent reconnaissance flights, including with maritime patrol aircraft, NATO AWACS planes, and drones. A fleet of four mine hunters has also been dispatched to the area.

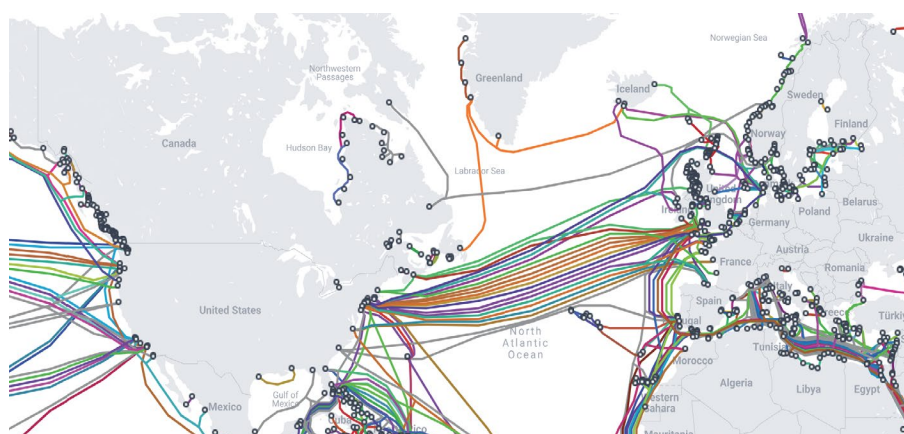


Yet a more comprehensive and long-term approach to these threats is necessary. This encompasses NATO's ability to counter and deter hostile maritime operations. An attack on the critical infrastructure of two NATO members might breach the alliance's threshold for a collective security response. Such a case would set a precedent for NATO in establishing a policy of countermeasure and deterrence in the maritime domain. NATO countermeasures could range from diplomatic expulsions, economic sanctions, vessel seizures, increased

These developments in the Baltic Sea have two sets of implications for Canada. First, as a member of NATO active in the Baltic Sea (via its military mission in Latvia) Canada will have the opportunity to be a part of planning and executing the response. While the Royal Canadian Navy sends ships to the Maritime Task Force in the Baltic Sea on a persistent rotational basis, the current focus of the Canadian mission in Latvia is largely land-based. Meeting Canada's obligations to scale up its land presence to the brigade level, as laid out in the July

Finnish-U.S.-Japanese venture would run fibre-optic cable from Europe to Asia via the Northwest Passage.

These investments will bring new vulnerabilities. Subsea hybrid threats are a novel development in North American security. The Arctic, where strategic and conventional military threats have long defined security posture, is especially vulnerable. Both China and Russia are advancing in underwater technologies with dual-use potential. Their conduct on the oceans, whether that be the Baltic Sea or



A closeup of a map of the world's major submarine cable systems and landing stations in 2023. (Telegeography via submarinecablemap.com)

*Canada would need to think about its own underwater assets, especially cables.*

maritime surveillance and patrolling (now underway) or even asymmetric offensive cyber operations. We will, of course, have to wait for Estonian, Finnish and Swedish investigators to release their findings and conclusions, but the stakes are high and now is the time to start planning potential responses.

Most importantly, whether the damage is intentional or not is not entirely relevant. Fundamentally, the case is a test for NATO, its collective decision-making processes, and its resolve to protect maritime critical infrastructure – something Russia will follow closely. A weak or delayed response would signal that the alliance is not capable of preventing future acts of sabotage. This is an opportunity to form a deterrence for potential adversaries and, as such, a chance that should not be missed.

2023 joint statement from the Canadian and Latvian defence ministers, is mostly an Army matter. Canada could use the present juncture to take stock of what patrol, cyber, intelligence and other assets it might have to contribute an enhanced NATO maritime and aerospace effort.

Second, Canada would need to think about its own underwater assets, especially cables. The world's informational circulatory system flows through a network of slim maritime fibre-optic arteries. In Canada, cables are or will soon be coming ashore from Europe and Asia in British Columbia, Labrador, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. They are already spreading along the coast of Hudson Bay and will eventually reach Nunavut. Some important transoceanic cable projects will also likely pass through Canadian waters. For instance, a proposed

South China Sea, already shows a propensity for aggressive posturing and hybrid tactics. One step in the right direction for Canada would be enacting the recommendations for urgent action made by the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence this year on acquiring undersea surveillance equipment and new, under-ice capable submarines.

Resilient solutions bake in security upfront, not after the fact. The time is therefore now to get a move on policy and contingency planning. Tapping into the knowledge and experience of Nordic and Baltic allies will be one path to strengthening Canada's critical infrastructure security. 🌐

Alexander Dalziel is a senior fellow at MLI. Henri Vanhanen is research fellow at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs.



## Japan and Canada: Toward a strategic partnership

*Complementary strengths make Canada and Japan poised for a powerful economic partnership, particularly in the energy and critical minerals sector.*

**Jeff Kucharski**

Canada's deteriorating relations with India and already poor relations with China have some questioning whether Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy can remain effective. Little consideration has been given to the role and importance of Japan, Canada's most important partner in the Indo-Pacific outside of the United States. Current geopolitical realities mean that Japan will be much more central to effective-

ly delivering on Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy now and for the foreseeable future.

