HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

FAAE • NUMBER 135 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, April 9, 2019

Chair

Mr. Michael Levitt

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Tuesday, April 9, 2019

● (0845)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone, on this surprisingly snowy day in Ottawa.

We are beginning our study into threats to liberal democracy in Europe. We're pleased to welcome our guests for the first hour.

From the Atlantic Council, we have former ambassador Daniel Fried, distinguished follow at the Atlantic Council and also former special assistant and NSC senior director for presidents Clinton and Bush, ambassador to Poland and assistant to the secretary of state for Europe. Welcome, Ambassador Fried.

We also have Mr. Benjamin Haddad, Director, Future Europe Initiative. He's an expert in European politics and transatlantic relations. He has notably advocated for transatlantic unity in the face of Russian aggression, greater European responsibility and investment on strategic matters.

We also have Dr. Staffan Lindberg, Professor in the Political Science Department and Director of the V-Dem Institute at the University of Gothenburg.

I would like to start with our guests from the Atlantic Council, who can take 10 to 12 minutes for some introductory remarks.

Dr. Lindberg, we'll then move to you.

Then of course we'll open it up to members because I'm sure they're going to have many questions for all of you.

With that, our guests from the Atlantic Council, please proceed.

Mr. Daniel Fried (Distinguished Fellow, Atlantic Council): Thank you for this opportunity.

I wish we were able to meet under more auspicious circumstances, but the fact is that the west, that is, the core of the world's democracies, comprising North America and Europe, is suffering a period of what I would call a democratic sag in self-confidence at the same time that authoritarians around the world—Russia, and in a different way, China—are finding themselves emboldened. This is a period of testing for the west and for our values. Since 1945, and again since 1989, we believed that our values and our interests would advance together or not at all. We built institutions reflecting the lessons we had learned in the first half of the 20th century.

The result was spectacular. It was the longest period of general peace in the west in recorded history, with world prosperity. Despite gaps, mistakes, blunders, hypocrisies and other mistakes made by the U.S. government and all governments, this period was a good one. From 1945 to 1989 we advanced a vision of a democratic world order within the space we had at our disposal. From 1989 we expanded that space and achieved a vision of a Europe whole, free and at peace.

That vision is under assault from both authoritarians without and doubts within. The problems that have weakened us have also been of our own making. Economic stresses, massive income disparities in the United States, a prolonged period of economic stagnation in Europe, and enormously high youth unemployment, plus issues of national identity in the face of massive immigration, Latino immigration mainly in the United States, and north African and Middle Eastern immigration in Europe have led to stresses on both sides of the Atlantic and a nativist counter-reaction.

We face a narrative in which the authoritarians, including especially the Chinese, may believe that their time has come and that the authoritarian model is actually more effective. This, in fact, is not new. This is a remake of an old movie we saw in the 1930s. I like remakes no better than the original, and in this case certainly not, but the challenge is not to be laughed at. I suppose the proof that the United States and Europe are part of the same civilization is that we are suffering—I won't speak of Canada, but certainly my country and Europe are suffering—the same kind of political and economic stresses at the same time. Whatever you think of Brexit or President Trump or the Italian government or whatever it is that we call what is happening in some countries in central Europe, we face common challenges.

Now, in the view of the Atlantic Council, at least, and in my own view, it won't do to wring our hands and complain or, being an American, to simply be mad at some of the narratives coming out of the Trump White House about nationalism or the unilateral nature of American foreign policy interests. Instead, the Atlantic Council, along with Canada's Centre for International Governance Innovation, launched an effort to, as it were, plant the flag of values and what we stand for. Madeleine Albright, a former secretary of state; Steve Hadley, a former national security adviser; Carl Bildt, a former Swedish prime minister and foreign minister; and Yoriko Kawaguchi, a former Japanese foreign minister, were leaders and co-chairs of an effort to write and then present a declaration of principles—what it is we stand for. Frankly, we were inspired by the Atlantic Charter, which set out the first set of foundational principles for the post-World War II world. This was not an official effort but an unofficial effort to set out principles for the 21st century.

● (0850)

It has seven statements about democracy, economic freedom and responsibility, about the right to protect and about human rights. I commend it to you. It was a joint U.S.-Canadian production. That is, CIGI and the Atlantic Council worked together on this. At the rollout at the Munich Security Conference in February, the Canadian foreign minister took part of the town hall meeting to explain the document. The purpose of this is to rally the forces of—if I may use the phrase—the free world, rally ourselves and then, when we have consolidated our thinking, find ways to reach out to others.

This isn't a western-only product. Former officials from India, Indonesia, Brazil, Mexico, Tunisia, Israel and South Korea have all signed this, as well as a number of Europeans. We want to reach out to countries, democracies around the world, and then reach out to see whether we can develop common ground with countries like China, because we do want China involved in the making of a 21st century system. We just don't want to have to compromise our basic values to bring it on board.

Now there's much more to say about this effort, and I look forward to the discussion, but I will say that your inquiry, Canada's inquiry into the challenges to the liberal world order, is timely and important and we have work to do together.

I will yield the rest of my time to my colleague from the Atlantic Council.

● (0855)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benjamin Haddad (Director, Future Europe Initiative, Atlantic Council): Thank you for your invitation.

[*English*]

Let me just add a quick couple of words to what Dan just said about the threats to liberal world order. As we have talked about this a lot in the last few years both in the United States and Europe, it's important to define the words that we're talking about because we sometimes talk about democratic backsliding or the rise of the liberalism. I think what we're seeing is the rise of an alternative liberal model that is defined by authoritarianism, assault on the rule of law, a sort of direct connection between the leader and the people circumventing parliamentary power, civil society and NGOs. We see this all over Europe.

I really want to stress one of the points that Ambassador Fried put forward, the idea that a lot of the causes for this are self-inflicted, and it's true that we have maybe not been reactive enough to some of the economic inequalities that have been on the rise, a very high youth unemployment that you see all over Europe, as well as the ripple effect of what is seen by many in Europe as uncontrolled immigration and the effect on the transformation of national identity. To respond to those challenges, it is very important to be able to differentiate the illiberal measures taken by some leaders from maybe legitimate differences in policy, such as the reaction to immigration.

I want to come especially to the question of European politics in the last few years, especially since the refugee crisis of 2015. There maybe has been confusion sometimes between, once again, some measures taken that are antithetical to the values of the European Union and the attachment to the rule of law and what could be seen as constituting legitimate policy disagreements about how to treat the immigration crisis. I think this difference has been exploited by leaders, especially in Poland and Hungary, saying that the voters didn't have a choice but to side with them including when they took measures that were seen as threatening the rule of law.

I think it's really important to make this point because, as you see the European Union, you have countries that come with very different historical cultural traditions, very different relationships to the notion of sovereignty and national identity. These are linked mostly to dramatically different experiences in the 20th century. Western European countries, like France and Germany, joined the European Union—created the European Union—to a large extent as a way not to reproduce the ills of the first part of the 21st century, nationalism and border-strong identity. Countries that are left behind the Iron Curtain to a large extent saw the integration in the European Union and NATO as a way to protect their national identity and sovereignty. From this you can have very different reactions to issues like immigration that need to be understood and not confused with legitimate criticism over the rule of law.

Once again, understanding the concerns of voters on these issues without giving in to illiberalism is a key element, in my view, to respond to what we're talking about today. I'd be happy to expand this in a conversation a little later.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now move to Dr. Lindberg.

Again, perhaps you could take around 10 minutes or so, and then we'll open it up to my colleagues for questions.

