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## Tuesday, February 19, 2019

## Chair

**Mr. Michael Levitt**

# Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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● (0845)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.)):** Good morning, everyone. I call to order the 127th meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

This morning we will be continuing our study on Canada's support for international democratic development. We will be hearing from four individuals this morning. Our first two speakers are on the line.

First, from London, England, from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, we have Anthony Smith, the chief executive officer.

Good morning, sir, or good afternoon.

**Mr. Anthony Smith (Chief Executive Officer, Westminster Foundation for Democracy):** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** From Washington, D.C., from the National Endowment for Democracy, we have Carl Gershman, the president.

Gentlemen, I would ask you to deliver your introductions, each taking maybe slightly less than 10 minutes. I know that everybody will have lots of questions for you. We'll finish off the hour with those.

Mr. Smith, perhaps I could have you begin.

**Mr. Anthony Smith:** Thank you very much, Chair. I'll try to be quicker than that.

I'm very grateful for your invitation to give evidence to this inquiry. Having read the remarks of some of your previous witnesses, I won't repeat some of the general points they made about the recent trends in democratic governance and what they said about the importance of supporting democracy around the world. I fully endorse what they said and I also strongly endorse the points they made about the importance of Canadian support for democratic governance.

I think the most useful contribution I can make to your committee is probably to describe the origins and governance of my organization, its current work and some of the factors that have affected our approach in recent years.

The Westminster Foundation for Democracy was established in 1992 at the initiative of a cross-party group of parliamentarians who wanted to support their counterparts in eastern Europe and in other regions that were enjoying new freedoms following the end of the Cold War. Since our Parliament did not have the means to fund such work, they approached the British government which, having looked at the practices in the U.S. and Germany in particular, decided to establish our foundation. Since then, our governance structure and mission have remained broadly the same.

We are an arm's-length body of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, so the board and the CEO are appointed by the foreign secretary. The board is non-executive and has six political members. At present, they are all members of Parliament—they don't have to be. It has four non-political members as well.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office approves our strategy, but we have operational independence in our work. Although we are not a parliamentary body, the Speaker of the House of Commons is our patron, and we work very closely with all the U.K.'s Parliaments, including the devolved Parliament and assemblies. The U.K. political parties are obviously critically important to us. Our mission remains the same now as it was in 1992: to support improvements in democratic governance in developing and transition countries.

Today we have offices in 30 countries and we work with four main stakeholders: Parliament, political parties, electoral bodies and civil society. Our focus is the quality of the political system in our partner countries, so our main areas of thematic focus are women's political participation, inclusion of marginalized groups, accountability and transparency.

Our dominant methodology is peer-to-peer support, sharing experiences among counterparts. The details of each program are different and tailored to the requirements of our individual partners. I can provide examples later on. There are also many in our annual report and on our website. We also have a small research program and a research partnership with the University of Birmingham in England.

On our funding, we receive an annual grant from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. This has been steady at £3.5 million in recent years. We also receive grants from the U.K. government, and from a range of other donors for programs in specific countries or regions for which we usually compete with other organizations. Our overall revenue this year will be about £17 million.

Let me just mention three factors that have affected our recent approach to the work in this area. The first factor is interests versus values. We are very much a values-driven organization, but we can no long rely on values alone to persuade donors to invest in democracy support. We also point out that democracy is a critical contributor to all the U.K.'s international priorities from security through to prosperity, from poverty reduction through to carbon reduction. My guess is that it's the same for Canada and all our other allies in their international priorities.

We also want to be clearer than in the past about the specific elements of democratic practice that count, be it financial oversight, policy-driven political parties or gender-sensitive parliaments. It's no good anymore just to say that we support the general idea of democracy. We have to be much more specific than that.

● (0850)

The second factor that affects our work is that change takes time. We believe that progress comes through patient investment in a combination of institutions and leadership. Institutions need skills and a political culture that's adaptive, tolerant and resilient in the face of the inevitable challenges that every country will face, but every country also needs leadership to respond to those challenges and to take up opportunities when they arise.

In some ways, time in this work is more valuable than money. Democracy needs modest resources but abundant patience. I would add that for us as an organization, the position that we're in today, which is feeling pretty strong at home, has taken 25 years of work to get to. So we've needed patience domestically as well.

These two factors feed into the final one that I want to mention, namely, how to work as effectively as possible to support democracy. My feeling in the U.K., and my observation in other countries, is that effectiveness has to start with a clear policy. Each country, be it the U.K., the U.S., Canada or whichever it might be, needs a well-developed democracy support policy that will secure broad political consensus. We haven't all had that all of the time, but I think it is a very important element.

With a strong policy, we can establish a coherent approach across government and help to maintain support over a long period. Without a strong policy, there is a risk of incoherence and a short-term approach.

Mr. Chair, I'm happy to elaborate on any of those points, but those are the main things that I wanted to say to start off the discussion.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We are now going to Carl Gershman.

Sir, please begin your remarks.

**Mr. Carl Gershman (President, National Endowment for Democracy):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the committee for inviting me to testify this morning.

I applaud the fact that you're initiating a study of Canada's role in democratic development around the world. I've long believed that Canada has a critically important role to play in this field, never more so than at the present time.

NED was founded 35 years ago, at a hopeful moment, when what was subsequently called the third wave of democratization was just beginning to gather momentum. As, of course, we well know, the current period is very, very different. The year 2018 marked the 13th consecutive year, according to Freedom House, in which democracy has declined around the world. This period has seen the rising power and assertiveness of authoritarian states like China, Russia and Iran; the backsliding of once democratic countries like Turkey, Venezuela, the Philippines, Thailand and Hungary; and the rise of populist and nationalist movements and parties in the established democracies. Autocratic regimes have tried to repress independent groups working to promote greater freedom and to cut them off from international assistance, from institutions like the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute, NED's party institutes. They've also passed harsh laws that make it illegal for NGOs to receive foreign assistance.

The work nonetheless goes on and has even been expanding, which is a testament to the determination and the courage of indigenous groups that want to continue to work and receive needed assistance despite the risks. We should not forget that despite all the backsliding, there have also been important gains over the past year in Ethiopia, Armenia and Malaysia. NED provided support to democrats in all of these countries before the political openings, which positioned us to quickly scale up our support once the openings occurred. This is an example of our commitment and ability to navigate around the obstacles created by authoritarian regimes and to continue to provide assistance, while taking care to protect the safety of our grantees.

NED is an unusual institution. It was built to take on tough challenges. Following President Reagan's historic Westminster address in 1982, which called for a new effort to support democracy throughout the world, NED was created as a non-governmental organization governed by a private and independent board of directors. NED receives its core funding in the form of an annual congressional appropriation that was authorized in the National Endowment for Democracy Act passed in 1983. The NED Act also built a firewall between the endowment and the executive branch of our government.

NED is a private, bipartisan, grant-making institution that steers clear of immediate policy disputes and takes a long-term approach to democratic development. In addition to supporting grassroots democratic initiatives, it also serves as a hub of activity, resources and intellectual exchange for democracy activists, practitioners and analysts around the world.

NED takes a multisectoral approach to democratic assistance, funding programs by its four core institutes, which represent our two major political parties, the business community and the labour movement. I'm aware that you heard from the presidents of our two party institutes, NDI and IRI, just two weeks ago. Each of the NED's four core institutes is able to access its sector's expertise and experience from all over the world. In addition, its targeted demand-driven small grants program responds directly to the needs of local NGOs, defends human rights, strengthens independent media and civic education, and empowers women and youth in a manner that enables them to establish credibility as independent democratizing forces in their own societies.

As an autonomous institution dedicated to supporting democracy, NED can steadily strengthen indigenous civil society organizations, learn through trial and error, and build important networks of trust and collaboration that can be effective over the long term.

As a nimble private organization with no field offices abroad, NED has developed a reputation for acting swiftly, flexibly and effectively in providing vital assistance to activists working in the most challenging environments. It also devotes enormous efforts to monitoring the work of our grantees and to fulfilling our fiduciary responsibilities in the careful management of taxpayer funds.

● (0855)

NED further leverages its grants program through networking and recognition activities that provide political support and solidarity to front-line activists. These activities include the World Movement for Democracy, which networks democracy activists globally; the Center for International Media Assistance; the Reagan-Fascell democracy fellows program; and our own democracy award events on Capitol Hill.

NED also promotes scholarly research through the International Forum for Democratic Studies and the Journal of Democracy, giving activists access to the latest insights on aiding democratic transitions and strengthening liberal values, and also helping to inform thinking internationally on critical new challenges facing democracy.