In an increasingly geopolitically unstable and unpredictable world, national security issues now loom large for Canada. As Canada has learned in the case of India and China, we cannot go it alone and need the support of our closest allies and partners in the international arena. As Canada seeks

to diversify its trade relationships and pursue opportunities to integrate more deeply in the Indo-Pacific region, there is a compelling case for Canada to build on its strong foundation of cooperation with Japan to forge a closer, more comprehensive relationship.

National security has many dimensions, but economic security is the foundational

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Japan Prime Minister Fumio Kishida addresses Canadian business leaders in Ottawa, January 2023.  
(Prime Minister's Office of Japan | [japan.kantei.go.jp](https://japan.kantei.go.jp))

one and is concerned with sustaining economic vitality and resiliency. It is only through a strong economy and enduring economic prosperity that countries have the capacity to play a positive and influential role on the world stage.

Japan recognized this fact by creating a dedicated Minister for Economic Security and enacting a sweeping economic security law in May of 2022. The law requires that Japanese companies consider economic security issues as part of their decision-making processes. This includes making supply chains resilient to disruptions from geopolitical conflict and relying more on

Japan – its second largest export market in the Indo-Pacific after China. In 2022, Canada's exports to Japan increased by an impressive 24 percent on a value basis, with Canadian energy products driving this growth. Meanwhile, exports to China were virtually flat, growing by a paltry 2 percent. Canada's trade with Japan is also quite balanced, with about \$18 billion in exports to Japan and about \$17 billion in imports from Japan. While China remains Canada's largest export market in the Indo-Pacific with about \$28 billion in exports, the balance of trade weighs heavily in China's favour with Canada importing 3.5 times

investing heavily in Canada's energy supply chain. Canada's reserves of oil, natural gas, renewables and critical minerals can help Japan achieve its energy transition goals and reduce its dependence on suppliers in authoritarian regimes and less stable regions.

Energy products, mainly coal and liquid petroleum gas (LPG), are currently Canada's largest export category by value, accounting for more than 30 percent of Canada's total exports to Japan. Canada's energy exports are set to increase dramatically in the next few years once the Transmountain (TMX) pipeline



*Closer relations with Japan can help diversify trade within the Indo-Pacific, attract investment and protect Canada from the threat of economic coercion.*

allies and partners for supplies of strategic goods. Canada has been much slower to respond to threats to its economic security but has still taken meaningful steps in this direction. These include tightening national security reviews under the Investment Canada Act, investing in critical infrastructure and working with the U.S., Japan and other allies on building critical minerals and clean energy supply chains.

Canada and Japan, respectively, have complementary strengths that could make for a powerful economic partnership. Canada boasts abundant natural resources, including energy, minerals, and agricultural products, while Japan is a leader in advanced technology and manufacturing expertise, and home to one of the world's largest domestic consumer markets.

Canada currently enjoys a well-balanced and productive trading relationship with

more from China than what China imports from Canada.

Closer relations with Japan can help diversify trade within the Indo-Pacific, attract investment and protect Canada from the threat of economic coercion. Both countries are signatories to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), and Canada has applied to join the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), of which Japan and the U.S. are members. Both Canada and Japan hold strategic dialogue meetings with the U.S. to coordinate approaches to the Indo-Pacific.

One of Japan's most pressing economic security concerns is energy supply. Most of Japan's energy supplies must travel through the South China Sea, putting these supplies at risk should there be a conflict over Taiwan or a disruption of sea lanes. Japan views Canada as a safe, reliable supplier and is

expansion project comes online in 2024 and the LNG Canada project begins exporting around 2025. LNG Canada is well-positioned to provide low-emission liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Asian markets including Japan, and TMX will provide more options for Asian buyers to reduce their reliance on the Middle East and Russia for crude oil and help improve overall energy security in the region.

On the horizon, ammonia and hydrogen are exciting new energy export opportunities for Canada. Japan plans to import millions of tons of ammonia in the next few years as part of an effort to decarbonize its electricity generation system. To this end, Japanese companies have already made proposals to invest in Canadian ammonia production for use in Japanese power plants and, eventually, to help extract hydrogen for use in zero-emissions vehicle fleets.




The level and pace of cooperation in the energy and critical minerals sector holds great promise for the future. During the visit of Japan's trade minister, Nishimura Yasutoshi, to Ottawa in September, Canada and Japan signed a memorandum of cooperation that will see Japanese public and private entities develop supply chains in Canada for electric vehicles that encompass extracting and processing critical minerals as well as battery production. Another memorandum also signed in September will see Canada and Japan expand cooperation in the fields of science and technology.

spending by two-thirds over the next five years. This is significant in view of the rapidly deteriorating regional and global security environment and China's aggressive moves to gain de facto control over the South China Sea. It also demonstrates Japan's strong commitment to oppose any unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the region by force or coercion.

When Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited Canada in January of 2023, he reiterated Japan's commitment to the "free and open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) concept that aims to defend freedom and the rule of law, enhance connectivity,

at the same time, strengthening its military and security capacities to stand up to the regional superpower when necessary. Japan has managed to co-exist with China for thousands of years and there is probably no country on earth that understands China as deeply as Japan does. As such, Canada should take advantage of any advice and assistance it can get from Japan in managing its own relations with China.

The affinity between the people of Japan and Canada, our complementary economies, shared security interests and commitment to democracy, human rights, and a rules-based international order,



*Japan has been steadily taking leadership in the Indo-Pacific, through its commitment to collective defense and increased spending on security and the military.*

In an era marked by geopolitical tensions and uncertainty, a partnership between Canada and Japan can contribute to regional stability and serve as a model for peaceful cooperation, reinforcing the importance of diplomacy and international norms. Both Canada and Japan share a commitment to upholding the rule of law, human rights, and democratic values. By aligning their diplomatic efforts on issues such as human security, transnational crime prevention, human trafficking, cybersecurity, and counterterrorism, the two nations can amplify their joint impact in the region.

Japan has been steadily taking leadership in the Indo-Pacific, through its commitment to collective defense and increased spending on security and the military. The Japanese government has announced a plan for Japan's national security-related spending to reach 2 percent of GDP by 2027. This figure includes a pledge to increase defense

and promote prosperity within the Indo-Pacific region. Canada should continue to support these principles and work with Japan and other allies to reinforce this approach. While Canada has committed three navy frigates to regular activities in the Indo-Pacific and has participated in freedom of navigation operations in the Taiwan Strait and elsewhere, potential cuts to Canada's military budget threaten the capacity to respond to threats, in addition to risking Canada's reputation as a serious contributor to peace and security in the region.

Japan has a lot of experience in managing geopolitical issues in the Indo-Pacific and could be helpful in acting as a strategic advisor to Canada in managing its fraught diplomatic relationship with China. Japan has managed to successfully sustain its prosperous economic relations with China – its largest trading partner – while,

make Canada and Japan natural partners. These facts make a strong argument for the two countries to forge a more robust, comprehensive, and formalized relationship through a strategic partnership agreement. Canada already has such an agreement in place with the European Union; both Canada and Japan have bilateral strategic dialogue talks with the U.S., but not with each other.

Canada should move to cement a strategic partnership with Japan as soon as possible. Such a partnership would build on the solid foundation of relations that have already been established, strengthen national and regional security, and help Canada achieve many of the aims of its Indo-Pacific strategy. ✨

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Jeff Kucharski is a Senior Fellow at MLI. His current research is focused on energy security, international trade, the geopolitics of energy and the Indo-Pacific.



## Now more than ever we must resist an illiberal turn against free speech

*Sides are shifting in the battle for free speech in the aftermath of Hamas terror.*

**Kaveh Shahrooz**  
**Aaron Wudrick**

**I**n the wake of Hamas's brutal attack on Israel and the subsequent armed response, the pitched battle over free speech and cancel-culture in the West has suddenly taken an unexpected turn.

Until recently it was the “woke” left deplatforming speakers, calling for boycotts of those who questioned leftist orthodoxy, or firing people for making arguments that progressive cultural arbiters deemed “hateful”. Progressives often denied that cancel-culture even exists, but when pressed would defend punishing the holders of heterodox opinions on the basis that

*This is not the first  
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and right have  
switched sides on  
the issue of  
free speech.*

free speech does not mean freedom from consequences.

The political right, often on the receiving end of cancellation attempts, made championing free speech a cornerstone principle.

Almost overnight, these roles were reversed.

In response to deeply offensive rallies and statements coming from the left that seemed to champion (or at least condone) Hamas, it was suddenly the right calling for the government to ban pro-Palestine demonstrations, demanding that those taking part in such protests be fired from their jobs, and even going so far as calling for these people to be blacklisted from future employment opportunities.

Meanwhile, progressive-dominated institutions have conveniently rediscovered a passion for free speech. Harvard University, for example, sits near the bottom of university free speech rankings. Yet suddenly, when faced with criticism for not censoring student groups that applauded Hamas, Harvard President Claudine Gay

Illustration created using Stock

put out a statement celebrating Harvard's commitment to free expression.

This is not the first time that the left and right have switched sides on the issue of free speech. In an earlier era, it was the religious right calling for censorship of material it considered to be immoral and the left defending freedom of expression.

The constant shifts in position suggest that many people and institutions want free speech for themselves but their support for those same protections evaporates in the face of ideas they abhor.

But a selective commitment to principle is no commitment at all.

and libelous assertions. This should continue to be the norm in civilized societies.

Nor does it mean that we must refrain from expressing moral outrage or passing judgment on those who hold abhorrent opinions. Offensive speech can, and often should, be met with condemnation and rebuttal from institutions, government and the public at large – but this is not the same thing as outlawing it.