● (0900)

Professor Staffan Lindberg (Professor, Political Science Department and Director of the V-Dem Institute, University of Gothenburg, As an Individual): Mr. Chairman and honourable members, thank you for inviting me to be here today.

With your permission, I would like to show some slides when I give my introductory remarks.

I'm going to put what I have to say in a bit of a world context. I represent the V-Dem Institute. That's the headquarters for—

The Chair: Dr. Lindberg, we have to pause for a second. It's required that all slides be bilingual. Unfortunately, we haven't had an opportunity to view these yet.

Let me ask the members.

Do I have unanimous consent to move forward with this?

Monsieur Caron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Yes, but I want to mention that we should inform witnesses that their presentations must be sent to us in English and French. This time, I'm willing to say yes, but I would like the matter clarified in the future.

[*English*]

The Chair: Absolutely, and we do endeavour to contact witnesses to make that clear, with the caveat that we continue to want all materials before this committee to be bilingual.

Dr. Lindberg, thank you, and sorry about that. Obviously, in these committees, we are bilingual, but we have received unanimous consent to show your slides.

Please go ahead and continue your presentation.

Prof. Staffan Lindberg: Thank you very much, and apologies if the mistake is mine.

I just want to give you the background, in the sense that I represent what is now the largest-ever social science international collaboration to measure and study democracy, and now, the autocratization [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

This represents a collective effort of a total of 3,000 academics and other experts from 180 countries in the world.

What we have been establishing is that this current wave of autocratization affects large portions of the world. We are in a third wave at present. It affects large influential countries. The way things happen, as I'm sure many honourable members are aware, is that media and civil society are often attacked first and then rule of law. But different from what we were used to is that the current wave of autocratization is very incremental. It is very slow and gradual. That makes it hard to detect and hard to react to.

This is a visual of what has happened since 1972. To the left, you see the regular sort of country averages of the level of democracy in the world, liberal democracy, and you can see there is some backsliding, according to this measure, in the last five to 10 years.

If we—on the right-hand side panel—weigh this by population size in these countries, then these trends are much more pronounced. The top line there is North America and western Europe. Then you have the green line, which is Latin America, and the black line is the world average.

We established last year that 2.5 billion people, or a third of the world's population, live in countries that are undergoing autocratization rather than the opposite, democratization.

Here is entirely new data. This was ready two days ago. It covers up to the end of 2018 and is comparing things to those in 2008. If a country is below the line, things have gotten worse. If you're above the line, things have gotten better. We put names on the countries in which we can establish that there has been a statistically significant change. Only those countries are marked. But you can see some of the countries that are there: the United States, and the Czech Republic, Croatia, Poland, Hungary, and Serbia in Europe. Then there are other big countries like Brazil and India with its 1.3 billion people. And, of course, down there is Turkey. That's an electoral autocracy today, or electoral dictatorship if you want.

If we look at the last couple of years, for Europe it's even worse. Of the four countries that have backslid the most, three are in Europe: Romania, Poland and Bulgaria. When they are backsliding, these are the areas that are affected the most. Again, below the line over the last 10 years, more countries have become worse in that aspect, and above the line, things have gotten better.

You'll see that it's freedom of expression, in which you also have freedom of the media, that is the worst affected, along with freedom of association and rule of law to some extent.

If we look at that liberal democracy index in Europe, you have the Czech Republic, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine that have gotten worse. Here it's from 2009 to 2018, so it's a perfect 10 years. Also, in these countries, it's largely freedom of association that is the most negatively affected.

I just want to give you one visual of that. One of the indicators we have that have to do with freedom of the media is government censorship efforts when it comes to the media. Here, again, even on these specific indicators, you see there are many of the same countries again, but also, in some of the countries, this aspect of democracy—a very precise, specific indicator—has gotten worse, although in the aggregate, when we look at liberal democracy as a whole, the changes are not yet so big that we can say that democracy has slid back as a whole.

● (0905)

This is one of the, so to speak, early warning signals in the battery of indicators of liberal democracy that tend to move early. This is, for us, a very worrying picture, if nothing else, because of this. I'm sure you've seen similar pictures online at certain points. First they came for the journalists and then we don't know what happened.

On that note, let me just say thank you. I'll be happy to answer any questions that the honourable members may have.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move straight to questions.

We're going to begin with MP Alleslev, please.

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

Obviously, it's not the most positive; it doesn't look like we're moving in the right direction. Are we at a stage where we need to define the problem, or do we already have a good understanding of the problem and, as a result, need to move into the concrete defining of pragmatic, executable solutions?

That question is for both, so whoever wants to jump in first....

Mr. Daniel Fried: Well, I already tried to give the answer to that when I referred to the declaration of principles. The Atlantic Council and Canada's CIGI decided that bemoaning the state of democratic deterioration in Europe, in the United States and around the world simply was a hand-wringing and ineffective exercise.

Our thought is that we need to decide what we stand for and rally forces, the better to push back against these trends. We need to decide how to push back against the authoritarian trends. We think that we could best do that by defining who we are, by extolling the virtues of the democratic order and by honestly evaluating the problems that have brought us to this point.

I also don't think that simply describing the democratic sag as a problem in central Europe or in the former communist countries post-1989 Europe is going to do. I think that what is happening in Poland and Hungary is simply their version of what is happening throughout Europe and, indeed, in the United States.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: There's no question then we've defined the problem. You've identified the declaration of principles as being an overarching guide of what we stand for, so that would be the "what" that we're trying to achieve.

As a parliamentarian, I'm looking for concrete recommendations of what I can propose to a government and to my citizens in terms of the pragmatic deliverables around how we achieve that. What specific policy actions do we need to be taking in our countries to stop the autocratization and to adhere to the declaration of principles?

● (0910)

Mr. Daniel Fried: Oh my, there's a long list.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Where do we find it? Where's the list?

Mr. Daniel Fried: With respect to Ukraine, the only disagreement I have with the professor's chart is that I don't think Ukraine has deteriorated since 2008. I think Ukrainians are struggling with many of the same issues that we all face, but they are doing so under far worse conditions and under actual military assault by Russia. One thing we could do is back Ukraine—not simply its resistance against Russian aggression, but also its efforts to reform itself and try to Europeanize itself.

I think that the notion of inevitable deterioration of democracy, if this idea gains currency, can be self-perpetuating. I think we can break that cycle. I think Ukrainians are trying, and I think we ought to back them.

That's one thing we could do. Another—

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Thank you. I'd like to make sure I have time for Dr. Lindberg. I apologize.

Mr. Daniel Fried: That's quite all right.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Dr. Lindberg.

Prof. Staffan Lindberg: Thank you.

Have we identified the problem? I think that depends on what you mean by "the problem". Do we know that there's backsliding going on? Yes. Do we know where it's going on? Yes, and with our data you can see the details of it, but is that the problem? Is it that we see backsliding?

In that sense, yes, we can identify the problem, but along with the problem, do we know why this has happened or is ongoing in so many countries, and not only in Europe? I think we need to have a global perspective here. It's ongoing in very much the same ways and manners in India and in the Philippines. You talked about the United States, and I agree with that.

Do we know why this is happening? Yes, we have hunches, and I think we heard some good hunches from my colleagues at the Atlantic Council. Do we know that those are the drivers? No, we don't. We still need to study that a lot more, unfortunately.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Okay.

Do we need to be able to answer that in more detail before we can move to the "what we do about it" in terms of the actual solutions? I want you to answer that with two perspectives, if you could, because it sounds like we're talking about "them" rather than talking perhaps about "each of us". As much as what we should be doing in support of others, what should we be doing in each of our own countries?