In 2015, the Congress provided NED with additional funds to develop a strategic plan to respond to resurgent authoritarianism. As part of this plan, NED now funds programs that address six strategic priorities: helping civil society respond to repression; defending the integrity of the information space; countering extremism and promoting pluralism and tolerance; reversing the failure of governance in many transitional countries; countering the kleptocracy that is a pillar of modern authoritarianism; and strengthening co-operation among democracies in meeting the threat to democracy.

By pursuing common strategic objectives, the entire net effort has become stronger and more integrated, with greater co-operation taking place across the different regions and among the five institutions—NED and its four core institutes—that comprise what we call the NED family.

As Canada thinks about how to establish an effective, and cost-effective, way to advance democracy in the world, I suggest that you consider the distinction that is drawn in a new European report between what it calls top-down and bottom-up approaches to democracy assistance. In essence, the top-down approach supports the incremental reform of, for example, the judiciary or other institutions, often in a technocratic way and in partnership with governments that may be only superficially committed to democratic reform. The alternative bottom-up approach responds to and seeks to empower local actors in addressing immediate challenges that they face and developing their capacity to promote reform and institutional accountability over the long term. The report recommends a substantial strengthening of the bottom-up instruments, such as the European Endowment for Democracy, an organization modelled on NED, which the report says has been effective in dealing with the current difficult challenges.

I want to conclude by stating my strong and long-held belief that Canada has the ability to make an important contribution to strengthening democracy internationally, especially at this very uncertain moment when liberal democracy is under attack around the world. You have hundreds of dedicated democracy practitioners, many of them veterans of NDI and IRI programs, who have the experience to lead a new Canadian effort.

The U.S. is still engaged in this work, and there is strong bipartisan support in the Congress for what NED does and for human rights and democracy more generally. However, the American voice is now more muted than in the past, and the time has come for Canada to step up and provide a new source of democratic energy and drive.

There are many practical ways that you can help, but the decision to create a new instrument to provide such help will itself be an important act of democratic solidarity, one that will give hope to many brave activists and make our world a safer and more peaceful place.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

● (0900)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much to both of you.

We'll move right into questions. We're going to begin with MP Alleslev, please.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC):** Thank you very much to both of you for being here and helping out with this important conversation.

My first question is for both of you.

It's quite concerning that we've seen 13 consecutive years of the erosion of democracy. I'd like to know, one, has that erosion over the past 13 years been equal, or have we seen it accelerating in recent history? Two, with all the work that the U.K. and all of us—the international bodies and even Canada without a specific institution—have been doing, why are we still seeing a significant erosion? To what would you attribute that erosion? What problem are we trying to solve?

Anthony.

● (0905)

**Mr. Anthony Smith:** My response to the first question is that I don't believe there is a continuing acceleration of decline. I think the decline coincided with a period of a range of crises in the world, including an economic crisis. The causes of it range from the political conflicts that resulted from those crises along with the phenomenon we've seen of countries adopting the form of democracy but in a hollow way, without the reality of a democratic culture underpinning that form. Many people who had an autocratic approach to government learned how best to maintain power without resorting to the more extreme forms of autocracy we've seen in the past.

As to why the erosion has taken place, I think that's partly covered by the answer I just gave. We mustn't forget that there has been a hugely welcome amount of progress in the world in terms of democracy over the last 50 years. If you look back even further, you should be even more encouraged. The erosion is something that has happened because politics is difficult in places. The ability of people to exploit weaknesses in democratic institutions has increased. People learn lessons and share those lessons about how to do that.

I think we all have to keep doing our work. As I said in my opening statement, this is slow, patient work in many places. The experience that the three countries represented in this meeting have of building our democracies over generations is something that many other countries don't have yet. They are still working on that. It does take time.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Mr. Gershman.

**Mr. Carl Gershman:** I don't know that there has been an acceleration, but the trend is steady and very worrisome. I think we should start by at least recalling....

I referred earlier in my testimony to the third wave of democratization. That was the period that began with the fall of the Portuguese military in 1974 and then grew and expanded. It really covered the whole world except for the Arab Middle East, which then had the revolutions of 2011. This really came to a head at the end of the 1990s. The number of democracies in the world reached a peak in 2005 of about 125. We've seen this reversal since then.

I should point out that in the theory put forward by Samuel Huntington about the third wave, he said that the third wave assumes the possibility of a reverse wave, just as the first two waves of democratization had reverse waves with the rise of communism and fascism in the 1930s. Then there was the backsliding in the newly decolonized countries in the 1960s and 1970s, with the rise of military dictatorships in Latin America.

I might note that in 1976, Daniel Patrick Moynihan said that democracy is “where the world was, not where the world is going”. It was a very pessimistic moment. He had been ambassador in India, and India had an emergency at that time, yet that was at the very point where the third wave of democratization was beginning. We shouldn't get too upset by these reversals. They are sort of built into the process of development. In terms of reversal, obviously there are things like the economic crisis of 2008, globalization and the fact that many people have been left out of globalization, and the so-called dictator's learning curve, where dictators learn how to use forms of democratization while increasing repression, making it more difficult to attack them. All of these things are factors.

I did point out in my testimony that we should not forget that gains have been made. What's happening now in Ethiopia, Armenia, Malaysia and even Tunisia, the first Arab democracy, is very, very important. We need to be able to encourage those trends. The political scientists, in talking about the current period, do not use the term “reverse wave”. They do not feel we're in a reverse wave. It has been called a recession. It may get worse, and this is what we have to fight against, but I would not exaggerate the backlash and the backsliding.

● (0910)

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** That leads to my next question.

Both of you have institutions that have been in place for quite some time. If you had to do it over again, and you were starting to create an institution at this moment, what key things would you do differently or focus on to set it up for success, recognizing this moment in time and where we're going next?

**The Chair:** Gentlemen, we have about 30 seconds left, so you might want to address that as part of an answer to a subsequent question. If you want to take a very brief amount of time each, I'm happy to let you do so.

**Mr. Anthony Smith:** I'll build that into a—

**The Chair:** You'll build it into a future one. Okay.

We're going to move to MP Vandenbeld, please.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

Thank you, both of you, for coming here and showing models of what this could look like.

I'd like to direct my first question to Mr. Gershman.

It's good to see you again. In your opening remarks, you mentioned that Canada has a critical role to play. I wonder if you could elaborate on that. In what particular niche area do you think Canada could play a role? Particularly in terms of the previous question, how do you think we could learn from the institutions that exist around the world? What should we be doing in terms of our own democracy promotion?

**Mr. Carl Gershman:** Canada is a parliamentary democracy, and I do think it has an important role to play in strengthening parliaments around the world. It also is a country that has played a lead role in a number of critical countries, like Iran, Ukraine and many others. I think Canada is primed to be able to help in those countries. These are very difficult countries, and I think Canada can develop the capacity to work in a low-profile way in these very difficult countries, especially the more authoritarian countries like Russia, Iran or even China. I think it's possible.

We have, frankly, a very significant program in North Korea. The programs are actually supporting groups in South Korea working in North Korea, but really, it's possible to find openings in many places around the world to work and to support democracy activists who are all over the world.

I think Canada, working closely and with its experience and the networks it already has, has the capacity to connect with all of these networks and to work quietly in these very difficult places.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** My second question is for both of you.

Both of you mentioned the importance of a long-term presence on the ground.

I think, Mr. Gershman, you said that in certain places you were able to scale up when there was a window because of the presence and the networks that were there.

I'd like to talk about not just the physical presence of having an office in a country but also the movements and the networks. I'm thinking of the World Movement for Democracy and other networks. How important is it?

Mr. Smith, you mentioned that time is more important than money, which is a very significant statement, I think.

Perhaps we could start with Mr. Gershman and then Mr. Smith about the importance of having a constant presence.

**Mr. Carl Gershman:** Regarding the question of offices, first of all, let me underline that the NED is a unique institution with its four institutes. We are not a programmatic agency. We're a grant-making agency with an oversight responsibility. We don't have offices anywhere in the world. We sometimes say that if they don't like us, they can't kick us out because we're not there, but we find ways of supporting indigenous groups on the ground in all of these countries. That includes Russia, where we were declared undesirable in 2015, yet the program has expanded since then quite remarkably. We're able to work in this way.

The World Movement for Democracy is something that was established—it's now celebrating its 20th anniversary—and represents a network of activists all over the world. Thank you, Anita, for being a member of the steering committee of the World Movement for Democracy. As I think you know, it's going to be holding its 20th anniversary celebration in Malaysia in July. We just had Anwar Ibrahim deliver the Lipset lecture in Canada—in Toronto last week—and in Washington, so there's a lot of co-operation at that level.

