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Chair

Mr. Michael Levitt

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● (0845)

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP)): Hello. *Bonjour à tout le monde.*

As you noticed, I'm not Michael Levitt and I'm not Erin O'Toole either.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Almost.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): As the second vice-chair of the committee, I'll be chairing today's meeting in the absence of Michael Levitt and Erin O'Toole.

[*Translation*]

This is the 138th meeting of the committee, and we are continuing our study on threats to liberal democracy in Europe.

To do so, we start by welcoming the following two witnesses.

First, from London, England, we welcome Anne Applebaum. She is a historian, Pulitzer Prize winner, *Washington Post* columnist and Professor of Practice at the Institute of Global Affairs, London School of Economics.

Her publications include: *Gulag: A History*, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe, 1944-1956* and *Red Famine, Stalin's War on Ukraine*.

[*English*]

That was published in 2017.

Ms. Applebaum, welcome to the committee.

[*Translation*]

Then, from Warsaw, Poland, we will welcome Rafal Pankowski, Associate Professor at the Collegium Civitas, Warsaw, and co-founder of the “Never Again” Association, which describes itself as the main anti-racist organization in Poland.

His publications include *Neo-Fascism in Western Europe: A Study in Ideology*, *Racism and Popular Culture*, and *The Populist Radical Right in Poland: The Patriots*.

Mr. Pankowski, welcome to the committee.

We'll start with Ms. Applebaum, who has 10 minutes, and then we'll go to Mr. Pankowski.

Ms. Applebaum, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

Ms. Anne Applebaum (Professor of Practice, Institute of Global Affairs, London School of Economics and Political Science, As an Individual):

First of all, thank you very much.

I'm very flattered and delighted to be appearing before this committee by video link. I apologize that I couldn't make it there—maybe another time.

I've had a look at who's testified before you already, and I know you've discussed general issues of democratic decline in Europe. You also have Mr. Pankowski about to speak. He's a great expert on Poland.

I'm going to talk about something more specific today, which is the media and information environment that is enabling this decline not only in Europe, but also in North America. This is something I work on very specifically at the London School of Economics.

Clearly we're living through a revolutionary moment. So many elections and so many democracies are suddenly taking surprising turns. Nationalists and xenophobes—who sound the same—are winning support in countries with very different economic and political histories—from Poland and the Philippines to Brazil and the United States.

It's my contention that just as the printing press broke the monopoly of the monks and priests who controlled the written word in the 15th century, the Internet and social media have very quickly undermined not only the business model of the democratic political media that we've known for the last two centuries, but also the political institutions behind them.

Look at the democratic world. Everywhere, large newspapers and powerful broadcasters are disappearing. These old-fashioned news organizations might have been flawed, but many of them had as their founding principle at least a commitment in theory to objectivity, to fact checking and to the general public interest. More importantly, whatever you think about them, they also created the possibility of a national conversation and a single debate.

In some big European countries, well-funded public broadcasters who are obligated by law to be politically neutral still maintain that debate, but in many smaller European countries, independent media has become very weak or has disappeared. It has been replaced by very partisan media, which is either controlled directly by one party or via business groups connected to it. That means there is no broadcaster or newspaper that both sides of the spectrum consider to be neutral.

The result is polarization. People choose sides and move apart and the centre disappears. This has other side effects. In many democracies—and I would say the United States and Poland are two of the worst—there is now no common debate, let alone a common narrative. This is not just about different opinions or different biases; people actually don't have the same facts. One group thinks one set of things are true and the other believes in something quite different.

Social media accelerates and accentuates this phenomenon because it allows people, and indeed its algorithms, to sometimes force people to see only the news and opinion they want to hear. These algorithms reinforce narratives that have created homogenous clusters online. These are sometimes known as echo chambers. Members of an echo chamber share the same prevailing world view, and they interpret news through this common lens.

This polarization has numerous effects, and it is extremely detrimental to democracy. It creates distrust for what used to be considered apolitical, neutral democratic institutions, such as the civil service, the police, the judiciary and government-run bodies of all kinds. They can fall under suspicion because one side or the other, or maybe both, suspects that they have been captured by the opposing party.

It also has a lethal effect on traditional political parties, which were once based on real-life organizations, like trade unions or the church. Instead of looking to those real organizations, more and more people now identify with groups or organizations that they find online, or ideas and themes that they find in the virtual world. In many places, this phenomenon has also led to fragmentation and, again, increased partisanship.