Prof. Staffan Lindberg: Yes, I share that completely. Let me also say that I think the changes I showed and that we've published are the sorts of the changes that we can say are statistically significant and substantial, but that doesn't mean we.... Also, in my own country, Sweden, we see some of these trends, with growing exclusive nationalism and fear in the wake of large-scale immigration and so on. We see that here too.

Until we have a better solid basis for what the drivers of this are, really, it's hard to say whether we need to know them or not. Let me give you an illustration—

The Chair: Dr. Lindberg, I'm going to have to stop you there. I'm sure we can get you to finish off the answer in a future question.

We're going to move now to MP Wrzesnewskyj, please.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen.

Dr. Lindberg, I'd like to begin with you.

You've done a lot of statistical analysis and diving into numbers. I'd like to dive into some numbers in Europe. It's how elections have played out.

There seems to be a pattern, whether it be the AfD, the Five Star Movement or France's National Front. The Five Star Movement received 32% of the vote. The National Front, Le Pen's party, received 34% of the vote. It seems that in Europe the numbers cap at that one-third of the population that it resonates with.

The Pew Research Center did something quite interesting. Last spring, in most of the democratic countries—or some that are slipping—they put a question to the population: Do immigrants make our country stronger? What's fascinating is in countries like France or Germany, 59% of the population agreed with that premise. It seems there's a hard base of about 32%, with perhaps a little room for growth. Then there's something really odd that happens.

I'd like to note, by the way, that Canada ranked the highest in terms of people agreeing that immigrants make our country stronger. Sixty-eight per cent of Canadians agreed with that. That was the highest in the world.

In Hungary, it was only 5%, and it really stands out when we look at what perhaps happens in Hungary that's different from the AfD or the Five Star Movement. Whereas there seems to be a creep of autocratization in many of these countries, in Hungary there's kind of a sneaky way of eroding democracy. Orbán has codified this whole concept of Christian democracy with three clear principles. He propagates that view and you see it translate in very dangerous ways in the numbers. On that point of view, he seems to have the backing of over 90% of the population.

Diving into that data, and looking at it through that particular lens, it would seem there's a base of 32%. Once they are in power, and once they begin this process, if it's codified in a succinct, clean way, as we see in the example of Hungary, what do you believe could happen in some of the other European countries? Of course, Mr. Orbán is spreading this ideology beyond Hungary.

● (0915)

Prof. Staffan Lindberg: I don't think it necessarily stays at 30%, or whatever it is. We know this also from history. Once you have this sort of leadership in place, you can change the population's perceptions of, say, immigrants or any other part of the population. That's the worrying part of today's autocratization. Not only in Europe but across Europe we see these uglier forms of nationalism that build on identifying a subpopulation within the country, which they vilify and scapegoat as a step to making the other part of the population scared enough that they can go to emergency powers, such as changing laws regarding civil society, constraining media and so on, in the name of protecting the nation. You see the same thing going on in India with Modi. It's a very worrying trend. It reminds me too much of the 1920s and 1930s for me to be comfortable.

On Orbán and the Christian principles, I want to note that he didn't start there. If you go back to 2010, there was nothing of that there. This is something that, later in his tenure, he has sort of found out can be used.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you.

I would like to turn to Ambassador Fried. You had referenced Russia and China. During the Cold War, we had proxy wars in different parts of the world. Now we have a hybrid war, and when you take a look at what the Kremlin's role is in particular in these trends in Europe, perhaps you would like to comment on that because we're well aware that they do things.

We've seen the Schroederization of politicians in Europe. We see substantial loans to Marine Le Pen's party in France. They are engaged in false flag tactics like the fire bombing of a Hungarian—and this is where it gets really complicated—cultural centre in western Ukraine to stir up interethnic animosities. The culprits were caught. They were Polish white supremacists who by chance ended up getting caught. Then they spilled the beans that it was an AfD official from Germany who paid them to do this, and the money came from handlers in Russia.

It shows a multi-layered approach to destabilizing liberal democracy in Europe. You have those very active engagements, and then you have China with Huawei where they go around to a lot of these countries and say, “Look. Forget about even pretending to have elections with this equipment. It's cheaper than western equipment, plus you can watch your citizenry with this equipment.”

I was wondering if you would like to comment on those—

● (0920)

The Chair: I'm going to thank my honourable colleague for his comments but, sadly, the time is over.

Before we move to MP Caron, Dr. Lindberg, could I ask you to please forward your slides and your presentation to the clerk. We do want to translate and distribute that material to members of the committee so they have it.

Thank you, sir.

MP Caron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Thank you.

Mr. Lindberg, first of all, I just want to say that I didn't want to embarrass you. As Mr. Levitt said, the committee is responsible for ensuring that all documents are sent to us in English and French. It's not your fault. The committee should have done its job.

That said, I'll move on to my questions.

I think that today's well-functioning democracies are the democracies that run the same way as they did before the rise of autocracy. These democracies seem to have the same communication methods, the same approaches and the same diplomatic process.

I think that protection against the threat posed by the rise of autocracy in well-functioning democracies depends heavily on communication and a proper approach to the problem.

I'll provide an example of what we've seen not only here in Canada, but around the world. I'm talking about the reaction to the United Nations migration pact. This pact was intended to initiate the start of communication to end the chaos caused by migration. However, various autocratization forces used the pact as a lightning rod, in order to gather behind a standard.

Do you agree with this analysis? How could we address the issue of communication or approaches in our democracies? Do you have any proposals in this regard?

[*English*]

Prof. Staffan Lindberg: The UN pact or the UN agreement on immigration was the object of a little bit of discussion also in my own country in Sweden. I didn't follow the debate in Canada, unfortunately, on this but across Europe, obviously, there were strong reactions in some countries. It was used, as you say, for fearmongering simply.

I think the current trend of using fear more and more in the political communication between leaders and people in Europe and beyond is very dangerous. We know that fear is one of the most dangerous political forces that you can [*Inaudible—Editor*]. The extreme cases we know: Nazism and fascism in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, the genocide in Rwanda. Fear can make people accept extreme actions.

In that sense, I agree with you that it's really important to put a lot of emphasis on the quality of communication and what the message in that sort of communication is to avoid fearmongering and try to counter it when possible.

● (0925)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Thank you.

Mr. Haddad, I have a question for you.

You talked about migration, which I've just discussed with Mr. Lindberg. Migration poses a certain problem, particularly in the Mediterranean Basin. The problem won't disappear gradually, on the contrary.

We're talking about Europe, but we can also talk about Canada. How could we best accommodate refugees or migrants in liberal democracies such as ours? As I just said, the problem won't gradually disappear. How should we change our approach?

As I asked Mr. Lindberg, how should we share this priority and this set of principles that we have as democracies?

[*English*]

Mr. Benjamin Haddad: You're right. The French leader said, something like 25 years ago, that populists ask the right questions and give the wrong answers. It's true that this issue of immigration has been hijacked, in terms of fear, by nativist rhetoric. If we want to be able to respond to these fears responsibly, we have to understand where they come from. If you look at the refugee crisis in 2015, there initially was objectively a failure from the European Union to anticipate and respond effectively to the refugee crisis. I think we have seen a lot of measures since then, with a lot of coordination among European countries to be able to respond effectively in three ways.

The first way is to welcome with a humane and generous philosophy the refugees and asylum seekers in the European Union. There's still ongoing debate right now in Europe about how to be able to share the...I don't want to use the term “burden”, which is often used, but to share the refugees around European countries.