These networks are able to connect people with each other to learn from each other and support each other. They become real learning and solidarity networks. I think they've been extremely valuable. When you supplement this with the research, the fellowships and other things, there are various ways you can support people in addition to providing grants to local NGOs and also the kind of programs that our institutes carry out, which are on-the-ground training programs in many countries.

● (0915)

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** Thank you.

Mr. Smith.

**Mr. Anthony Smith:** Very quickly, the key issue for us about long-term presence is that what we're trying to support is a democratic culture. Helping to share rules and procedures and technical skills is one thing. What really counts is the leadership and the understanding at every level when political challenges arise. It is important for everyone within an institution to demonstrate tolerance, understanding and a commitment to democracy. Those things really are not learned overnight, as we know from our own countries. They take a long time. That's what it's about.

The presence for us is sometimes physical. We have 30 offices in different countries, but actually we have relationships with many more countries. That comes both through our own technical staff but also through the U.K. political parties, which are part of our foundation and have relationships that they've built up over a period that is coming up to generations now.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** Thank you.

Both your institutions mentioned autonomous, arm's-length from government. I think, Mr. Gershman, you mentioned a firewall.

If an entity is created, how important is it that it be arm's-length from the daily back and forth of government? How do you go about doing that?

**Mr. Carl Gershman:** I think it's critically important.

There are different levels of independence. I should note that in his testimony, Mr. Smith noted that the board is appointed by the foreign secretary, and they approve the strategy and the budget. That's not the way it works. NED has a greater degree of independence. I think Canada is going to have to determine the level of independence this can have.

I think the firewall has been critically important in giving us the flexibility and independence to move quickly and to get into very tough situations, sometimes before our government is ready to do that, sometimes when our government may have diplomatic initiatives under way. Somebody may say that if this were connected by an institution without an arm's-length relationship, it may be very difficult.

We were able to be active in Egypt during the Mubarak period. We're active there today, and also in Russia. We're active in China. This gives us the freedom to work, despite the diplomatic engagement that our government may have. That's how Congress wanted it.

This process has worked. In other words, it has not created complications for our government. It strengthened it, as I pointed out. In countries such as Ethiopia, Armenia and Malaysia, when an autocratic government falls, the fact that we have been there and have been involved there has given us the capacity to move very quickly to begin to strengthen the groups that are involved in the transition process. I think that's absolutely critical. I call attention to these three countries because we have to work together to help democracy succeed in these countries. If it does succeed, it's possibly going to give new momentum to democracy in other countries around the world.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

MP Duncan, please.

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Thank you very much, both of you, for your work. What your countries are delivering is very profound.

Following up on what my colleague just mentioned, Mr. Gershman, I noted that you said your endowment is established by statute, and that creates a firewall by law. I'm wondering, Mr. Smith, if you could speak to that.

I'm interested in the issue of political interference or accountability. It would be a two-way street. Some people may object, saying that if all of these initiatives are being delivered by somebody at arm's length, then the government doesn't have to say it's accountable for how those monies are being spent. On the other hand, if you do have a firewall, then it does give you the independence from the government of the day.

I'm wondering if both of you could speak to that.

**Mr. Anthony Smith:** Let me start.

Our operating model provides political stability in that we are a cross-party organization. All the parties in our Parliament are represented on our board. This means that in agreeing to a long-term strategy and in taking day-to-day operational decisions, we need to hit that sweet spot where we will maintain the support across our Parliament, across our political system, if you like, for what we do.

Certainly in my four and a half years at the foundation, we have not had any decision that has caused controversy between the members of the board from the governing party and the members of the board from the opposition parties. We have all been in a position whereby we've supported the type of action we're taking, because there is cross-party support for work on democracy. That's the way we have maintained our ability to operate in an objective way that retains cross-party support.

The second thing responds partly to that and partly to the previous questions.

I think the first question for Canada is not necessarily an institutional one; it's a policy one. The first thing we need in our system—and I think it would apply to Canada too—is clarity about that vision, that you, across the political spectrum in Canada, want to work on these issues, want to be committed to these issues over the long term and are willing to fund them.

The question of the institution is the next one. The foundation is not, by the way, the only instrument our government uses for democracy support. It uses many institutions, including the ones that Carl mentioned, our colleagues at NDI and IRI. The institutions question is, if you like, a secondary one. Different models can bind in the political support you need.

Thanks.

● (0920)

**Mr. Carl Gershman:** I'll quickly correct one thing.

The NED Act did not establish NED. The NED was incorporated as a private organization in the District of Columbia. What the NED Act did was build that firewall and also authorize the funding for the NED, but it did not establish the NED because the NED is really a non-governmental organization, which is critically important.

I think that at the same time, of course, it's completely accountable. It has to abide by all the financial regulations. It has to be transparent and open and to let the administration and the Congress and everyone know what it's doing. It is bipartisan. I think one of the critical factors that Canada needs to think about here is that, when our government changes, the NED does not change. The only thing we do differently, if the party in power changes, is that we have somebody in the chair of our organization, chosen by us to be the chair of the board, being of the same party as the party in power. We do nothing else. The board remains the same. The policies of the institution don't change. We adjust to the conditions in the world, to what's happening in the world, and we are able to pursue a consistent long-term policy. Obviously, it has to be consensual with what is consensual among our parties that we're not pushing in one direction or another. There's kind of a bipartisan and even labour-business balance built into the institution. I think that's critically important.

I think Canada had an experience 13 years ago with another democracy institution. I think a lot of the trouble came when the party in power changed and there developed a conflict between the board and the staff. You have to build stability into something like that over the long term so that it doesn't reflect all the changes in the politics.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Thank you very much.

I'm interested that your two organizations actually deliver your services and your support in different ways. Mr. Smith outlined that they actually have 30 in-country offices, whereas the NED does not have any in-country offices.

My question is for both of you. Who decides what the priorities are, and how do you move toward what Mr. Gershman mentioned, which I think is really important, that it be a bottom-up initiative? If you're going to build democracy, in my view, it will last longer if it's bottom-up. I'm interested in the two approaches.

How do you decide what the priorities are in the receiving country if you don't have in-country offices?

What is your experience, Mr. Smith, of having in-country offices in order to develop the priorities for your organization?

**Mr. Carl Gershman:** Anthony, why don't you go first?

**Mr. Anthony Smith:** Thank you, Carl.

Our programs can only exist and operate if we have a partner in the country. We do not go in with an agenda for a country and say, “This is what we want it to do.” Of course, we have an overall strategy that pulls out certain things that we think are critically important for good democratic practice around the world, but that's a pretty broad mandate for us.

Our methodology when we have an in-country office is that we have a partner, which would typically be a parliament, but it could be an electoral body or a civil society, which we think has an agenda that it is important to support and we can find added value in what we do to support it. We will take that agenda and use the contacts we have both in the U.K. and in other countries, including Canada, by the way, to share experiences that we think would be helpful to push that agenda forward. Although that in-country presence is very important, we do have relationships in other ways in other countries as well.

● (0925)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

MP Saini.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Are you not going to let Mr. Gershman answer? No?

**The Chair:** We're—

**Mr. Carl Gershman:** I'll come back and try to answer that.

**The Chair:** You can answer that in responding to the next question. Exactly.

MP Saini, please.

**Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** Good afternoon, gentlemen.

Mr. Gershman, I'm going to start with you.

One difference between your two organizations that I noticed, and I think you mentioned this in your opening remarks, is something very important. You mentioned that you also support business organizations in the countries. The WFD does not. Can you tell me why you think it's important to support business organizations?

**Mr. Carl Gershman:** Our Center for International Private Enterprise is unique in this field because business is often seen as a dimension of development and not democracy, whereas it's absolutely critical. A lot of the countries—Egypt, Ukraine and others—that had failed transitions failed because they couldn't get the economy right. We call it CIPE, Center for International Private Enterprise. It's able to work with the informal sector, with business associations and with think tanks. Really, it's not a development organization, but it helps in shaping the approach to the market economy to make the market economy work, to be democratic, to be free of cronyism and to be really a dynamic force in this.

I just want, in 30 seconds, to respond to the previous question to say that there are democracy activists throughout the world, including business associations, that need to be supported on the ground. It's not just a single local partner. We are responsive to demands that come from the ground, and our institutes are as well. We are a demand-driven organization.

Sorry, go ahead.

**Mr. Raj Saini:** My next question is for both of you.

Mr. Gershman, in your opening remarks, you alluded to the changing geopolitical reality in the world. You have countries that are nascent democracies, that are having difficulty taking off. You have democracies that have been established over a short period of time, like the Visegrad nations, which are now reverting. You have the rise of populist movements. More important, out of all of that, it seems to me there's a vacuum of leadership because you have the involvement of China and Russia, whether it be in Latin America or in Africa or in Asia.