When in doubt, our institutions should err on the side of speech. Substantive institutional punishment for speech that is legally permitted should be rare and reserved for truly extreme cases. Expressing

minor infractions, we began to see a growing trend of groveling apologies, uncomfortably reminiscent of Maoist struggle sessions. These apologies would often be rejected by a ferocious online mob which, sensing weakness, called for blood. But an unforgiving society in which expressing the wrong idea or even telling an off-colour joke can render one persona non grata indefinitely is, by definition, a highly illiberal one. And it is not one in which any decent person would wish to live.

The solution here is largely cultural. It requires that our institutions not immediately fire or blacklist people when faced

*The constant shifts in position suggest that many people and institutions want free speech for themselves but their support for those same protections evaporates in the face of ideas they abhor.*

So it is perhaps at this moment, when both right and left have felt the harsh sting of cancel culture, that we can collectively articulate principles that will protect the ability of all sides to express views that others find distasteful.

The first and most important principle that should guide lawmakers and institutions that influence speech rights alike is that society's zone of permitted speech should be as broad as possible. A free society starts from the premise that all humans are fallible and must continuously search for truth through vigorous debate. Our laws, policies, and norms therefore should be designed to free people to openly question accepted orthodoxies without having to fear financial, professional or reputational ruin.

This should not be mistaken for a 'absolutist' interpretation of free speech. Words that incite "imminent lawless action" and public incitement and wilful promotion of hatred are criminalized in the U.S. and Canada, respectively. Most democratic countries also rightly punish fraudulent statements

views on controversial topics, be it the view that Israel is to blame for the conflict in Gaza or that there are only two genders, should not lead to a person losing their livelihood or having their right to peaceful protest outlawed.

To achieve this outcome, government officials must show leadership by refusing to cave to demands for censorship. Further, employment laws should be modernized to make it harder for employers to fire someone for political expression outside the workplace. Doing so would blunt the destructive power of cancel culture to threaten livelihoods.

A second principle that will hopefully protect us from the excesses of cancel culture is cultivating a culture of forgiveness and second chances. Everyone makes mistakes, and there should exist a path to redemption – especially in a world where simply Googling someone's name can reveal the worst mistakes they've ever made.

In recent years, as progressives cancelled many people for increasingly

with organized pressure tactics to do so. Instead, they should develop thoughtful ways for people who have expressed genuinely repulsive views, not just politically unpopular ones, to learn why their community rejects such views. If the speaker shows genuine remorse and makes amends, they should eventually be forgiven.

The left and the right each portray the other side's speech as "hate speech" and accuse opponents of "censorship". But many of these claims are in the eye of the beholder, and still others are made in bad faith.

The effect of this, as both sides have now experienced, has been a poisoned atmosphere. The free speech values that have served liberal democratic societies well for the past few centuries are the antidote. It is time for us to rediscover those values. ❁

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**Kaveh Shahrooz** is a lawyer, human-rights activist and senior fellow at MLI. **Aaron Wudrick** is the domestic policy director at MLI.



# Has there been a *Zeitenwende* in NATO?

*At the start of the conflict, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz declared Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine occasioned a *Zeitenwende* - imperfectly translated into English as a 'turning of the times'.*

## Alexander Lanoszka

Over 600 days have passed since German Chancellor Olaf Scholz gave a landmark speech to the Bundestag wherein he declared that Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine has occasioned a *Zeitenwende*. Imperfectly translated into English as "a turning of the times", the *Zeitenwende* necessitated a dramatic change in Germany's foreign and defence policies, with Scholz announcing the creation of a €100 billion fund dedicated to recapitalizing the Bundeswehr (armed forces). More broadly, the *Zeitenwende* speech has signalled a dramatic change in NATO's basic approach to the security challenge posed by Russia. Containment had effectively become NATO's strategy following years of attempted compromise and appeasement.

Has there really been a *Zeitenwende* in the time that has passed since Scholz's address? Certainly, in those early and heady days when columns of Russian tanks were still advancing on Kyiv, a massive change seemed afoot within the alliance. Political leaders across NATO countries were issuing a flurry of policy statements against Russia's aggression and reaffirming Ukraine's territorial integrity. Yet, with some distance, one can better assess whether the dramatic transformation that the term *Zeitenwende* invokes really took place in 2022.

The answer, as ever, is 'it depends.' Such hedging may seem to dodge the question, but it is nevertheless appropriate when thinking about how Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine has affected NATO.

The positive case that *Zeitenwende* did take place has much going for it. Germany



Doorstep statement by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the start of the meetings of NATO Ministers of Defence, October 2023.

NATO | flickr

“  
Containment had  
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compromise and  
appeasement.”

and its NATO partners did make significant policy choices that will have lasting effects. That Germany provided large quantities of lethal military equipment to Ukraine is the most obvious manifestation of the alliance's new, more assertive approach. Between

2014 and 2021, Germany offered only token military support. The 5,000 helmets and military field hospital that Germany gave Ukraine, with the latter largely produced by Estonia, underwhelmed many observers. By contrast, through 2022 and early 2023, Germany provided a besieged Ukraine with MARS 270 Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS), PZH 2000 Howitzers, Gepard anti-aircraft guns, IRIS-T air defence systems and even Leopard 2A6 tanks.