The second one is to clearly bolster border control. We have seen increased resources in terms of both manpower and financial resources that have been allocated to the European border control agency, Frontex. You still have this debate going on right now in Europe with the European Commission putting forward more resources.

Finally, and I think this is really key, is understanding that this immigration is as a result of instability in the periphery of the European Union. It's a result of crisis and conflict in Libya, in Ukraine, in Syria, so there is absolutely no way—I think you made that point in your question—for Europeans to shield themselves and to think that they can “bunkerize” themselves from the rest of the world. Economic aid and sometimes also military involvement will be critical for Europeans to be able to respond to these challenges.

I really want to stress the fact that it is important and completely legitimate for voters and citizens to feel that at least their institutions are in control of this phenomenon. You can be humane, generous and open and at the same time show that you are in control of your own immigration policy. I think it is one of the great successes of Canada that it is a country that has a fairly strict and controlled immigration policy and at the same time is open and generous. It has shown itself to be extremely open to refugee and asylum seekers in the last few years.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now move to MP Saini.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Good morning or good afternoon, everyone.

I would like to start with you, Dr. Lindberg. You've written extensively on autocratization. If we start from Dahl's famous conceptualization that electoral democracy is a polyarchy, and if we go now and see the democratic erosion going on throughout Europe, probably one of the most interesting things is that this autocratization is affecting democratic countries as opposed to the electoral autocracies that it affected in the past. When we look at the majority of the countries that are being affected, a lot have to be east European countries, the near abroad states to Russia.

How much is this democratic erosion phenomenon a general phenomenon and how much is it simply the near abroad countries—Hungary, Poland, the Visegrad nations—that are being affected, maybe because they have a Russian-speaking population because they're in close proximity to Russia? How much is it a Russian orbital problem, or how much is this democratic erosion a more widespread problem?

● (0930)

Prof. Staffan Lindberg: It's 23.5% Russian.... No, obviously, it's really hard to quantify.

Although we now speak about Europe, and I highlighted some of the changes in Europe, we see this happening across the world. It's only sub-Saharan Africa that's not affected by this trend yet, and there, arguably, in many places, democracy is not at a very high level, or most countries are not democracies.

It is and has been affecting Latin America. It is affecting central Asia and Southeast Asia as well. It is not simply an east European problem induced by proximity to Russia, even if that may also make things perhaps more accentuated.

Mr. Raj Saini: This question is for Mr. Haddad and Mr. Fried.

You mentioned the immigration issue which started in 2015. When we look at Europe, part of the criticism was that the Schengen agreement was not as strong as it could have been. More importantly, Hungary has now been censured by European lawmakers where it has gone to a majority. Now it will go on to the 28 member states. There has to be unanimity if any sanctions or any repercussions are going to happen to Hungary, but as you know, Poland is going to veto that.

How much of this is actually creating a new normal? If you look at what's happening in Europe now with some of the political changes in the other stronger democracies, it seems that a new normal has now been accepted. Dr. Lindberg has said that the depletion rate now, when it comes to democracy, is about 8%. You have this creep, or democratic erosion. It's happening so slowly that other countries are now beginning to accept that they used to be here, but now they will accept this as a new normal to somewhat keep the peace. Right now Europe is going through a lot of transition, especially with Brexit and with the hard border in Ireland, so maybe they think it's just better to accept certain things just to keep the peace at the new normal, or.... What should be the response to that?

Mr. Benjamin Haddad: A quick point on this is that the Schengen agreement was the abolition of internal borders. I think the reason they were seen to be a failure to a certain extent was that there wasn't the necessary transfer of resources to control external borders. This left an undue burden on certain countries, like Italy, for example, which was left on its own to a large extent at the beginning of the refugee crisis. I think this fuelled the rise of populism in a much more unhelpful government today.

Some of the measures that were taken by the European Union since then are not discussed enough because we mostly generally talk about negative news rather than the positive news afterwards. I think we have seen a lot of measures precisely to make the Schengen area much more effective. It is absolutely critical because it is one of the major success stories in the European integration. Without the Schengen area, I think the European project would be much more weakened.

To come to your point on Poland and Hungary, I think this question of immigration has been exploited by leaders for domestic purposes to bolster their own power and sometimes take measures against the rule of law. It's really critical for European leaders—and we have seen this recently—to be able to separate the two and respond effectively to challenges that are economic or linked to immigration with reasonable policies and to assuage voter concerns, yet at the same time be extremely firm when it comes to the backsliding of the rule of law that questions the liberal democracy that is the heart of the European Union. They are non-negotiable.

I don't know if I would agree with your assessment of a new normal. On the contrary, I think we are seeing a rising concern in Europe over this. We've seen both the European Council and the European Parliament react quite forcefully in the last year. We have seen the EPP take measures against Orbán this year. This is still an ongoing conversation, but I would argue that it has been an awakening for European leaders on these issues.

Mr. Raj Saini: I have one final question.

You've written about the illiberal democracy and obviously Orbán is the sort of figurehead for that ideology. The opposite to that is Emmanuel Macron on one side, who wrote a position paper and said that there has to be a reset or a renewal in the European Union, and you have Orbán on the other side. When Macron said this, he never got much support from the other democracies, yet Orbán seems to be gaining more support either with the Visegrad nations or with other nations. There seems to be two polar opposites in Europe, but Macron doesn't seem to be the one who's garnering as much support as Orbán is. Why is that? Why aren't the other more established democracies supporting Macron, as opposed to Orbán?

● (0935)

Mr. Daniel Fried: I agree with the way you've set out the problem. The United States is, shall we say, distracted, as is the U.K. I think it is important that the democracies do rally around what Macron has said, or rather the principles that Macron is at least trying to champion. Frankly, good for him. Instead of sitting on his hands or complaining or retreating, he's trying. The point of the declaration of principles was to do exactly what you, sir, have suggested be done, which is to rally around the democratic principles, so that the apostles of illiberal democracy don't have a clear field.

Mr. Raj Saini: Thank you very much.

Mr. Benjamin Haddad: If I may add something, I agree with your assessment on Macron's position in Europe. I think it is a result of the fact that it is a harder position to take to both defend the European Union and its principles and at the same time be lucid about the challenges and some of the policy failures of the European Union in the last few years.

Macron recently addressed Brexit in a document that said we should not be complacent about Brexit, even though the British establishment is going through difficulties in dealing with it, because the mistakes and failures that have led to Brexit are still in the European Union and we need to address them.

Mr. Raj Saini: Thank you.

The Chair: With that, gentlemen, we are going to thank you for joining us and providing us this testimony this morning.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Do we have time to ask questions?

The Chair: There is a vote at 10:30, and we'll have to break from here at 10:20. Also, we have to suspend to get the second panellists set up. Sorry, I should have made that clear. I want to make sure that we have little bit of time to at least get one full round of questions with the second panel.

Gentlemen, thank you very much.

With that we shall suspend.

● (0935)

(Pause)

● (0940)

The Chair: We are resuming.

We're going to start with our second panel as we continue with our study on threats to liberal democracy in Europe.

I'd like to welcome, as an individual, Dr. William Galston, the Ezra K. Zilkha Chair and Senior Fellow, Governance Studies, at the Brookings Institution. Dr. Galston is the author of nine books and more than 100 articles in the fields of political theory, public policy and American politics.

Dr. Galston, thank you for joining us from Washington, D.C., this morning. I would ask you to provide your opening remarks, and then we will open it up to our colleagues on the committee for questions.