It's very important that this new information network, with its divides and its suspicious plans, is also far more conducive than the old one was to the spread of false information and false rumours, either generated naturally or imposed from outside, as well as to campaigns of insider and outsider manipulation. To put it bluntly, and this has now been proved in several studies, people who live in highly partisan echo chambers are much more likely to believe false information.

We all now know that, famously, the Russian government was the first to understand the possibilities of this new information network and that it deployed trolling operations as well as fake websites and Facebook pages to increase polarization not only in the U.S., but also in the U.K., in Germany, in France, in Italy and across eastern Europe.

For an example, I took part in a data analysis project at the London School of Economics in the months before the last Bundestag election. We found that the messages of the AfD, the German far-right populist party, were being deliberately boosted on social media by pro-Russian media, as well as by trolls and artificially created botnets.

● (0850)

Some of them were originally created for commercial use and then repurposed for the election. They echo and repeat divisive messages—anti-immigration, anti-NATO, anti-Merkel, pro-Russia and pro-AfD.

Most of those who read mainstream media in Germany never even saw those messages, but the AfD's alternative echo chamber read them every day, and that was one of the factors that contributed to the surprisingly large support for the AfD in that election.

Although the Russians were the first to invest in these things, others are already following them—other governments, other political movements, private companies. It's important to remember that there's no big bar to entry in this game: it doesn't cost very much, doesn't take very much time, isn't particularly high tech, and requires no special equipment. It will happen—it surely has already happened—in Canada too. As I said, these are very simple and rather cheap methods to influence public debate, and everybody is now using them.

The most important point I want to make today is that at the moment there is no institution capable of stopping this kind of manipulation. Democratic governments don't censor the Internet. They aren't in the habit of funding independent media, and if they did, they would cease to be independent.

Militaries of NATO and international institutions are not set up to fight information wars either. Even counter-intelligence services are very queasy about taking part in political debates inside their own countries. It isn't their job to penetrate echo chambers, let alone to reinvigorate democratic newspapers.

Tech companies could help to solve this problem, but at the moment they have no incentive to do so. The new information network is also where Google and Facebook are making their money. Facebook and Twitter created the algorithms that spread shock and anger and conspiracy theory faster than truth—and these are of course the elements that contribute to the rise of populism—but censorship from Google or Facebook will not in the long term be any more acceptable or successful than censorship from a government. We may see some solutions from old media or from universities. There are journalists talking about reinventing what they do in order to create greater levels of public trust. There are media literacy campaigns and fact-checking websites.

If I were going to leave you with one thought today, however, I would say that there is also another precedent to remember for this historical moment. In the 1920s and the 1930s, democratic governments also found themselves challenged by radio and by new fascist movements across Europe whose early stars were all radio stars. Adolf Hitler and Stalin actually were excellent users of the radio. They understood it as a technology that could be used to provoke anger.

People began asking whether there was a way to marshal this technology for the purposes of democracy instead. One answer to that was the BBC, the British Broadcasting Corporation, which was designed from the beginning to reach all parts of the country to "inform, educate and entertain", in the famous phrase, and to join people together not in a single set of opinions but in a single national conversation that made democracy possible.

Another set of answers was found in the United States, where journalists accepted a regulatory framework, a set of rules about libel law, and a public process that determined who could get a radio licence.

The question now, I think, for Canada and for every other liberal democracy, is how to find the equivalent of those institutions in the world of social media. In other words, what regulatory or social or legal measures will make the technology work for democracy, for our society, and not just for Facebook shareholders?

This is not an argument in favour of censorship. It's an argument in favour of applying to the online world the same kinds of regulations that have been used in other spheres to set rules on transparency, privacy, data and competition. We can regulate Internet advertising just as we regulate broadcast advertising, insisting that people know when and why they are being targeted by political ads or indeed any ads. We can curb the anonymity of the Internet. Recent research shows that the number of fake accounts on Facebook may be far higher than what the company has stated in public. We could require them to eliminate those, because we have a right to know whether we are interacting with real people or bots.

In the long term there may be some more profound solutions. Think: What would a public interest algorithm look like or a form of social media that favoured constructive conversations over polarized ones.

Regulation is not a silver bullet; it's only part of the answer. The revival of democracy, which so long was dependent on reliable information in an era of unreliable information, is going to be a major civilizational project. It may take some time before long-term solutions to this problem are found.

● (0855)

I will stop there to let Mr. Pankowski continue.

Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): Thank you very much for your presentation and also for staying within the time limits.