Democracy building 20 to 25 years ago was much different from what it is today because you have new actors who are trying to pursue their own prominence or their own reputation in that region of the world, i.e., China and Russia. How do you deal with this new set of factors, especially where China's been more involved in countries where democratic governance is an issue, and Russia's more involved, especially in the satellite states or the near abroad countries that it has in its sphere of influence? How are you going to deal with that impact but also continue your work in those parts of the world?

**Mr. Carl Gershman:** First, let me say that the idea of having other actors is not new. When the NED was established, you had the Soviet Union, which was another actor. I think what happened after the collapse of communism in 1989 through 1991 was people assumed that challenge was over. Actually, somebody called it a vacation from history. We didn't face these challenges anymore. What we've learned since 9/11 in 2001, since the rise of China and Russia more recently, is that there are rivals and that if we retreat from the world, these vacuums will be filled by such powers.

Right now, today, we've seen the disruptions, the penetration caused by the Soviet Union, especially in using trolls on the Internet, but China represents a much more serious threat. It's wealthier. It's investing much more money. Our figures show that China is spending somewhere in the order of $10 billion a year on what it calls external propaganda or malign activities in different countries. This could be in the form of information activities. It could be in the form of penetrating societies through what we call sharp power.

This is a new issue that people are facing. They're just coming to the realization of this in Washington. It's something we have to get our hands around. It's something, of course, we're trying to respond to with the strategic priorities we've shaped.

● (0930)

**Mr. Anthony Smith:** If I have time to contribute, although very briefly, one thing we really have to fight against is the view that development can be separated from democracy. I think we all know that Amartya Sen argued strongly against that. Democracy is development.

What you see now is a Chinese editorial in The Economist magazine, paid for, which says that the old dichotomy between democracy and autocracy is dead; the new dichotomy is between bad governance and good governance. China is very good at governance, and therefore is a model that others should follow. That, literally, is what has been published by China.

I think we have to be very clear within our own administrations, including the development ministry where I used to work, that you cannot promote good governance without thinking about values and democracy. You need to think about the way in which people's voices are heard, and the ways in which accountability takes place, the mechanisms that are needed to prevent the abuse of power by those in the executive and in control. It's absolutely essential to push this argument, both with those whom we know are malign but also within our own communities, which sometimes want to avoid some of those choices around democracy support. I think that's another reason Canada is so important in this debate.

**Mr. Raj Saini:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

MP Finnigan, first of all, welcome to the committee. Please go ahead with your questions.

**Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair. Thanks to our guests for being here.

As the chair said, I'm new on this committee, but very interested. As with anybody in this country, I follow democracy around the world, so I appreciate the chance to ask some questions.

I'll start with this. I'm the chair of the agriculture committee. International trade is very important for us and for most countries and it's growing. We're signing trade agreements across the world. How is it affecting democracy, or is it? Are we closing our eyes to authoritarian countries when we want to sign trade agreements? How would you describe how this new international trade or global trade is affecting democracy, or does it affect democracy?

**Mr. Carl Gershman:** I think we want to keep a world order in which there is the rule of law and we have a rules-based world order in which countries can trade within a lawful system. We get into that only through promoting these values around the world and promoting movements in countries that want rules-based order in their own countries. If we have that, I think we will have a more open trading system. I think we have to find the right balance between defending our own sovereignty in many different areas and finding forms of international co-operation. I think we as an international community are struggling with that now.

Some countries are reacting against the pressures of globalization, but the need to maintain a rules-based international order is critical. If we can do that, I think that trade will proceed and will encourage economic growth. A lot of what China is doing today through its belt and road initiative is not promoting a rules-based international order. This is a geopolitical instrument that China is using. We've seen backlashes against this in countries like Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Malaysia. The Malaysian election in May was a reaction against the corruption encouraged in the way the Chinese are expanding their economic influence in other countries by buying off elites.

We need to defend the rules-based order. I think that's what's critical.

**Mr. Pat Finnigan:** Thank you.

Mr. Smith, do you have any further comments?

**Mr. Anthony Smith:** I have just a very brief addition to that. Within each country, obviously, you need to have democratic institutions that enable voices to be heard when the policies are made —the trade policy of the country—that provide confidence that the trade agreements the country is signing on to have been subject to oversight by the parliament and are subject to effective judicial oversight as well.

In the way that they're important for everything, democratic institutions within a country are critically important for an international trade agenda. They're important for a stable business environment. They're important for confidence in the democratic system of every country.

● (0935)

**Mr. Pat Finnigan:** Thank you very much.

Moving on, would you say there are threats of danger or evidence of threats of the democratic movement being eroded either from within or from outside of our countries, especially in the last 25 years with the arrival of the web? How has that affected the democratic movement around the world?

Either of you can answer.

**Mr. Carl Gershman:** We once thought that social media would be a force strengthening indigenous democratic movements. Certainly these indigenous democratic movements use social media to strengthen their communications capability, their ability to get information out and their ability to network with each other. What we did not expect, and I think this is the surprise, was the way autocratic governments would master the Internet and use it to try to penetrate into societies, to disrupt democracy and democratic procedures and to encourage distrust. This has become very, very dangerous.

I want to really emphasize the need to maintain an open Internet. These issues are being negotiated every day. We don't want to see autocratic governments controlling the Internet. We have to fight for the independence of the Internet, but we also then have to defend ourselves against abuse from autocratic governments. We have to realize that this is the new frontier. This is the new front line of struggle for democracy in the field of information, and we have to master ways in which that can be done.

The NED published a report in December 2017 that really coined the term “sharp power” to distinguish it from soft power. Soft powers are our universities, our culture and the way it organically spreads around the world. Sharp power is the use of information and information tools by governments to penetrate and manipulate other societies. We have to understand that and we have to be able to defend ourselves against that.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. The time is up.

We're going to move to MP Aboultaif, please.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Good afternoon and thank you to both of you.

There is some mention of authoritarian capitalism and that makes it a challenge to protect and promote democracy, and from our perspective it keeps the challenge going. We know that democracy is a long process. It needs patience, determination and investment in many ways in order to maintain and continue promoting it in different places of the world. NED does excellent work supporting pro-democracy around the world.

Mr. Gershman, you spoke about the non-governmental character of the NED. You mentioned that this gives you a benefit of being more effective on the world stage. Are there any downsides to not operating as an arm, in this instance, of the U.S. government?

**Mr. Carl Gershman:** Look, when I talk about a bottom-up approach and operating at arm's length from the government, I think this needs to be understood that this type of work is complementary to the things that our government does through its official policies and through the development agencies like USAID. Even now, our state department, through the democracy bureau, is funding programs. These are different types of programs. It's complementary. I think ultimately this type of diverse system works. The report I mentioned about bottom-up and top-down that was just done by a European organization doesn't talk about doing it all one way or the other. They recommend a strengthening of the bottom-up approach to complement what is being done by the governments in support of official institutions such as a judiciary and other official institutions in the country.

You need a complex and diverse approach.

● (0940)

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** We've known for the longest time that the free world is a free world. You mention the United States, Europe, Canada and Australia; this is the democratic world. It seems that the tie is always there between the government and the private or independent institutions out there. If you were to advise Canada in moving forward, how can we find a way to be more effective in engaging both sides?

**Mr. Carl Gershman:** One thing that we have started doing in a number of African countries is to try to bring together the private sector, the government and civil society to have a common dialogue and a common approach. This is also something that can be done. The governments want this because they don't, on their own, have the capacity to do that. Again, I think it's a matter of bringing the different players together, understanding the importance of not just having a stable government but a rules-based order and a vigorous growth-oriented market economy. That's the role played by our business institute in trying to encourage that. We also have a labour institute which tries to make sure that the rights of workers are protected in the context of an open market economy.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** I have one more question.

Both of you mentioned in the introduction that there are some countries that are losing democratic institutions and democracy is actually in a recession, if you will. While we have made some improvements in other areas in the world, if we were to name a bright spot or optimistic area for us to operate in, where would that be? Can you name a few countries around the world where we must capitalize further?

**Mr. Carl Gershman:** I did, and I really want to come back to this. I think that the transition that is now under way in Ethiopia is the most important transition taking place in the world. This is a country of 105 million people, 80 different ethnic groups. If they can make it work in Ethiopia, it will send a message around the world where the issue of ethnic division is so important. This is one area where Canada should go in right now—I'm sure you're already there in some ways—with whatever instruments you have because you have to move quickly in this kind of a situation.

I've also mentioned Armenia, which has a remarkable transition under way. It got The Economist's country of the year award for 2018. It's a remarkable transition. They are keeping it on balance and they are bringing in new forces.