Dr. William Galston (Ezra K. Zilkha Chair and Senior Fellow, Governance Studies, Brookings Institution, As an Individual): Thank you very much, Chairman Levitt. It's an unexpected honour to be asked to testify before this important committee.

Your staff very usefully provided me with five questions to address. Two of them concern Canada's transatlantic alliances and policies for bolstering the liberal international order. Coming from a country that has made a total hash of these issues recently, I'm a little reluctant to offer my advice, but if you press me during the question period, I will do so.

Of the remaining three questions, the responses to which will form the bulk of my opening testimony, the first concerns the factors driving the popular and populist resentment, the upsurge in this resentment in most of Europe's liberal democracies. Happily, after a period of confusion, something of a scholarly consensus is emerging as to the major causes of this upsurge.

A familiar place to begin is with the impact of technology and globalization on the economies of advanced western democracies. This has triggered, among many other pathologies, the end of the 40 years of postwar convergence between more prosperous and less prosperous regions, and instead the rise of massive and steadily increasing regional inequalities. One economic geographer has recently labelled the upsurge of populism “the revenge of 'left-behind' places”, and I think there's a lot to that.

Second and relatedly is the collapse of traditional manufacturing in many areas, including many former urban manufacturing centres, particularly in France and the U.K. This hit the industrial working class very hard. At the same time, centre-left parties updated or modernized their programs away from working-class concerns toward the concerns more characteristic of upscale professionals. This left the working class in many countries feeling resentful and politically homeless. They decoupled from their traditional alliances with centre-left parties and became the most unstable force in European politics and, I would add, in American politics as well.

Third is the impact of immigration, which has triggered a host of identity concerns and issues. If I had a lot of time, I could go through a series of decisions by European leaders, such as Tony Blair and Angela Merkel, which contributed to the impact of immigration on the population of European countries. Suffice it to say that we have the AfD in Germany, the League in Italy and Brexit in the U.K. in no small measure as a direct response to public concerns about immigration policy.

I should add parenthetically that one of Canada's distinctive features against this backdrop is its immigration policy, which not only serves your national interests pretty well, but also enjoys broad-based public support, the last time I checked. This is very unusual and accounts, I think, for the decidedly more positive and healthy tone of Canada's democracy, relative to most of the rest of the west.

● (0945)

The fourth cause for popular and populist discontent was the mismanagement of the financial crisis and its aftermath. European elites did not distinguish themselves in their handling of the post-crisis recovery. Failed austerity policies raised questions about the elites' competence and their concern for ordinary people.

Fifth and finally, there are growing conflicts between elites, most of whom are urban-based, and those in small town and rural areas about cultural change and the rapid evolution of social norms. In this respect, I would note the increasing importance of educational differences. One of the great dividing lines that have emerged in western democratic politics is between people who have gotten a college education and people who haven't. This is more than a question of economic opportunity. It also shapes fundamental outlooks on a host of cultural issues.

So much for question one.

Next is question two: What are the main threats facing liberal democracies in Europe today? Here I can be briefer. I think we have to distinguish first between established democracies and new democracies, especially the post-communist democracies. The main problem is with the latter, not the former. I am not saying that large established democracies in Germany and France are going to get off scot-free, but I do not expect them to morph into something illiberal, let alone undemocratic. I am much less sure about the new post-communist democracies.

In this respect, I would cite the growing cross-national appeal of what I will call "Orbánism". Viktor Orbán of Hungary, of course, has originated what he calls illiberal democracy, which gives you the trappings of democratic elections without liberal restraints such as a free press, an independent judiciary, robust civil society and protections for individuals and minority groups.

The problem with Orbánism and this whole idea of illiberal democracy is that it is not a stable political position, for two reasons. First of all, the centralization of power tempts leaders to put their fingers on the electoral scales. We have seen this happening in Hungary and in many of the countries influenced by Orbán's ideology. Second—and this is even graver—is that the reliance on the people, the idea of pure majoritarianism, in practice gives way to exclusionary definitions of the people, based on differences of religion, ethnicity, language, etc.

The third and final question I will address is: What can and should be done? Here, very briefly, let me just tick off a few points. First of all, whatever neoclassical or neo-liberal economics may say, it is increasingly important to take place seriously as the basis for economic policy. The exacerbation of regional differences has created serious strains within European countries and between them, and there are active discussions going on in the United States, the U. K. and the EU as to what can be done to put in place more effective, place-sensitive economic policies.

Second, the kinds of immigration policies that leaders such as Tony Blair and Angela Merkel put in place are not politically sustainable. Immigration policy must be rethought to meet public qualms halfway and to establish a basis for a sustainable immigration policy that enjoys a broad measure of public support.

● (0950)

Third, the EU should be very careful and restrained in imposing elite cultural preferences on populations that may have a more traditional set of views. Take Poland, for example, where the influence of the Catholic church is particularly profound. The conflict between EU cultural norms and what most people in Poland believe is correct is an increasingly troubling issue.

Finally, I think it's important to acknowledge the power of the desire to retain a measure of control over one's national destiny. It turns out that nationalism is not dead, and because it's alive—but not only because it's alive—it shouldn't be treated as a dirty word. I think it's going to be important to work for a new balance between the imperatives of nationalism on the one hand and of European integration on the other.

In conclusion, I will say that, as an overarching goal, an ever-closer union may be past it's sell-by date.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I'll be happy to answer your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Galston.

We'll move straight to questions.

We're going to begin with MP Kusie, please.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you very much, Dr. Galston.

I was a diplomat for Canada for 15 years and I have to say that I'm a big fan of the Brookings Institution. I retweet your stuff frequently and I believe many of the ideas that you've outlined were also outlined in Stephen Harper's recent book, *Right Here, Right Now*. However, I'm very interested, as my colleagues are, in regard to.... You talk about the practicalities of things we must do to help these established democracies. I certainly agree with them, but I'm looking for your opinion—I know you said you would give it if you were pressed, and I will press—on a mentality, vision or approach for Canada to take with respect to our foreign affairs agenda.

I'm just going to quote the recently published "2019 Trudeau Report Card", which was issued not by me or my party but by the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton, a major university in our capital city. In the report they discuss two types of approaches to foreign affairs. I'm going to ask which approach you think is better for these established democracies in Europe that are troubled right now, and how we can best assist them.

The first approach is one that the Harper government is known for having used. It is more hawkish: to stand in the face of dictators and to directly promote democracy abroad. In fact, it has been noted that the current Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chrystia Freeland, has used this as well. I genuinely believe that the difference is that—and this is stated in the report; these are not my words—the Trudeau government relies on "virtue signalling" and as opposed to a grand strategy, sort of a more piecemeal, ad hoc approach. With the Harper government, we did a have a direct strategy. I would say it was a more fulsome strategy.

The alternative—and the current government is criticized for this, but we were criticized for it as well—to this hawkish outlook is one of more diplomacy. In the recent example of Venezuela, Canada having taken a leadership position in the Lima group, some are saying this degrades our ability to act as a fair broker, which of course, since the time of Pearson, we are historically known for doing.

In your opinion, in regard to Europe, which is better, the more hawkish approach or the more diplomatic approach?

● (0955)

Dr. William Galston: I will respond to the member's question as follows.

I think Canada has a nearly unique position of moral strength and credibility on the global stage. I'm not saying this to be flattering; I genuinely believe it to be true. I think you are seen as a country that has articulated a set of principles and has done its best to live by them, and this perception of moral credibility I think should be the foundation of Canada's foreign policy.