Of course, negotiations to provide military assistance to Ukraine were tortuous and involved much protracted bargaining that ultimately came at the expense of Ukrainian lives. The German ship-of-state prioritizes stability over speed and, like a massive container ship at sea, it takes a long time to shift course. Yet the fact remains that Germany has gone from one of Ukraine's most miserly partners to one of its most generous. German air defence

systems have proven crucial to the relief of Ukrainian cities against the onslaught of Russia's aerial assaults. Critically, German arms maker Rheinmetall recently announced that it will build and repair tanks in Ukraine in partnership with the state-owned Ukroboronprom, thus helping to ensure that country's long-term defence prospects.

NATO itself has also seen major changes since the start of 2022. The most visible change was the addition of Finland to its ranks, with Sweden likely to follow. Historically, both countries had strategic cultures that placed an emphasis on maintaining neutrality between NATO and Russia, at least officially. Their decision to join the alliance thus upended long-standing tradition. From NATO's perspective, their inclusion takes much of the guesswork out of plan-

defences. Ammunition production, so long neglected, has finally become a priority for defence establishments in Europe and the United States. Finally, although these policy changes are taking place at the national and European Union levels, NATO members have made major strides in curbing their dependency on Russian energy.

These changes do indeed point to a turning of the times that *Zeitenwende* evokes. Nevertheless, as there are reasons to think that it is easy to exaggerate how things have changed for NATO. Taking a longer-term perspective, from 2014 onwards, defence budgets were already rising across the alliance, partly because of the regional security challenge that Russia now posed following its seizure of Crimea and destabilization of the Donbas region. The 2016 NATO Warsaw Summit might be the most

and the German/Swedish-made Taurus cruise missiles. The criticism that NATO members have given Ukraine enough to survive but not enough to win is not unfounded. The Government of Canada, for example, has not negotiated new contracts for ammunition production despite the fact that Ukraine is, for all intents and purposes, fighting an artillery war. Canada, along with other allies, will struggle to turn its battlegroup from a battalion to a brigade. Ironically, Germany has left the €100 billion defence fund that Scholz announced over 600 days ago largely unspent. Structural constraints created by years of underinvestment still hinder Germany's ability to meet its defence spending targets.

These observations suggest that the changes that NATO made in 2022 were mostly differences in scale rather than in

*The shock and outrage provoked by Russia's brutal aggression towards Ukraine has led to an uptick of defence spending across the alliance.*

ning for a contingency in the Baltic region that could involve, particularly thanks to the presence of Finland (and eventually Sweden) on the North Atlantic Council.

Other changes are worth highlighting. The shock and outrage provoked by Russia's brutal aggression towards Ukraine has led to an uptick of defence spending across the alliance. New battlegroups came into formation in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia while pledging to expand those already in place in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland into brigades. NATO members are now finally making moves to acquire capabilities that they arguably should have nurtured years ago. For example, Latvia and Estonia are now cooperating on procuring air defence systems, while Romania and Bulgaria are looking to rebuild their navies and coastal

consequential meeting that the alliance has held since Russia's first incursions into Ukraine. The members first agreed to put multinational battalion-sized battlegroups in Poland and the Baltic countries at the Warsaw Summit, setting the precedent for the deployment of subsequent battlegroups, in 2022 and beyond. Though their decision to formally join NATO had much symbolic meaning, Sweden and Finland had already cultivated high levels of defence cooperation with many members of the alliance, especially after 2014.