The Malaysian transition, I think, is also critically important. Canada heard from Anwar Ibrahim when he spoke at the University of Toronto last Thursday.

If we can help make it work in those three countries, I think we will give democracy a shot in the arm.

Then there is also Tunisia, the first Arab democracy, which had local elections in May. They were important in spreading democracy to the grassroots. Tunisia is operating under a democratic constitution. It's a beachhead for democracy in a very unstable and undemocratic part of the world. I think we have to help make it succeed there.

**The Chair:** Thank you to you both. That was a very interesting hour of questions and answers.

With that, we're going to pause for about five minutes to get our other witnesses ready, but for both of you, please enjoy the rest of your day.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Chair, may I ask a question?

**The Chair:** Certainly.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** I'm wondering if Mr. Gershman can send us the citation to the report on top-down and bottom-up approaches. It sounds very interesting.

**Mr. Carl Gershman:** Okay, but there is a hyperlink to the report in the testimony I sent to the committee.

If you want me to send a separate link to the report, I'm happy to do that.

**The Chair:** That's fine. We'll be able to find the link and we'll make sure to distribute the report.

**Mr. Carl Gershman:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, gentlemen.

We will suspend.

● (0945)

(Pause)

● (0950)

**The Chair:** We are resuming for our second hour of testimony on Canada's support for international democratic development.

We have two guests for this hour of testimony.

With us is the Honourable Ed Broadbent.

Welcome back to Parliament Hill. It's really an honour to have you testifying before our committee.

We also have with us Jacqueline O'Neill, member of the Woodrow Wilson Center.

I want to thank you, Ms. O'Neill, for joining us from Washington, D.C. That's wonderful. Maybe we will get you to begin, because even though it's not too great a distance, these video connections sometimes can conk out on us. Would you please begin your testimony.

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill (Global Fellow, Canada Institute, Woodrow Wilson Center):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for letting me appear from Washington. It would be cruel to tell you about the weather here today, so I won't.

[*English*]

Given that I am perhaps just slightly less well known in Canada than the Honourable Ed Broadbent, I thought I'd give you a bit of context on where I come from on this issue.

Several committee members and witnesses have talked about the prevalence of Canadians working in non-Canadian organizations on democracy promotion. Both my husband and I fit that description. He is from Vancouver Island, and after joining the Canadian Armed Forces, worked for the National Democratic Institute. He now works for a private U.S. firm, in Bosnia, Afghanistan, Yemen, Haiti and Iraq. I grew up and went to university in Edmonton. I lived in Ottawa for several years and have spent the last 15 years or so abroad.

[*Translation*]

I helped Mr. Roméo Dallaire with the Child Soldiers Initiative.

[*English*]

I worked in Sudan at both a UN peacekeeping mission and an all-women university. I also helped to lead one of the world's top organizations focused on implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325. We've worked with institutions, with more than 30 governments and directly with coalitions of women in Colombia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Rwanda and many other places.

I'll just say that I've been lucky enough to see up close some of what works and some of what doesn't with regard to democracy promotion. Quite frankly, I will note that while I've always been a very proud Canadian, living in the U.S. for the last several years and having a front-row view of the erosion of democratic norms here has only reinforced my appreciation of what Canada has to offer on the world stage.

I've listened to all of the witnesses who have testified thus far, from two weeks ago and this morning, and agree totally with their headlines: democracy is under threat; authoritarians are emboldened; and Canada has a unique and important role.

Every speaker has also emphasized the importance of women's meaningful inclusion. What I'd like to do in my testimony this morning is unpack that a bit and discuss how Canada can do that in the smartest way possible, so here's a spoiler alert about my own headlines. They are, one, meaningful inclusion for women, with support for meaningful inclusion for women, is crucial; two, key to doing this well is thinking broadly about the ingredients of democracy promotion; and, three, we should energetically and unapologetically embrace this idea as core to Canada's brand and central to what we contribute to the global order.

I understand that part of objective of this study is to see how the field has developed since 2007. To start, we have important new data. Harvard researchers undertook a massive study and found that the single biggest predictor of whether a country goes to war with itself or with its neighbours is not its ethnic makeup, geographic location, GDP or dominant religion. It's how women are treated. Do they have access to their rights and are they included?

Another study found that even democracies with higher levels of violence against women are as insecure and as unstable as non-democracies. Why would that be? Researchers now propose that what occurs in a home is fundamentally a blueprint for how society runs and governs. If the dominant norm in the private sphere, in the home, is that men's interests trump women's, that differences are resolved with violence and that there is impunity for that violence, it becomes a template for dealing with all other forms of difference, including ethnic, ideological, etc.

Another new indicator of the centrality of women to democratization since 2007 is much more information about the fact that authoritarians have put women activists more squarely in their sights. The committee has heard about the shrinking space for civil society activism worldwide. Again, let's unpack that for a minute.

One of the most credible 2018 reports on the subject said that, by a large margin, women, including women's rights defenders and groups advocating for women's rights, are the most common target in the incidents they recorded. See the murder in Guatemala of indigenous environmental activist Berta Cáceres. See the arrest last week in the Philippines of Maria Ressa, a journalist and outspoken critic of President Duterte.

This weekend, I spoke with a friend in Sudan, who confirmed that women have been the primary organizers and front-line protestors of the demonstrations that have been going on there since late December. She confirmed that women are facing targeted rape and sexual assault and that in the last few days, security forces have taken on a new tactic of cutting off women's hair while they are exposed in the streets.

● (0955)

In terms of women's political representation, where do we stand? As I think you know, about 24% of national parliamentarians globally are women, and that has doubled in the last 20 years. The fastest-growing area has been Latin America. Of particular note for this committee given your interest in promoting youth inclusion has been the fact that among women you see the greatest proportion of young people. About 18% of ministerial posts are held by women worldwide. Right now, there are only about 11 women serving as heads of state.

The trajectory is roughly good with some exceptions, but the overall pace of change is abysmal. How can Canada accelerate that pace of change?

I would argue that it is important to focus on the so-called traditional dimensions of political strengthening, such as building capacities of women candidates and members of Parliament, registering women voters, encouraging women to run and focusing on institutional capacities. I'd also argue that Canada can lead the way by thinking and acting more expansively, that is, by recognizing the connections between democratization and women's participation in a broad range of areas that determine governance. That includes areas like peace negotiations where forms of government are determined, constitution drafting where rights are enshrined or ignored, and non-violent civil resistance movements, which are the linchpins to sparking the democratic culture that Mr. Smith mentioned earlier.

That means playing a deliberate role in conflict environments, which are often the hardest and the messiest, but which also present opportunities for the most accelerated change. This bears out around the world. Of the 30 countries with the highest levels of women's representation, one-third are post-conflict.

In this case, strategic support for democratization means implementing Canada's national action plan on women, peace and security. It means funding the feminist international assistance policy and ensuring core funding for women's rights groups. It means insisting that women be at the table for negotiations in Afghanistan, North Korea, Venezuela and beyond, and maintaining a holistic perspective about the path to democratization, specifically resisting the idea that spending on defence equates to the only true investment in security.

I'm happy to speak to any of those issues, including technology, which I realize we haven't touched on.

If I may, to close, I want to address a notion that I've heard expressed several times, that Canada may already be pushing too hard or too fast on some of these issues, and that this could be alienating or counterproductive or harmful economically for us at home.

First, I say in response to this that this is no time to treat inclusion as a side item or merely nice to have. There are forces aggressively pulling people away from democracy. They are strong, well resourced and aggressive, and there is a profound cost to not meeting that pull with an equal and opposite reaction. It may not happen immediately but we will experience the costs from states that are more likely to traffic in drugs, weapons and people, to create or harbour terrorists, to enable criminal networks, to generate refugees, or even to suffer pandemics.

Very clearly, the fight for women's rights has never been isolated from the economy or from national security.

Finally, I have seen on too many occasions how people who want to hoard power often use the excuse that some changes that others are seeking are not “culturally appropriate” or are western driven. To be clear, culture has to inform tactics such as the messengers we use. It's a crucial consideration regarding our approach, but democratic values and the idea that women should have an influence on decisions that affect their own lives are not inherently western concepts. In my experience, those who tell outsiders to bring their capital but step back on anything related to power are usually the ones most fearful of being held accountable by their own constituencies.

I think our approach must always be respectful and humble, but we can and should talk about our values. It's more crucial now than ever.

Thank you.

● (1000)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. O'Neill.

We will now move right along and I give the floor to you, Ed Broadbent.