Now, with regard to the substance of that policy, I believe that Canada should be forthright in a principled defence of liberal democracy as the best form of government and of the liberal international order as the best way of maintaining peace and sustaining prosperity and progress among nations. Does that mean a policy of active intervention? It depends on what you mean. It certainly means the use of your moral pulpit to criticize undemocratic decisions and tendencies in Europe and elsewhere, where they occur.

With regard to Venezuela, for example, I think it's possible to be part of the solution and at the same time to say forthrightly what I believe to be the fact of the matter, and that is that Mr. Maduro is a dictator who is increasingly isolated from his own people and has shown by his actions in recent months that he really doesn't care very much about their well-being. You all know what I'm referring to.

Therefore, I'm not sure there's a really bright line between the diplomacy track and what the member characterized as a harder line track. I think Canada should be hard line in defence of principle and flexible in the policies it uses in order to defend and promote those principles. What that looks like on an event-by-event basis, I can't tell you. I will say that your foreign minister, Chrystia Freeland, has evoked a lot of admiration.

● (1000)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to move to MP Sidhu, please.

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for your testimony this morning.

I had this question for the last witness, but we are discussing the same issue.

Lately in Slovakia a female president has been elected. She is a caretaker of the environment and she is anti-corruption. Will this set a tone in the right direction in eastern Europe by electing a female? What do you think of that? What's the outcome?

Dr. William Galston: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would reply to the member's question as follows.

I personally believe that the results of the election in Slovakia were encouraging for the forces of liberal democracy. Whether the election of women is always encouraging for the future of liberal democracy is another question altogether. I don't think, for example, that Yulia Tymoshenko in Ukraine did very much for the development of Ukrainian liberal democracy, but we can have a long discussion about that.

Sir, let me put your question in a larger context. The fact that democracy in Europe has suffered some serious reversals does not mean, in my judgment, that it is on the verge of collapse in most European countries. There are enough resources through democratic electoral procedures, and also for forces of resistance in civil society and the press and elsewhere, to sustain a public protest against the excesses of illiberal tendencies in many parts of eastern and central Europe.

I would say further, if you look at the outcome of the recent municipal elections in Turkey, I think it is absolutely astonishing that after Mr. Erdogan did everything possible to put his finger on the scales, the people of Turkey were still able to deliver a major rebuke to the policies of the AK Party and to the leadership style and increasingly anti-democratic tendencies of Mr. Erdogan himself.

I think, after the shock of 2015 and the immigrants, 2016 and Brexit and the U.S. election, 2017 and 2018, with the surge of anti-immigrant populist parties throughout Europe, we may be at a hinge moment now when the forces who believe in more traditional liberal democracy are beginning to regroup.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll share my time with Borys.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you.

On the previous panel, Ambassador Fried noted that one of the most important battles for liberal democracy is playing out in Ukraine. What we tend to focus on are the Russian military occupations, which have undermined the international rule of law and gone back to the 1930s in regard to changing of borders through brute force.

However, there's a battle when it comes to the concept of liberal democracy. This last round of elections was particularly encouraging. The far right only received less than 1.5% of the vote, which stands in stark contrast to...never mind the Visegrad countries, but also western European countries, where the far right gets up to about a third of the vote.

I am wondering whether you would like to comment on the fact that it appears that in Ukraine all the polling shows that a vast majority of the citizenry see their future as a liberal democracy in the European Union mould. There seems to be a lack of imagination in how we encourage that other battle taking place in Ukraine.

Would you like to comment on that?

● (1005)

Dr. William Galston: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would respond to the member's question with emphatic agreement. We have to ask ourselves why Russian troops are in the Donbass and other parts of eastern Ukraine. The answer is that they were a last play on Mr. Putin's part to prevent Ukraine from slipping out of an orbit defined by the gravitational force of Russia and moving closer to the west. Left to its own devices, Ukraine would indeed seek closer economic, cultural and political integration with the west. I agree with your assessment of polling and public opinion. I think it is absolutely clear on that point.

Although I am a member of the Democratic Party, I was not happy when the Obama administration refused to consider Ukraine's request for defensive weapons. I think it sent a signal that we were not prepared to back Ukraine's desire to join the west—obviously not formally, not as a member of NATO, probably not for a long time as a member of the EU, but western-oriented.

I don't have a precise answer to your question, but I would say that Ukraine is such an important country by virtue of its size and strategic position. It ought to receive a much more sustained focus than it has tended to receive in the United States and elsewhere.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Galston.

We're now going to move to MP Caron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Galston.

I'll talk about economics. You said that the rise of populism could coincide with mismanagement by the economic establishment. You mentioned the manufacturing sector. We saw this in the United States, when the Rust Belt and other sectors supported Mr. Trump. We also saw this in the case of Brexit. Yes, it was related to immigration, but also mainly to the economy. The decline of the manufacturing sector in areas where the sector used to be strong coincides with the further liberalization of markets, including through trade agreements.

Do you agree that mismanagement by the economic establishment, which you call the elites, is the result of not paying enough attention to the negative impact of trade agreements? These agreements can help promote trade, but they also lead to economic dislocation. They may help promote sectors with higher wages. However, the new jobs wouldn't necessarily be available to people who have been uprooted and forced to move, for example in the manufacturing sector.

My question arises from this issue. What would you tell the elites, the leaders, to limit the dislocation resulting from these economic changes?

[*English*]

Dr. William Galston: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would respond to the member's question as follows.

Let me just talk about the case I know best, that of the United States.

I was a member of the Clinton administration. I did not have any responsibility for China policy, but it is certainly the case that the major thrust of the Clinton administration's China policy was to open up world markets to China and vice versa. This policy culminated in the accession of China to the WTO in 2001. I believe that American policy-makers dramatically underestimated the impact of Chinese competition on the U.S. manufacturing sector. It is a matter of fact that between 2001 and 2007, before the great recession hit, the United States lost 3.3 million manufacturing jobs. That was more than 15% of its manufacturing base. We did not have policies in place to mitigate either the economic or the social consequences of that disruption.

I believe it is too late to reverse those consequences. I do not believe that the effort to dial the economic clock back 25 years and restore the iron and steel industry, the aluminum industry and mass manufacturing to the place that they enjoyed as recently as the 1990s can succeed. That's a policy of nostalgia.

All the horses have left the barn, but one reason that Mr. Trump is president is that he promised to do something about that. I believe that any leader of the United States or any country facing massive dislocation because of the disruption of the manufacturing sector has to have a plausible plan to address that.

● (1010)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Thank you.

My question will be quick, but it will probably require you to elaborate.

You talked about the challenges that can result from populism. Can there be a good and productive populism, which could counter the excesses and negative impact of the current populism? If so, what would be the characteristics of a good populism?

[*English*]

Dr. William Galston: Let me give you a short answer to a question that deserves a longer answer.

Populism can be useful when the established political parties agree on fundamentals but are failing to ask certain very important questions about the evolution of the economy and society. I think it is fair to say that when it came to trade, for example—and once again, I'm talking about my own country, the United States—the elites of the two major political parties did agree on fundamentals. That's one reason that China's accession to the WTO passed with strong bipartisan support.

To the extent that populism challenges easy agreements and brings to the surface important issues, I think it can be positive. Where it becomes negative is when it takes a pure majoritarian form that seeks to override liberal protections for individuals and minority groups. That undermines a fundamental building block of liberal democracy as I understand it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Chair, I don't think that I have any time left.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We are now going to move to MP Baylis, please.

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): We can start with Ms. Vandenbeld, and then she'll pass it to me.