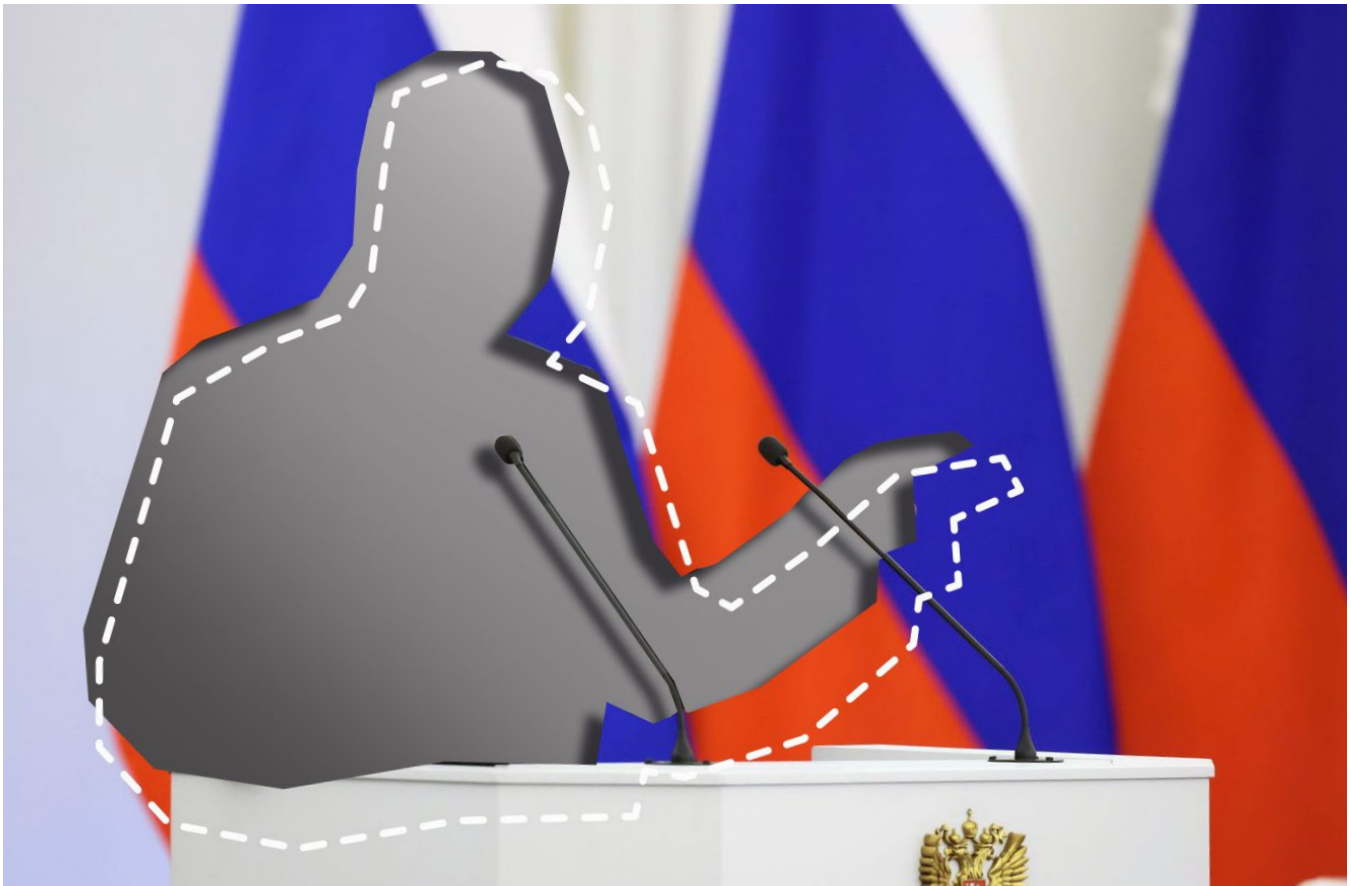
Some of the more positive aspects of the *Zeitenwende* can also be overstated. Although NATO members have pledged and delivered to Ukraine significant military assistance, they are still withholding key long-range systems like the U.S.-made Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS)

kind. Whether these developments truly reflect a *Zeitenwende* may be beside the point, considering that the alliance has such a large and diverse membership. Because its own founding treaty reflects Westphalian principles of sovereignty, NATO is constitutionally unable to go about radical change, especially in such a short time. The positive achievements thus merit acclaim. However, so long as Russia is present in Ukraine and threatens overarching Euro-Atlantic interests, much hard work remains to be done. ❁

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## Hope for a post-Putin Russia

*A large segment of Russia's population has persistently voiced a desire for a democratic future.*

*Canada and its allies could help.*

### Marcus Kolga

For more than two decades, Vladimir Putin has consolidated his power and dashed any hope of democratic transformation in Russia. His actions have dragged his nation back towards neo-Stalinist totalitarianism and a perpetual state of war and violence. While the possibility of a democratic and free post-Putin Russia may seem remote today, it is not without hope. By supporting Russian independent journalism and civil society organizations, Canada and its allies can help activists maintain and eventually realize the hope of a democratic future.

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Since 2000, Vladimir Putin has relentlessly chiseled away at Russia's post-Cold War potential, creating an Orwellian mafia-state through political repression, rampant corruption, the suppression of free media, and costly neo-imperialist wars like the one currently ravaging Ukraine. He has weaponized misinformation against his own people, creating false realities that distract from his failed leadership. This includes manipulating history, rehabilitating Stalin, glorifying Soviet colonization, and fostering radical Russian nationalism, xenophobia, and irrational fear and animosity toward the Western democratic world.



Through disinformation and conspiracies, Putin has fashioned an image of an all-powerful Russian leader who is uniquely qualified to defend Russia against the “pure Satanism” of the West and the “fabricated threat” of NATO imperialism. Putin’s – and thereby Russia’s – domestic adversaries include the LGBTQ community, pro-democracy liberals, and anyone who challenges his official narratives or authority.