**Hon. Ed Broadbent (Chair and Founder, Broadbent Institute):** Mr. Chairman, and if I may say, my fellow colleagues or former colleagues, it's good to be back here, especially in consideration of such an important subject. I appreciate the opportunity of sharing some thoughts on how Canada can best support democratic development internationally. In particular, I will focus on the proposals made by an earlier incarnation of this committee in the report issued in 2007, in which it recommended the creation of two bodies: an arm's-length foundation for international democratic development and a centre for multi-party and parliamentary democracy, to be funded by that foundation.

I believe that in considering these proposals, the committee can do no better than to review the reasons for Parliament's decision in the 1980s to create the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, which fortunately has since been simply renamed Rights and Democracy, which is a little easier to say. Then, as now, much of the world was in turmoil and our parliamentarians came up with a modest, but effective, proposal for assisting people in developing nations in their efforts to develop democratic societies. In a unanimous report to Parliament, they recommended the creation of a single institution that would be clearly at arm's length from the government and would foster in developing countries provisions of the International Bill of Human Rights, and in so doing, would most effectively establish the foundation for a multi-party democracy. This key idea was accepted by the government of the day, Mr. Mulroney's government, and by the opposition parties, and resulted in the unanimous adoption of the bill creating Rights and Democracy that came into effect just before the election in 1988.

Of particular concern to parliamentarians at that time, as it should be today, was to avoid any form of Canadian imperialism lite, if I may put it that way. Our objective should not be to replicate our form of parliamentary democracy or our Charter of Rights; rather, it should be to foster human rights, which are universally recognized in the International Bill of Human Rights. This includes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the optional protocol on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and finally, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

With this emphasis, it was understood in the 1980s as it is today that many states, for example, in Latin America, have so-called competitive elections, but what they lack is freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom to have a union, freedom of the press, and broadly speaking, the rule of law. As the broad sweep of western European and North American history has shown, the core foundation for a multi-party democracy is a society that embodies in its institutions and practices universal rights, which now include social and economic rights. Without human rights and the rule of law, so-called elections more often than not are simply a sham. With rights in place, however, men and women who were once excluded from the franchise used those rights to organize and demand their right to it. The act creating Rights and Democracy specifically focused on what it said was the need to reduce the gap between what some states are formally committed to, for example, in their constitutions, and what actually takes place within those states.

Since that time and now, many states have signed onto the international covenants but have failed to meet international standards for their implementation. Much of Rights and Democracy's most useful work has been to help bridge this gap between principle and reality, for example in Guatemala, Mexico, El Salvador, Peru, Kenya, Tanzania, Pakistan and Thailand. It was to pick up, as some of the earlier presenters said, a bottom-up approach, not top down. Most often this work was done by the institution with civil society partners in those countries, and it was those partners, not we Canadians, who established the priority for action. In the same countries, CIDA often worked on a state-to-state basis for the same objectives with the government of the day.

● (1005)

I believe it's of great importance to understand that by combining the words “democratic development” with “human rights”, the former was not seen as an add-on to the latter; rather, it was to make clear that the emphasis on rights is precisely what is involved in democratic development. It's for this reason that I do not believe Parliament needs to create two institutes, as recommended by the committee in 2007, one for international development and then another one for multi-party and parliamentary democracy. I believe one institution can suffice.

The principal reason the former Rights and Democracy did not have programs specifically aimed at the development of multi-party democratic states, during my six-year tenure as president, for example, was simply a matter of resources. Considering the global scope of the mandate and the limited financial resources, we thought we should restrict our support to human rights activists and programs. I now believe that with an enhanced budget, one institution would be sufficient, and it could be made clear in legislation that the development of multi-party democracies should be part of its mandate.

Some other suggestions might also be considered in contemplating the content of legislation creating a new institution. It should be spelled out in that legislation, in my view, that the institution is “not an agency of Her Majesty”.

To help ensure all-party support for its work, I believe board members should be appointed after serious consultation with leaders of all the opposition parties. In addition, consideration should be given to appointing up to one-quarter of the board's members from developing countries.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize how unique the structure, independence and importance of Rights and Democracy were up until nearly the end of its existence. In operating independently of the government, it gained credibility both with international NGOs and foreign governments. At the same time, as a creation of the federal government with its president appointed by Privy Council and having the institutional support of the Department of Foreign Affairs, I as president had more access to heads of government than almost any other international NGO.

It was because of the special combination of independence from the government of the day, yet being on a Canadian diplomatic passport that I was able to seek and obtain meetings with President Clinton, the King of Thailand, and the presidents of Guatemala, Mexico, Rwanda, Eritrea and Kenya, among others. Such meetings and the usefulness they provide for serious human rights action and discussion are simply unavailable to heads of NGOs.

In summary, I believe Canada should help the emergence of more democracies in the world, and do so in part by establishing an arm's-length institution whose purpose is to help facilitate in developing countries the implementation of the rights found in the International Bill of Human Rights.

I'm very much aware that the ideas I've briefly outlined raise a lot of questions that I will now try to answer.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much to you both.

We will get right into questions. We're going to begin with MP O'Toole.

● (1010)

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC):** Thank you very much, Chair.

It's nice to see you, Mr. Broadbent. I am an MP who now represents part of Oshawa. I grew up in your wider area. We've had some good interactions over the years. It's nice to see you on the Hill.

I like how you positioned potentially leveraging Rights and Democracy and some of the work that's been done now to perhaps build upon and repurpose what has been done rather than starting something from scratch. Do you think that's the better approach, particularly when there's some expertise and there's a bit of a track record? Do you think it would be a setback to create something that would then perhaps run contrary to what another organization is already doing?

**Hon. Ed Broadbent:** To look back on the foundations is good in this case, because the foundations were excellent.

I didn't work on the committee at the time—I was party leader—but I can say it was a remarkable all-party report in the 1980s, with a lot of enthusiasm, which led to the creation of Rights and Democracy. It had the support not only of the government, but of all the parties in the opposition, and for many years, whether it was in Mr. Mulroney's government, with Joe Clark as foreign affairs minister, or in Jean Chrétien's government, with André Ouellet as foreign affairs minister, there was an arm's-length relationship with the institute, but the emphasis of the institute was on grassroots organizations.

I should add, because it was a big part of the mandate, that women's rights were at the front and centre of our priority in developing countries then, as they should be now.

By the way, all parties were represented on the board, not as MPs, but in terms of their backgrounds. They came from all political persuasions in Canada. It was built on experience, and the institutional work is there. I would recommend the committee look at some of the reasons why it was created and why it was quite successful.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** Thank you.

My next question will be for both of you. I'll probably run out of time, so I'll speak and then give you both a chance to answer.

Mr. Broadbent, you mentioned the need for all-party support and an all-party approach several times.

Ms. O'Neill, certainly with your background, working internationally and within the Woodrow Wilson Center...exposing how the International Republican Institute and the NDI make sure they can see themselves reflected within a larger movement.... Not only is that appropriate for our parliamentary democracy, but it likely will mean more buy-in by future governments.

I don't think we've ever tackled it quite that strategically to make sure that all parties can see themselves reflected. Do you think that's critical for making sure this works?

**Hon. Ed Broadbent:** I think it is. To be quite candid, I had discussions with Mr. Mulroney when he offered to appoint me as the founding president. For reasons everybody will understand, the board in a broad sense had to be accepting of me going into that position. There were very good and frank discussions about membership on the board that ended up reflecting, as I said, all parties, and which Mr. Mulroney, of course, as prime minister and ultimately responsible for the act, readily agreed to, as did the successor government, the Liberal government with Mr. Chrétien.

The all-party buy-in was a very important reason for its success.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** Ms. O'Neill, would you care to comment on that aspect?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Yes, I would agree completely and say just two things. One is what we heard earlier about the need for a shared political objective. It's exactly as you're saying. It has to be a political objective that is shared across parties in order for this to be sustainable.

Then, to pick up on something which Mr. Broadbent said in his testimony, the idea about ensuring there are representatives from the so-called global south or developing countries, etc., on the board within the governance structure also ensures both relevance and cohesion and a sense of buy-in and commitment, as well as more direct representation to the service itself, which also increases buy-in over time.

● (1015)

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** In terms of accountability, might it be something where we try to make sure there's an annual report to Parliament or some mechanism like that so that this isn't just an institution that sits on a shelf and has no active relationship with Parliament?

Are there any learnings there from both of you?

**Hon. Ed Broadbent:** The act creating Rights and Democracy had that as a requirement. There was an annual report that went to Parliament. The institute was audited by the Auditor General annually as well.

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** [*Inaudible—Editor*] always all for parliamentary oversight.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** Finally, in terms of the track record, Mr. Broadbent, you said that often the countries were held...and that we looked at the gap between their constitutional underpinnings and the reality on the ground. How did we assess the reality on the ground? Was it working in partnership with Global Affairs or Foreign Affairs, or was it specifically done by Rights and Democracy?