We now move to Mr. Pankowski, for about 10 minutes.

Dr. Rafal Pankowski (Co-Founder, Never Again Association): Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for your invitation. I am really honoured, and I am especially honoured to be invited alongside Anne Applebaum today.

During your discussions over the last weeks, there is one term that has come up, and for good reason. It's a powerful term that has been making a revival in both academic and non-academic discourses in the last couple of years, namely, fascism.

Some years ago, I wrote a book trying to propose my own definition, present my own understanding of the essence of fascist ideology. I would argue that fascism is the politics of total cultural homogeneity. Of course, Poland suffered enormously from fascism through the Nazi occupation, and the name of my civil society organization in Poland, "Never Again", is not accidental, but it is good to mention that Poland also had its own fascist movement, which is now experiencing a kind of revival.

While historically Poland used to be one of the most diverse, multicultural societies, if not the most diverse society in the whole of Europe, today, due to those tragic events of the 20th century, Poland is one of the most mono-ethnic, homogeneous societies in the whole of Europe. There is a certain paradox in that, and I would say that a return to diversity, a return to multiculturalism in the case of Poland especially, would be a return to normality.

Unfortunately, what we witness is currently a move away from the appreciation of diversity as a value, a move away from the liberal democratic consensus. That worries me as a citizen of Poland, but I think it is not just Poland that is important here. Why Poland matters, and I hope it doesn't sound arrogant on my part, is that the democratic transformation of Poland in 1989 and in the 1990s was a watershed event, not just in Polish history but in global history. In a certain way, the democratic transformation of Poland symbolized the legitimacy of the post-Cold War international order based on the predominance of the idea of human rights and liberal democracy. In my view, the current crisis of the liberal democratic consensus in Poland symbolizes the much broader crisis of the post-Cold War international order.

Two main ideological drivers of this move away from the idea of diversity in Poland are known in other countries too: Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. Islamophobia on that scale is a relatively new phenomenon in Poland. We can literally point to a moment in time when it skyrocketed. That was in the summer of 2015 during the so-called European refugee crisis. As we well know, it didn't really affect Poland in any meaningful, direct way, but it coincided with the electoral campaign in Poland where different right-wing and far-right groups competed amongst each other for who would present their group as more anti-migrant, anti-refugee and anti-Muslim.

● (0900)

I believe the repercussions of that wave of Islamophobia are still with us today, despite the fact that the Muslim community in Poland is very small. We are talking about maybe 20,000 or 30,000 people in a country of almost 40 million.

The second type of hateful discourse that is important here is anti-Semitism. That, of course, has a much longer history in Poland and the region of central and eastern Europe. Importantly, the language of hatred against the Jews is also, traditionally, the language of hatred against liberal democracy as such and against the very of idea of a diverse society.

On a personal note, I can tell you that I have dealt with the topic of anti-Semitism for almost 25 years now, so I knew it existed. In a way, it is really difficult to shock me in this field, but I didn't think I would live to see the kind of explosion of anti-Semitic discourse in the Polish media and politics on the scale we experienced in Poland last year, when anti-Semitic discourse really became very widespread, especially in the state-owned, state-controlled mass media, on a scale that didn't happen in many, many years in Poland.

The crisis of liberal democracy in Poland has many different dimensions. You are aware of many of them: the rule of law, media freedom, artistic freedom, etc. But what I think is possibly one of the most serious aspects of the crisis of liberal democracy in Poland is visible on the level of social values and the level of culture. Possibly the single most alarming aspect of this breakdown of liberal democratic values is the breakdown of democratic and humanist values among the younger generation.

There is another paradox here, because that goes against the perceived wisdom on the part of what you may call the liberal elite, which assumes that the new generation of people who are born and socialized in a new democratic society would automatically become more progressive, tolerant and open-minded than the generation of their parents and grandparents. What happened is actually something opposite. Radical nationalist and xenophobic ideologies were successfully transmitted to the younger generation.

As a social scientist, I can give you one or two figures showing this. For example, 82% of young people between 18 and 24 years of age are against accepting any non-European refugees in Poland—82%. The figure for the general population is 70%.

As another example, there is a new political bloc in Poland that is going to participate in the European Parliament election later this month. It is called Konfederacja—confederation. The ideology of this new bloc is summed up by one of its leaders officially. I quote, “We don't want Jews, homosexuals, abortion, taxes and the European Union.”

● (0905)

This new group got 31% of the vote among young men between 18 and 30 years old. Actually, it's the most popular electoral option among young men of this age. The next party is Law and Justice, the Polish ruling party, which is also right wing in many ways. It has 23% of the support among this group.