Putin relies on disinformation and conspiracies to deflect attention from his failure to improve the quality of life for ordinary Russians over the past two decades, while simultaneously reinforcing the impunity of the kleptocrats who support his regime. A 2019 report by Russian auditors revealed that one-third of Russian medical facilities lacked running water, over 40 percent were without central heating, and 35 percent had no sewage systems.

repression. Boris Nemtsov, among the brightest symbols of hope for a free and democratic Russia, was assassinated in 2015 near the Kremlin. Vladimir Kara-Murza, Nemtsov’s protégé, narrowly survived two poisoning attempts and is now serving a 25-year sentence in harsh conditions for his human rights advocacy and criticism of the Putin regime. Alexey Navalny suffered a similar fate and was arrested upon his return to Moscow from Germany in January 2021. Over 3,000 Russians who protested Navalny’s detention (including 300 children) were arrested; many of them were beaten in clashes with Russian police. The Kremlin’s relentless and severe repression spares no one, regardless of age or social standing.

The latest phase of Russia’s war against Ukraine has intensified government repression, censorship, and informational warfare, both at home and abroad. Anti-war

Southern Military District in Rostov and then on to Moscow. Prigozhin’s march was not motivated by democratic principles or values, but by jealousy, personal grievances and a demand for more freedom and support for his troops fighting Putin’s war in Ukraine.

In a video posted on June 23, Prigozhin publicly exposed Putin’s false justifications for Russia’s invasions of Ukraine, revealing that there never was a credible threat from Ukraine or NATO, and that the Kremlin was concealing true Russian casualty rates. Despite this, the overarching demand of his march was not for an end to the war, but for further unrestrained violence towards Ukraine and Ukrainians.

Having occupied the city of Rostov and Russia’s Southern Military District Headquarters, his 5,000 soldiers stopped 200 kilometres short of marching into Moscow after Prigozhin accepted a deal to redirect his private army into exile in Belarus. A few



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This toxic blend of disinformation and stagnation fosters a climate of paranoia and reverence for power and violence, laying the groundwork for bloody conflicts and Russia’s murderous aggression against Ukraine. Putin’s wars, from those against Chechen separatists in the early 2000s to those in Georgia and Ukraine in 2014, are in part, designed to appease a Russian populace deprived of the standard of living, democracy, human rights, and freedoms commonly enjoyed in the West.

The Russian pro-democracy opposition and the anti-corruption activists who have courageously exposed and criticized the regime’s abuses have endured severe

protests have been violently suppressed, with over 13,500 protestors arrested in the first two weeks of the conflict. Human Rights Watch reported at the time that “the police used excessive force against protesters while detaining them and, in several instances, inflicted abuse amounting to torture or inhuman and degrading treatment, on those in custody.”

Fear of arrest and reprisals have effectively suppressed protestors for the time being but a new challenge emerged in June 2023 when Yevgeni Prigozhin, a former close ally of Putin and head of the infamous Wagner private militia, ordered his soldiers to march on the headquarters of Russia’s

weeks later, the crash of Prigozhin’s private jet outside of Moscow sent a deadly message to any future insurrectionists who might be considering plotting against Putin.

Prigozhin’s sole positive impact may have been exposing Putin’s vulnerability and suggesting that change in Russia might not be as impossible as many believe it to be. Despite Prigozhin’s own fate, the shattering of the illusion of Putin’s invincibility was a significant development that may yet embolden pro-democracy activists and even members of the elite to seriously contemplate the possibility of political change in Russia.

Almost all Russian pro-democracy civil society activists share the common dream of

a democratic, post-Putin Russia, although their thoughts on how to get there diverge. With many leading dissidents forced into exile over the past decade, the regime's media censorship and widespread repression of civil society present significant challenges in raising awareness and organizing activists inside Russia. While most seek a peaceful transition to democracy, others, like former Russian parliamentarian Ilya Ponomarev, are working towards a more radical approach.

Over the past year, Ponomarev has led the development of the Congress of People's Deputies while living in exile. The Congress, a collection of dissident former Russian officials – and, clandestinely, some current ones – shadows the Russian parliament and government, positioning itself as a transitional government-in-waiting. Ponomarev also heads the Freedom of Russia Legion, comprising around 1,400 soldiers who, according to him, are on standby for an armed rebellion against Putin, if and when it should occur. Using Prigozhin's aborted march on Moscow as a proof-of-concept, Ponomarev envisions expanding the Legion to 5,000 or more troops, and launching a second march – only this time, with a determined resolution. He said during a recent appearance in Vilnius, Lithuania, that he promises free tours of the Kremlin for all those who join him.

Despite the severe repression of pro-democracy and human rights activists (as well as journalists) through assassinations, arbitrary arrests, threats, intimidation, and violent repression, hope remains. Opposition leaders in exile continue to fight for change, and, crucially, Russian independent journalists remain steadfast in pushing back against the Kremlin's fabrications and conspiracies. This is one area where the Western world can offer support.

Reflecting on pivotal moments from the 2012 pro-democracy protests in Moscow, spearheaded by since-assassinated Putin rival Boris Nemtsov, to the January



*A large segment of Russia's population has persistently voiced a desire for a democratic future.*

2021 demonstrations in support of Alexey Navalny, a large segment of Russia's population has persistently voiced a desire for a democratic future.