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

We've spoken about one of the geopolitical fault lines, obviously, which is Ukraine. The other is the Balkans.

You've talked about nationalism and said that nationalism is still very alive and well and that it has to be factored in if we're to be fighting some of the illiberalism and anti-pluralism that's occurring. Where does that factor in when we look at the Balkans?

Particularly, I'm looking at the former Yugoslavia. Obviously, there's Serbia, with its close ties to Russia. Russia is still factoring large in that part of the world and the question is whether it's going to be integrating more toward Europe versus more toward Russia.

Could you talk about how this is playing out in that part of Europe?

● (1015)

Dr. William Galston: I would respond to the member's question by saying that the Balkans now are what they were a century ago, namely, a venue for great power competition. I'm going to refrain from passing judgment on that fact, but simply say that it is a fact.

The good news is that most Balkan countries are being allowed to make their own choices. You have, for example, Slovenia, which has integrated quite comfortably into the European economy and society, as far as I can tell.

You have Montenegro, which is joining NATO.

Encouragingly, you have a concord between Greece and what's now known as North Macedonia. I think the world breathed a sigh of relief when the Greek prime minister, at some considerable political risk to himself, was able to stand up and defend that agreement and allow it to go forward.

So yes, there is great power competition in the Balkans, but at the same time, at least so far, the great powers have refrained from preventing individual Balkan countries from making their own choices.

Now, there are some very complicated cases like Kosovo, for example, and I don't think it would be useful to start drilling down into the micro-texture of that issue. But I am modestly encouraged. The Balkan countries, for the most part, are trying to govern themselves democratically. They have ethnic issues left over from centuries. Those aren't going to go away overnight, but at least they're not slaughtering each other anymore.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you.

Mr. Frank Baylis: Thank you, Mr. Galston.

You mentioned that Canada has a nearly unique position on the global stage and we have some kind of moral credibility. How should we use that right now? For example, what are the top three specific actions we should take to use that position?

Dr. William Galston: Mr. Chair, the member's question has really put me on the spot.

My view is that the Canadian government, in an organized way, should make it clear that it believes that liberal democratic values create unique relationships among nations, relationships that are much more than simply transactional.

One of the most important changes the current U.S. administration has made is to reverse or nullify what I take to be the unifying principle of American postwar diplomacy; that is to say, that liberal democracies are natural allies and friends, that despite their differences on policy, there is a kind of moral unity or at least moral sympathy that brings them together which makes it—

● (1020)

Mr. Frank Baylis: Could you say that the role of the "leader of the free world"—if I use that term—has been abdicated by the Americans? What you are talking about was usually what the Americans did.

Dr. William Galston: I will not say that the abdication is permanent. We had one election in the United States with an extraordinary outcome.

I believe that the presidential election of 2020 is much more important than the presidential election of 2016, because by 2020 the American people will have all the information they need to assess the benefits and the costs of this sharp reversal of American foreign policy and diplomacy. I think it is entirely possible that the American people will decide that the costs, including the moral and reputational costs, far exceed the benefits, and that it serves us very poorly to play the victim and complain that other liberal democracies are taking advantage of us.

Is this a permanent abdication? The jury is out. Is it a temporary abdication? Yes, it is. I hope very much that countries like Canada will step forward to fill the breach.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

MP Wrzesnewskyj, please.

Let me just point out there does not appear to be votes now this morning, so we will keep running, as is our normal practice, until 10:45.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you.

You declined to get into some of the details on places such as Kosovo. Now that we have some additional time, I was wondering if perhaps you'd like the opportunity to provide some details.

Kosovo, of course, is facing some incredible challenges with this whole concept of border adjustments or readjustments—the terminology that's currently being used. If Kosovo is to have a peace agreement, lasting peace, Belgrade, with the backing of the Kremlin, is saying that it can only happen if there are border readjustments.

That's compounded by the European Union turning around and saying to Kosovo that, notwithstanding they've fulfilled all of the requested 104 items in terms of legislative and administrative changes, they will continue to require visas for citizens to travel into the European Union.

In a certain way, is this not an abandonment by the European Union of a small country right on their borders and in a zone where, as you said, we have great world powers at play?

Dr. William Galston: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As to the member's question, I don't think the EU has been a profile in courage in dealing with Kosovo, regrettably.

On the other hand, I think the attainment of a permanent and sustainable peace between Serbia and Kosovo is important enough to warrant the consideration of measures which, in other circumstances, would not have to be considered. I don't need to tell anybody on this committee about the extraordinary interpenetration of peoples and ethnic groups throughout the Balkans and the extraordinary difficulty of any sort of surgical division of any territory that corresponds precisely to ethnic conglomerations.

However, if there were modest adjustments to the borders that would lead reasonably quickly to a permanent peace between Belgrade and Kosovo, I think that would unlock the European Union to do the right thing, which it has not done up to now.

Obviously, the devil is in the details here, and if this were the equivalent of asking Czechoslovakia to surrender Sudetenland, no reasonable person could be in favour of it. I think that more modest adjustments are worth considering.

● (1025)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: I'd like to challenge you on that premise, actually.

You yourself have just said how difficult it would be to create surgically precise borders in places where there has been a lot of ethnic intermixing on territory. As you also said, the Balkans have a history. As soon as borders start switching, the peoples in the Balkans have a history of things spinning out of control and leading to people slaughtering each other.

Would that not also open up the potential of pre-World War II principles of might makes right and play right into the hands of the Kremlin when it comes to their case on whether it's Crimea, Donbass as you referenced, Transnistria, South Ossetia, or Abkhazia, a very different world order?

While that may seem to be small and insignificant, it has two extreme dangers. First, it could be a domino effect and things could go seriously wrong, and of course, the Kremlin loves it when chaos occurs. They've proven themselves, in many places in the world, to be very adept at working in those circumstances. Second, it undermines that principle of the unviolability of orders.

Dr. William Galston: The member may very well be right. I am not stating my position with any confidence, but I would say this. There is a difference between mutually agreed adjustments to borders on the one hand and the seizure of territory on the other.

In the case of Russia and Crimea, there was no negotiation. There was no agreement. It was brute force, and similarly in the Donbass.

I would distinguish between what nations have done throughout history, and that is to say, look for ways of accommodating one another's interests at a price they think is worth paying, on the one hand, and what the Russians are doing on the other, which is a flat contravention of the basic principles of the post-World War II international order.

However—

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Galston. We have to keep moving as the time is up on that question.

With that, we're going to move to MP Kusie, please.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you, Chair.

Dr. Galston, I mentioned Stephen Harper's book. Another book I've read recently which I've had a great interest in relative to this subject is *How Democracies Die*. I'm sure you're familiar with the authors there, as well: Mr. Levitsky and Mr. Ziblatt.

In that book, they talk a lot about forbearance. This was something that our previous witnesses mentioned significantly, the erosion of democracy over time. It's unfortunate for me to say, but I think we might be seeing this in Canada as well with this recent government, where we go from a full democracy to a flawed democracy, referencing The Economist Intelligence Unit's 2018 democracy index, and not only with that, but I'm sure you might have read the recent articles in the New York Times indicating the same thing, which I believe the Brookings Institution might possibly support as well.

Perhaps you could discuss the presence of forbearance in these European countries we are discussing here today and what we can do, as Canada, to discourage this forbearance, to discourage the erosion of the rule of law and the erosion of these historic customs that preserve democracy, not only in Canada but in all established democracies and evolving democracies throughout the world.