There are many more examples showing the explosion of xenophobic attitudes and far-right sympathies especially among the younger people in Poland. I think that tells us that we are going to have a much longer-term problem than is normally assumed or accepted.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): Mr. Pankowski, I would ask you to quickly conclude your presentation so that we can begin the questions and comments.

[*English*]

Dr. Rafal Pankowski: Of course.

I believe if there are any lessons that we can learn from the Polish case in the last few years, they are the following. First, the procedural constitutional framework of democratic institutions can be undermined by deficiencies in democratic culture. The second lesson, I believe, is the fact that the country's participation in the process of institutionalized regional integration, like the European Union, does not automatically guarantee progress in the field of intercultural understanding and inclusive identity, and such progress cannot be taken for granted.

Thank you.

● (0910)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): Thank you very much.

Thank you, Ms. Applebaum, as well.

[*Translation*]

We will now move to questions and comments.

Ms. Kusie, you have the floor for six minutes.

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

[*English*]

Thank you very much, Professor Applebaum and Professor Pankowski for being here with us today.

Professor Applebaum, I have the pleasure of serving on the trilateral commission with David Sanger, and I think he was ahead of his time with *The Perfect Weapon* in regard to the evaluation of cybersecurity and cybercrime. I certainly know that he meant it more in regard to the destruction of infrastructure and the manipulation of data as opposed to more manipulation of data and fake news as we've seen today.

We are moving towards the 2019 federal election here. I'm in the opposition. I'm the shadow minister for democratic institutions, and of course, I'm very concerned about the integrity of our electoral processes and our 2019 election. I would say that we are in a position here where we can identify the players in terms of foreign nationals, hacktivists as identified in the Canadian security establishment document of 2017. We can identify their motivations in terms of global spheres of influence, natural resources, the environmental causes such as this, but the question of course remains how. I'm very interested in what you talked about today in regard to the tech companies having very little incentive to step forward.

I know the present government has had little if any success in terms of their self-regulation, even in applying similar standards which these social media platforms apply for themselves in other nations.

However, there is of course the delicate balance, as you mentioned, of freedom of speech with the integrity of democratic institutions, as well as electoral processes. I'm very interested in a few things that you mentioned. You listed some specific examples. I was wondering if you could summarize those again, please. As well, you talked about time to apply regulation from other spheres. What other historical industrial spheres serve as a good framework for this? I'll start with that.

I'm also very interested in this public interest algorithm. When we have members of CSIS and the RCMP in front of us, I certainly see their postings for positions online and I can't help but wonder if they shouldn't make a trip to San Jose or go to the head office of Fortnite to try to poach.

Perhaps I could have your comments first in regard to that list that you mentioned previously, and what other industrial spheres you can take from.

Finally, I'll mention that I was a member of the Canadian foreign service for 15 years so this, as well, is of very much interest to me.

Thank you, Professor Applebaum.

Ms. Anne Applebaum: I think it's really important to...it's not so much that you can copy other spheres, but you can look for past patterns and use them. It's very important to understand there is not going to be a single silver bullet answer to this problem. We aren't going to come up with an Internet gadget that will fix it. There are people trying to do that and I've seen some of them.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: They do it.

Ms. Anne Applebaum: Think of it more like the way in which we regulated automobiles. At the very beginning, people just drove cars around and bumped into the horses on the street. Eventually somebody realized that no, we actually need traffic lights. Then they realized we need to paint lines on the road. Then people said that maybe the construction of the car itself is a problem and invented safer cars and eventually airbags and so on.

The whole long process of regulating cars and how they're used took a long time and evolved as the car technology itself evolved. I would think of it a little bit like that. We aren't going to come up with a single law that's going to fix this problem, but there are multiple things that governments can and should be doing. This ranges from media literacy education to teaching children—and not just children—how to use the Internet. We could also think about public service advertising in the way we used to, to get people to stop smoking with non-smoking campaigns. There could also be campaigns that teach people how to think about and use the Internet.

I do think that sooner or later we're going to need some kind of regulation of the social media companies and of the platforms. I would include Google in this. One thing that Canada might begin to think about is who the other countries are that it could work with toward this end. Obviously, individual country-by-country regulation is going to matter a lot less if we can pull together the EU, Canada, and in theory, the U.S., although the U.S. is going to be a difficult one. For Americans, these are native companies; they are "their" companies and it's somehow mentally harder, intellectually and psychologically harder, to regulate than it will be for Europeans and perhaps for Canadians.