If a democratic Russia that respects human rights, the rule of law, its neighbors' sovereignty, and global peace and stability is in our interests, we must support Russian human rights and pro-democracy movements. As my friend and imprisoned Russian dissident Vladimir Kara-Murza has often emphasized, historically, political change in Russia occurs suddenly and seemingly out-of-nowhere. Canada and its allies can assist Russian civil society organizations in succeeding when that window for democratic transformation opens. In other words, we can help ensure that pro-democracy activists are prepared to lead their countries towards a democratic future, knowing that they have the support

of their friends among the community of democracies.

The success of Russian pro-democracy activists is dependent on work of the brave independent journalists who challenge the regime's toxic stream of lies and fabricated conspiracies with truth and facts. They expose the regime's corruption, its criminal repression of its own citizens and the atrocities it commits abroad. Canada's leadership in supporting international media freedom should extend to independent Russian and Belarusian journalists and platforms. Funding should be made available for the training of journalists – to ensure their safety and to intensify their reach and impact.

Supporting the development of a strong community of independent Russian and Belarusian journalists will contribute to the overall defence of the democratic world against Russian misinformation operations. The increased production of high-quality content by independent journalists would challenge the dominance of the Putin and Lukashenko regimes in their domestic information environments, forcing them to adopt a defensive stance in the broader information domain.

Left alone and isolated, this task is formidable for the journalists and activists who find themselves underground or in exile. With the support of the community of democracies, it is not insurmountable.

Driven by their commitment to transforming their nations, Russian and Belarusian activists and journalists are innovating ways to elude state censors and authorities to disseminate reliable information in the face of aggressive state propaganda. This includes new ways of connecting with large audiences inside both countries and the strategic development of content that promotes democratic values to otherwise apolitical audiences.

Western support for some of the most vulnerable journalists, those who continue operating inside of Russia and Belarus, is

vitality important to ensuring the sustained flow of factual information from regions outside of primary urban centres. Reporting from stringers, operating outside of Moscow, St. Petersburg and Minsk, is sent back – often at great personal risk – to journalists in exile and published in the form of text, podcasts and videos online and on social media platforms like *Telegram*. The risks that these journalists take can be mitigated with training that focuses on cyber and physical safety, as well as with contingency plans to evacuate them if they face arrest (or worse).

Experienced Russian and Belarusian journalists in exile should receive support to train early career and aspiring journalists and cultivate their investigative skills

in Russia and Belarus through accessible platforms and employ them to train others to do the same.

3. Expanding the ability of those under authoritarian rule to safely circumvent state censors using existing technologies (VPNs, Samizdat Online) and develop new ways to access independent journalism and independently verified facts.

4. Providing training for Russian and Belarusian journalists to perform their jobs safely, offering tools to protect themselves against state repression and strategies to cope with intimidation, information warfare, and psychological warfare.

5. Ensuring the long-term sustainability and quality of independent journalism in

prolong his stay in power well into the next decade, his rule will end one day. Similarly, Alexander Lukashenko's authoritarian grip on Belarus will not last forever. (Putin is now in his 70s and Lukashenko will be turning 70 next year).

There are no guarantees that, when political change eventually occurs in Russia or Belarus, the forces of democracy will prevail, as recently witnessed by Yevgeni Prigozhin's march on Moscow. However, change is inevitable and it's only a question of when it will come.

If we envision a future with a free and democratic Russia and Belarus that uphold human rights, the rule of law, sovereignty, and peaceful coexistence

*Western support for some of the most vulnerable journalists, those who continue operating inside of Russia and Belarus, is vitally important.*

through the utilization of open-source intelligence methods, existing databases, satellite imagery, and sources within Russia and Belarus.

The facts and truths uncovered by independent journalists, along with the content they produce, are essential not only for aiding pro-democracy activists but also for maintaining the well-being of Russian and Belarusian communities in exile – whether in the Baltics, Canada, or elsewhere.

Canada and its allies should consider supporting:

1. Independent Russian and Belarusian journalists who expose the corruption of autocratic leaders, state officials, and the oligarchs who support them.

2. Journalists who have become adept at connecting with apolitical audiences

authoritarian countries like Russia and Belarus by supporting content creation and training aspiring journalists.

6. Supporting reporting from the non-urban regions of Russia and Belarus, where there is, at present, very little or no independent information available.

7. Amplifying the voices of independent Russian and Belarusian journalists in Western media to foster greater understanding and awareness of their cause.

Armed with facts and information from a robust community of independent journalists, civil society activists in Belarus and Russia will possess the ammunition needed to challenge corrupt authoritarian regimes and champion the ideals of democracy, freedom, and human rights.

While Vladimir Putin continues to manipulate Russia's constitution to

with their neighbors, we currently have an opportunity to support the civil society activists and independent journalists who will play key roles in realizing that vision. By aiding in their development, bolstering their resilience against repression, and encouraging their success, we will enhance their capacity to guide their nations away from dark autocratic pasts toward democracy, peace, and freedom.

Ultimately, if our defence of democratic values is confined to mere rhetoric without translating it into concrete, measured, and targeted action, we will never effectively counter the threat posed by Vladimir Putin and his growing axis of totalitarian allies. ✪

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