● (1030)

Dr. William Galston: The member's question raises very important theoretical and practical issues. As you anticipated, I'm well acquainted with the Levitsky–Ziblatt book. It is one of the foundational books in the recent spate of analytical books about the future of liberal democracy.

You've put your finger on the central argument of the book; namely, that if we look only at institutions and laws, and not at democratic norms that shape the way people actually behave within democratic orders, we will have missed something very significant.

There is a serious question, certainly serious in the United States, of what happens when all parties are determined to press their legal and political advantages to the hilt, to give no quarter to the opposition.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: That's a good question.

Dr. William Galston: This has happened in the United States as polarization based on differences over issues has morphed into something much more dangerous, what the scholars call affective polarization where each political party comes to see the other as a fundamental threat to the democratic order and to the principles they hold dear. Under those circumstances, compromise becomes a form of betrayal, and compromise is one of the major practical expressions of this idea of forbearance.

This argument or this discussion of norms is embedded in a much more serious historical development in the United States and elsewhere; namely, the polarization of the major parties, the disappearance of the centre, the increased difficulty of reaching compromises and honourable agreements on just about anything, so everything becomes a matter of partisan warfare where no quarter is given. This is not the formula for a healthy democracy.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: That brings me back to your previous comment in regard to moral credibility. I was hoping you could expand upon what your definition of that would be. I believe we in the opposition see moral credibility as standing for democracy, justice, the rule of law, whereas perhaps the government at present might see moral credibility as different from this, and perhaps from a historical perspective from Canada moral credibility would be seen more as this honest broker.

Could you further define what you mean by moral credibility to help us better understand it in an attempt to preserve it as you understand it?

Dr. William Galston: It would be inappropriate for me to intervene in internal Canadian partisan differences. I'm sure you understand why I'm not going to do that.

I think that Canada is seen as a successful model, not always untroubled, but a successful model of a multi-ethnic democracy that has managed an enormous diversification of its population over the past few generations with a policy of economic and social integration that, I believe, enjoys the world's respect. Canada is seen as a strong democracy. I'm not going to get embroiled in controversies as to whether it deserves that reputation or not, but that's the way it is seen, and I believe that Canada is seen as a force for good on the international stage. Sometimes that will involve serving as a mediator, but some issues can't be mediated because they're issues of right and wrong, and in those circumstances, obviously, a country like Canada that seeks to remain true to itself will stand up for the right.

● (1035)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Ms. Kusie.

MP Vandenbeld, please.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you.

I'd like to go back to what you were saying about the role of the great powers. In particular, you look at the Balkans. One of the things we know is that one of Russia's goals is destabilization, not just of the post-transition countries, but also of established democracies. We've seen that in multiple areas.

One of my concerns in the rejigging of borders in that area is that as soon as you start, you get the domino effect. Then you have Republika Srpska, North Macedonia, the Albanians. I wonder how much of that might be a destabilization effort. More importantly, I'm interested in this intersection between authoritarianism and nationalism, because particularly in transition countries, for example in the former Yugoslavia, there is a nostalgia for the good old days of Tito, because he kept nationalists in check, because there was prosperity. There is this looking back to an authoritarian past through rose-coloured glasses, because of what are seen as the failings of democracy and the promise of democracy that hasn't necessarily panned out. You mentioned youth unemployment and other issues like that.

Where is that intersection? We talked about nationalism, but in some ways nationalism was kept in check by authoritarianism. Obviously, we want to see democracies thrive. We don't want to see destabilization.

Dr. William Galston: The member has posed a very challenging question, which is fair enough. If nationalism can be held in check only by authoritarianism, that tells you something quite important. It tells you that there are genuine, indigenous, popular sentiments that are being suppressed forcibly, and I don't think anybody's in favour of that. The old Soviet Union had its nationalities policy, a great preoccupation of both Lenin and Stalin, and there was every effort to repress national sentiments, which ultimately failed. It turned out they were not suppressed so much as cryogenically frozen, and as soon as the post-1989 thaw occurred, there were the same old divisions.

Identification with one's nation is an important source of identity for many people. It can be a source of unity among an otherwise disparate people. There is no contradiction between nationalism and liberal democracy. As a matter of fact, in the 19th century, the two were twinned. If you remember thinkers and actors like Mazzini, for example, the whole idea was that liberal democracy and national liberation would go hand in hand.

Can nationalism lead to excesses? Of course it can, and it has, but the suppression of nationalism can also lead to excesses, and it has. There is no simple formula for managing this force, but it is there. It can't be denied, and therefore, a far-sighted defence of liberal democracy of the liberal international order will do its best to make peace with nationalism and not pretend that it doesn't exist or that it's going away, because it isn't.

● (1040)

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: To what extent can a civic identity based in equality before the law as opposed to national identities be a means to ensure that pluralism and liberal democracy are able to thrive?

Dr. William Galston: This is an issue that has been much debated in the United States in recent years. To the American civic identity, defined by crucial founding and refounding documents like the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Gettysburg Address and the “I have a dream” speech, this is foundational. I can't imagine an American nationalism that I would associate myself with that did not have that kind of civic foundation.

However, people who've looked profoundly at the United States have never believed that the civic definition of our unity would be sufficient. It was necessary, but not sufficient, so throughout our history, there has also been an appeal to other kinds of commonalities, including the joint efforts that we have made.

In Abraham Lincoln's first address, when he pleaded with the south not to leave the union, he invoked the mystic chords of memory, not principle. Lincoln, above all, knew what the principle of America was, but in appealing to the south, he wasn't talking about the principle of America; he was talking about the memory of shared struggle and shared sacrifice.

I would say that civic identity and national identity at their best can work together to produce a strong country.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: I think that's my time. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Kusie, we have about two minutes left, because there may be votes coming up, I understand.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Okay. Thank you, Chair.

My first question is in regard to hawkish versus diplomatic. When we look at places like Venezuela.... Again, I apologize that I'm referring to this in a European context here, but I say that because one reason it has been so difficult for the free world to intervene is the strong presence of Russia and China there in terms of resources.

As such, we're left to deal with the great powers not as the U.S., but as Canada. I'm asking for your advice—again, as a nation, as Canada—in regard to what you think would be the most successful approach to deal with these other great powers, as I guess the U.S. is now referring to them, but I apologize—there was a term I learned at the Trilateral Commission that escapes me now. What is the best attitude and approach for Canada to take in regard to these other two, I'll say, great emerging powers, two-way [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] internationally?

Dr. William Galston: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will necessarily be brief in my answer: clear-eyed realism.

I think it has taken the United States, for example, a long time to wake up to the fact that China is not a status quo power. It has no intention of integrating its economy into the western rules-based economic order. It wants to change that order. Similarly, it does not accept liberal democracy as the template for good government everywhere. In his address to the 19th party congress, Chairman Xi Jinping made it very clear that he regarded the Chinese model as preferable and exportable.

I think Russia is a failed state that has proved remarkably effective in mobilizing meagre military resources on behalf of mischief. It may be that Mr. Putin is now seeking to replay in Venezuela the low-cost success that he achieved in Syria. That's genuinely worrisome.

As for what to do in Venezuela, I honestly don't think that military intervention is the key. I'm not sure that we can do it, and I'm not sure that we can get away with it.

● (1045)

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: It's huge.

The Chair: Thank you very much. You've given us a lot to think about.

I want to thank you, Dr. Galston, and also our first panel of witnesses, for kicking off our study on threats to liberal democracy in Europe.

Dr. William Galston: It's my pleasure.

The Chair: With that, members, we shall adjourn.