In beginning to work with other countries, a lot of progress on thinking about regulation has been made in the U.K. Also, in France and Germany, there is a lot of public thinking and debate. I think it would be really important for Canada to be part of that conversation. There is also an EU-level conversation that you should be in.

When we begin thinking about regulation, we need to also move away from the idea that what we're regulating is content on the Internet, that somebody should sit in an office and say, "That's acceptable; that's not acceptable." That's ultimately going to be very contested and we should begin thinking, instead, about what the rules are. What's creating the echo chambers on the Internet? What is it that the algorithms favour? Do we want to cut down, for example, or restrict the use of anonymity? Do we want to make it much harder for people to create bots and fake campaigns that artificially amplify some messages over others. That is something that is technically possible to do.

● (0915)

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): Thank you very much, Ms. Applebaum.

I'm sorry, but we have to move to another round of questions.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): The next speaker is Mr. Wrzesnewskyj.

You have the floor for six minutes, Mr. Wrzesnewskyj.

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

[*English*]

Professor Applebaum, first, let me congratulate you on having recently joined Johns Hopkins University as a senior fellow.

Professor, over the past decade we've seen what I call the Schroederization of key members of Europe's old-guard political elites. Politicians and ex-politicians corrupted by Russian billions act for the economic and geopolitical interests of Russia, as in the case of Nord Stream creating western hydrocarbon and economic dependencies.

Now we see an evolving new stage of this verse in Russian hydrocarbon money flows, and the nurturing and financing of enemies within—far right-wing, vast groups in central and western European countries that see liberal democracy in the EU itself as the enemy. It takes the form of significant loans to political parties, such as Le Pen's National Rally and material media support to candidates of Germany's AfD. In fact, in an article in January, you referenced Bundestag member Markus Frohnmaier, who the Kremlin called, in a leaked document, "our own absolutely controlled MP in the Bundestag". Financing the staging of terrorist attacks in Europe against minorities, as happened in the fire bombing of a Hungarian cultural centre in Ukraine, has been exposed as having been done by Polish white supremacists paid by an AfD staffer in the German Bundestag using Kremlin money.

Recently, you and some of Europe's most important writers and intellectuals published an open letter in the Guardian sounding the alarm against the, and I'll quote it, “arsonists of soul and spirit who... want to make a bonfire of our freedoms”. The letter makes direct reference to May's European elections.

Can you tell us what's at stake in these upcoming elections?

Ms. Anne Applebaum: That's also a very good question.

The Internet manipulation that I spoke of is part of a larger set of issues. Mr. Pankowski also knows this very well. In addition to what's going on online, there is a larger Russian-backed assault on liberal democracy in Europe and an attempt to promote the far right to create ethnic conflict.

I should stress that although you are right to emphasize the Russian support for it, quite a lot of it is native, and there is plenty of native—native meaning native French or German or Polish or Czech—support for these movements and ideas as well. I don't want to imply that it's only or solely Russian.

In the European elections we have seen actually for the first time—and I have just written something about this that will be published on the weekend—some of these groups beginning to work together across borders in the online world and also even in the world of funding of one another's projects. We do see, paradoxically, a kind of cross-European internationalist nationalism whereby groups in different countries are seeking to support one another, so the far right in Germany supports the far right in France, which supports the far right in Poland and so on. That is one of the dynamics that we will be seeing in the coming European election. Really for the first time this internationalist nationalism will be working as a whole using common themes across Europe.

Just as a final point, we saw this, and it was fascinating, after the fire that took place in the Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral days ago where there were similar responses all over Europe echoing and using one another's memes and language, and this is the kind of event that is now being promoted across Europe by similar kinds of groups.

● (0920)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you.

Dr. Pankowski, you contributed to a report that was released just the other day by researchers at Tel Aviv University in an annual worldwide anti-Semitism report. The report states that the spike was most dramatic in western Europe, that in Germany, for instance, there was a 70% increase in anti-Semitic violence. The report also points out that France, the U.K., Belgium and the Netherlands had high numbers of cases.

What's the role of Germany's AfD, France's National Rally, Orban's Fidesz, Austria's Freedom Party and others in creating the environment for the rise of anti-Semitism in western and central Europe?