**Hon. Ed Broadbent:** It was a mix. Especially in the early years, when Joe Clark was foreign affairs minister, there was active emphasis on human rights in developing countries. The embassies collaborated with us and had their own independent assessments. When we would go into a country, or when I would, we would check with the Canadian embassy to get their assessment, frankly, of what was going on for sure. Normally, there was a very constructive interplay. We would report later, too. It was a unique institution that Canada had.

Part of its reason for success, I think, was that we are not a big power. We are not the United Kingdom. We are not the United States. Even though my position was as an appointment of the government, a Privy Council appointment, we managed to be seen for what we were, legally independent of the government. We were not accountable, except through Parliament, to the government on a day-to-day basis at all, and we didn't run into suspicion, if I can put it that way, from NGOs or governments. There was no confusion that I was speaking for the government, as it wasn't the case. The independence was respected, but the connection with the government—I'll come back to that again—was very useful. The fact that I was in one sense institutionally representative of the Government of Canada opened the doors that would otherwise not be open to many NGOs, for example.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We will now move to MP Vandenbeld, please.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** Thank you very much.

It's very good to have you back on the Hill, Mr. Broadbent. We could probably be here all morning asking questions.

I will be asking my questions to specifically Ms. O'Neill, because I would really like to delve a little bit more into the gender specific, the equality, the inclusion, and the complementarity of that with what we're talking about in terms of institutional development. When you think of political parties, when you think of parliaments, when you're looking at things like democracy, it's not immediately evident how this intersects with the feminist international assistance policy. We know, however, that if you don't have those inclusive institutions, if you don't have those voices of all members of the population represented, if you don't have the institutions right, you can't actually have gender equality in a particular geographic area.

If we created some kind of entity focused on democratic development, not just specifically women's participation in those institutions but also the structure of those institutions themselves, how would that actually contribute to the feminist international assistance policy? Perhaps I could ask you to elaborate on that.

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Exactly as the speakers in the previous session mentioned, some of the biggest challenges we're seeing right now are with the most fragile or perhaps regressive democracies. I believe they call them shallow. They are the ones who have taken steps at an architectural level very quickly and have either not had the cultural change underpinning them or been genuinely inclusive. There is a quick-fix option that I think we're seeing that is not resulting in sustainable results.

What does that mean for women's representation, women's inclusion and its connection to this issue? Specifically to your question, if there were to be an institution set up, I would, number one, want to ensure that it's not very narrowly defined as being only, for example, political party strengthening or candidate strengthening. I think it has to be, as many other speakers have referenced, broadly inclusive of civil society. It would also be crucial that staff there understand, and the programming reflect, a really sophisticated understanding of different contexts and different ways and different responses for supporting women, i.e., when they are appropriate and when they are not.

A great deal of study and scholarship experience has been gathered on, for example, saying that different types of quotas are more likely to work in different contexts. We need to make sure we understand that. We need to understand the different types of support that women's civil society networks are more likely to need to receive than either mixed or primarily male-dominated civil society networks. We need to have a level of sophistication and understanding about how to do this embedded in any institution.

I think Canada's far better placed to do this than almost any other country I have worked with. I mean, we have members of the Canadian Armed Forces who know how to do gender-based analysis plus. The national action plan was generated through your committee, overseen through this committee, and done with massive consultation across the country. There are people who have the expertise on this and who can do more than say that women's rights are important and we must protect those as a means of ensuring inclusion. I'd say there should be a real depth of expertise and a professionalization of that service within any future institution or set of institutions.

● (1020)

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** I noted in your testimony you said that gender equality is not a side issue, that it's actually core when you look at economy, at security. You talked about the costs of not doing this in terms of terrorism, criminality, the lack of security, refugee flows. Could you elaborate a little bit on that?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Sure. It's always been very difficult to quantify the cost of exclusion, but we're seeing that there's a strong correlation between countries that behave in ways that are, over time, costly to us—as you were saying, generating refugees, not playing by the rules in terms of trade internationally—and the ways they treat women internally. There are many different studies—and I'd be happy to point them out to the committee—to help substantiate this fact that it is no longer something that we can say is just a side issue, or is just nice to have. Rather, it's crucial.

Finally on that point, I'd say our enemies or our adversaries are very much understanding this point. They're understanding the power of women and of gender dynamics to advance their cause. They don't call it GBA+. They don't call it a gender analysis, but terrorist groups are recruiting women very deliberately. The majority of Boko Haram's suicide bombers are women. The majority of those are girls, child soldiers. There are numerous organizations pulling away from democracy that have understood the potential for women to help them advance their objectives. They're being much savvier about the way they do that. I think we need a response that's equally thoughtful.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** You mentioned also in your testimony the specific targeting of women human rights defenders, women political figures. Is there a different or even more specific way that women are being targeted in these institutions and women in politics are being targeted?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Yes. Some of the first ways that women experience the shrinking of space for their work is through a reduction in freedom of movement, a suffocation of space. They're either less likely to be able to assemble internally within the country and meet together or to travel internationally. They get increasing amounts of physical threats online. They're being publicly defamed at a much higher rate, especially with their honour and their integrity being attacked. It's also much harder now for international organizations or governments to get money to organizations of women human rights defenders. There are escalating ways that these groups are being increasingly targeted.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Just as a reminder, Ms. O'Neill, if you want to send in any additional reports for consideration, please send them to the clerk and we'll make sure that we add them as part of the study material.

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** I would love to. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

MP Duncan, please.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Thank you very much.

Of course we'd like to have everybody here all day long. The most important discussion that should be going on is about building democracy.

By the way, Ms. O'Neill, of course you're fabulous, because you're from Edmonton, as am I.

Your testimony is raising lots of interesting questions in my head, and I'd be interested to hear both of you respond to this—particularly Mr. Broadbent. Mr. Gershman reminded us that the National Endowment for Democracy was not founded by government. It was founded through NGOs, and they set the terms and objectives for the organization. The federal government simply funds it.

That raises a question in my mind. Is it really going to be an independent organization if the government creates it? What do you think is the best direction to go in for establishing this to make sure that it is arm's-length from government?

● (1025)

**Hon. Ed Broadbent:** If you look at the Rights and Democracy act, you can see that very careful attention was paid to this question about the tenure of appointments, the accountability of the institution to Parliament—not just to the government—and the representation of non-Canadians on the board that came into being. All of these measures contributed significantly until right at the end, when it was a disaster.

To be candid, Mr. Harper's government.... The only time there was a sort of government departure from neutrality happened when Mr. Harper put a number of highly partisan people on the board. This led to very serious conflicts within the institution about priorities. The net result was, well.... The then president died of a heart attack, as a matter of fact. It was a terrible situation. The government then just abolished it. I would put down that the reason for this is that it was the one and only time a government moved to put a partisan shape on the board, which any government can do, of course. Up until then, whether it was a Conservative government or a Liberal government, there was no attempt by any government to interfere in any way, either by stacking a board or by issuing directions.

To get back to your question, it can't be foolproof. It can't have legislation that will be permanently protected from a government if a government decides to do something that is inappropriate.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Do you believe the appointments to this entity should be by government...?

**Hon. Ed Broadbent:** Well, that's what they were in the past and there was consultation between the government and opposition parties. The government still made the decision, but there was serious consultation with the leaders of opposition parties to try to make sure that the appointments that were coming had some direct or indirect experience in human rights, for example, or activism of some kind, and were acceptable to all of the parties.

I have no apprehension in principle about the government making the appointments, as the government makes the appointments to the Supreme Court and by and large we've had a very impartial Supreme Court, certainly in terms of ideological orientation. Nothing's foolproof, but if you have a good act and then the government acts in good faith and in consultation with other parties, I think it can work.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Ms. O'Neill, I wonder if you could speak to this, and then you, Mr. Broadbent.

There's one thing that puzzles me. I think there is some interest in the current government in re-establishing such an organization, yet the Global Affairs budget right now doesn't see judicial development, democratic development, human rights, women's rights and so forth as working together. They're all separate lines in the Global Affairs budget and, in fact, democratic participation in civil society is given next to nothing.

Does the creation of this entity also mean that we need a rethink within Global Affairs and within the government, and how would they work together? That's a small little question.

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** My biggest concern, should there be the creation of an institute, would be to ensure that it wouldn't absorb too much funding away from local civil society organizations and networks. I can see a lot of compelling reasons why it would be useful for coordination and enabling the benefits that comes from arm's-length government.

I also thought that the earlier point about the act of symbolism of this right now, at this moment in time, is powerful, but I'd want to ensure that we wouldn't redirect too much funding, and that we wouldn't see, as I mentioned earlier, democratization as solely within the purview of that one institute. It's always a trade-off in these types of issues between mainstreaming and targeting funds, and I always want to see both. I want to see elements of support for democratization as core to various other line items.

I'd also like to see more funding very specifically for civil society and human rights organizations and networks, particularly women-led ones, as FIAP and the women's voice and leadership program have proposed. I think Canada has taken a huge step forward on that. I always like to see more, but it's a significant recognition thus far and I'd like to see that sustained.

● (1030)

**Hon. Ed Broadbent:** I would agree with all of that.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will now go to MP Graham, please.

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

Ms. O'Neill, in your opening comments you mentioned something about wanting to touch on technology but not having the time to. Do you want to touch on technology now?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Very briefly on technology, I really commend the committee, because I know that in the past you've talked about technology and this issue, recognizing its importance, and also recognizing that many of us talk about technology as though it's so-called gender neutral, as though it's something that's a great equalizer and it affects men and women in the same way. Again, I would love to unpack that.

For women, especially women democracy activists, technology can be really positive. Number one, it helps organize and helps overcome some of the barriers that I just mentioned in response to MP Vandenbeld about restrictions on movement. Technology is a way to overcome that. Civil society often needs permits to meet, to gather and to assemble more than 11 people at a time or something like that. It allows women to organize in a way they weren't able to do before.

It's also a very important way to bring young women into governance. I often tell the story about a friend in Tunisia who started a website, an app, to track Tunisia's constitutional drafting, and literally line by painstaking line she got consultation from young people. Her app ended up having more followers than the entire Tunisian national soccer team. When we're talking about getting young people involved in politics, transparency and oversight, it could be really useful.

It can also help share lessons globally. Solidarity is important and the sharing of good practices matters.

However, it also has a very negative potential impact for women specifically and for democracy promotion specifically. I don't need to tell all of you in this room the way that, number one, it can contribute to the external influence on elections, and the level of vitriol or backlash that men and women can face. Often much of it targeted at women is highly sexualized and is targeted at their honour and their place in families and communities.

I'd say that as we are supporting democratization worldwide, part of what we need to make sure we're doing is to ensure that we are supporting women with digital security training, data security, managing their online presence, etc.

I think we need to be wide-eyed about it, and like everything else, recognize that there are gender dimensions to even something that seems relatively innocuous from that perspective.

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham:** It leads to my next question quite well, which is how do we deal with players in established democracies, the people who are already there, who want to subvert it through things like gerrymandering, voter suppression and fake news, which are all technological? How do we deal with internal threats to democracy?

This question is for both of you.

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** I'd say the biggest way we can deal with this long term and fundamentally is by enhancing our critical thinking skills.

This is something that I've sharpened through engagement with a lot of women, working to counter poles of violent extremism and radicalization around the world. They're saying that some of what is getting foisted upon us by international donors is the idea of counter-narratives that we're going to put back out on social media, the ways that government is good and the ways that this government actually is supporting *x*, *y* and *z*.

They're saying combatting messages with messages is never going to be the winning path. What we need to do is focus on the critical thinking skills of our citizens and our populations. I think that's something that Canada can bring very directly.

In the shorter term, I think we have to make sure that there's a very close link between women and civil society activists and technology companies. I often hear from women mobilizing about new ways that technology is being used to subvert their activity, different apps that are being developed, different approaches of surveillance, etc. To the extent that there's a more direct connection between women fighting for democracy in any country, including our own, and the technology companies that are running these platforms, I think that's one of the best short-term things that we can do.

● (1035)

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham:** Okay.

**Hon. Ed Broadbent:** The only point I would add to that is the question of regulating institutions or multinational corporations like Facebook, for example, to head off the future use of this kind of technology in a way that undermines our elections and other elections around the world by creating dissent and conflict within societies. Without going into great detail—frankly, I couldn't in terms of technical expertise—the approach taken within the European Union about regulating Facebook, as an example, is something I think we should look more carefully at.

On the one hand, we don't want—as was suggested earlier in the day—the Internet to be controlled by government, but on the other hand, when you have large corporate entities that are acting on their own, which has led willy-nilly to the manipulation of their own technical possibilities to do harm to democracies, I think there is a place for some government regulation to make sure this doesn't happen.

As I say, I don't have personal expertise on this, but it seems to me from my reading that the European Union has moved sensibly in this kind of direction out of concern for democracy.

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham:** You mentioned critical thinking as a critical element of this, so I guess the critical element we're missing then is equitable education around the world, and we can only hope to get to that spot.

I don't want to dwell on that too much as I only have about a minute left, but in the previous panel we heard, and we heard this before, that it's the 13th consecutive year of the decline of democracy in principle. We're talking about spreading democracy and encouraging other countries to have it. Is American democracy, which is the model of democracy that people look to, healthy? Do we do a good job of respecting democracy once it's established?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** I don't think it's fundamentally healthy. We've seen a lot in the last several years, when you scratch the veneer, some of the institutions crumble relatively quickly. While many people look to American democracy, that's changing. In relative terms, Canada's standing and our approach to democracy has significantly enhanced in many people's minds. I'd also note that one of the reasons there are so many Canadians working on democratization abroad is that our model of democracy is desired by other countries rather than the American one. Fewer are wanting an export of a congressional system, especially when it is so rife with money and outside influence.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. We're actually out of time on that question.

We have about four minutes to go.

Mr. Saini.

**Mr. Raj Saini:** Good morning to both of you.

Mr. Broadbent, I want to ask you a specific question, because I want to get your opinion. The subcommittee on human rights has had some sessions on Venezuela, and now our committee will be studying and maybe have a couple of meetings on Venezuela. You can appreciate the deteriorating situation right now. Canada recently pledged $53 million to help with the refugee crisis that's occurring in Brazil and Colombia.

As you are aware, there's the hyperinflation, the deteriorating economic situation, and the deteriorating political situation. Protestors are being beaten and dissidents are being jailed. Currently, the way we look at it, Mr. Guaido is being recognized on a daily basis as more the rightful ruler of Venezuela. Recently, as of today or yesterday or last week, Japan also supported him as the leader of Venezuela. What do you think of Canada's position? Do you think we're doing the right thing by supporting him and trying to mitigate the humanitarian crisis on the ground in Venezuela?

**Hon. Ed Broadbent:** Would you like to ask me a different question? That's an immensely complex issue.

I've normally been on the side, in terms of international law and government, that whatever group happens to be in control of the major institutions—parliaments, courts, armies—whether we like that particular group or party or not, it should be recognized as the government of the day.

On the other hand, the government of the day in Venezuela is abominable, according to almost every human rights evaluation, in terms of recent elections, in terms of how it is treating people in terms of rights and concerns of the population. I can well understand why not only Canada but many other democracies, that I have a respect for in western Europe and elsewhere, are supporting the leader of the opposition. However, this is almost an unparalleled situation. All I can say is I understand that. Certainly, if I were a voting person, I would be voting for the opposition leader, my personal choice in all of this.

● (1040)

**Mr. Raj Saini:** The reason I ask you this is there's a certain element in the Venezuelan constitution which makes this even more complex. It's article 233, which states that if there's a vacuum of leadership, or if there's a vacuum in the presidency, then the head of the national assembly can temporarily take that position. Because of the fact that the previous elections were not fair or not free, where dissidents were jailed—this is the reason I wanted to ask the question—because of that stipulation within its own constitution, could that be seen as a legitimate way of trying to mitigate the crisis and change the political trajectory there?

**Hon. Ed Broadbent:** Well, that's certainly what people in governments are looking to justify in supporting this opposition leader.

As I said, I understand that. However, it's not a normal healthy procedure internationally for our government or any other government to get involved in putting pressure on another country in terms of shaping its government. Therefore, as I said, it's a very exceptional situation and kind of a Hobson's choice: You're damned if you do and damned if you don't.

One thing I would not be in agreement with—and this is what's causing concern—is the forceful involvement of the President of the United States who is talking about using force, to use his words, not taking the option of force off the table. That's entirely counterproductive in my view, and it is what makes a lot of people apprehensive about any government getting involved in shaping the destiny, the formation, of a government of another society.

**Mr. Raj Saini:** In terms of Canada's position with its leadership within the Lima Group, they have ruled out any attempt of force. As you know, the United States is not part of the Lima Group, so that's an isolated comment by the President.

I think Canada's position is quite clear. We want to work politically to find a solution and not use force in any way.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I want to thank Ms. O'Neill from Washington, Ed Broadbent with us here in Ottawa, and our previous two witnesses as well, for some very, very important testimony this morning.

I also want to thank all members for getting up early to meet at 8:45 on a Tuesday morning, and for being here sharply and with such good questions to ask.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.