Dr. Rafal Pankowski: I would like to stress that anti-Semitism is very important but it is not an isolated type of hateful discourse. Especially in central Europe I believe we have witnessed it for a long time now. We can notice that one type of hatred goes with other types of hatred, so we are rarely talking about isolated types of hateful discourse. Anti-Semitism, in many ways the revival of anti-Semitic discourse, is emblematic of a broader tendency, which can be labelled hostility to liberal democracy and diversity as such.

There is a certain difference between the west of Europe and central Europe in the specifics of anti-Semitic expressions. Certainly in the countries of western Europe we can observe a larger number of physical attacks against Jews. There are few of those attacks in central and eastern Europe, partly because of the fact that there are so few Jews in those countries. In Poland, depending on what statistics you look at, it's probably around 10,000 people only.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): Thank you, Mr. Pankowski.

Mr. Wrzesnewskyj's time is up, and it is now my turn to ask questions for six minutes.

Let me start with you, Ms. Applebaum. You raise the issue of social media. We have had guests in the past who talked about the consequences of the rise of authoritarianism and the role that social media plays in that.

I really liked your example about the evolution of cars. However, if we look at other countries, there are still various road safety codes or signs. We drive on the left in some countries, and on the right in others. So there is no international convention in that respect.

Perhaps we have the same problem with social media. Facebook or Twitter, just to name two, are international. So there is a need for concerted action at the international level. How can we go about this, knowing the magnitude of these social media empires?

● (0925)

[*English*]

Ms. Anne Applebaum: The only thing I would say to that is first of all, it has turned out, as the European Union discovered when it enforced these GDPR data privacy rules, that by passing them in one place, you do force the social media companies to act in other places. The GDPR rules in Europe have had a cascading effect around the world. It's not totally useless to do it even as a single country, but of course it would be much more powerful and much more effective to do it as several countries.

One of the things I'd love Canada to think about is whether North America and Europe, as the pillars of the western NATO alliance, should be thinking about adding a kind of disinformation or information security aspect to the alliance, maybe not within NATO, maybe alongside NATO. There's really a common interest in trying to figure out how to protect democracy in these circumstances.

On the one hand, it's not useless to do it by yourself; it can have an impact. On the other hand, adding this and expanding the concept of security to include this, I think, would protect all of our democracies.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): Thank you very much, Ms. Applebaum.

I would now like to hear your opinion, as well as that of Mr. Pankowski, on the following question.

Mr. Pankowski, I think you mentioned two political parties, the first called Confederation of Independent Poland, and the second, Law and Justice. Their platform indicates what they don't want, what they want to prevent, what they oppose. My question is the one that would come up in any country where such parties exist: what exactly do they want?

In the case of Great Britain, they wanted Brexit and they got it. Leaving the European Union has left the country in chaos. In the case of Poland or other countries where such parties exist, we know what they are against and that they were created to fight against a particular movement. However, to put it in less negative, more positive terms, what do those parties ultimately want?

You each have about a minute and a half.

Go ahead, Mr. Pankowski.

[*English*]

Dr. Rafal Pankowski: I think you are quite right to allude to what you might call the negative identity of those movements, which is much more powerful and much more important, frankly speaking, than are any of the positive proposals they are making. They definitely stand for a type of community defined through ethnonationalist ideology.

At the end of the day, the ethnonationalist type of community is very much defined by who does not belong, by the construction and the reconstruction and the reproduction of the enemy image. The enemies are ethnic minorities, religious minorities, ideological opponents and also sexual minorities. The targets change. We see there are a lot of targets to choose from, but the basic idea is relatively simple: It is the hatred of the other.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): Thank you very much, Mr. Pankowski.

The floor is yours, Ms. Applebaum.

[*English*]

Ms. Anne Applebaum: I would answer that by saying that what a lot of these groups want is power, and they think that either they can use this kind of language to galvanize people and consolidate a political party or, once they have power—even shared power, as we've seen in Italy—they will then attempt to take over the institutions of the state to make sure that they stay in power. This is what we saw happen in Hungary famously. It's what has happened in Poland, where they haven't succeeded yet, and you can see other extremists and far-right parties attempting to do the same in Europe.

They're interested in putting themselves and their members in charge. They think that they are the only people who legitimately have the right to rule in their countries. Once they are in charge, they will then seek to bend the rules in order to stay in power, and this of course is exactly why they're dangerous to democracy.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): I'd like a quick answer. You're in London. With Brexit, for example, why didn't all the leaders of Brexit just leave without attempting to shape the things to come?

I have about 30 seconds, 20 seconds now.

● (0930)

Ms. Anne Applebaum: It was essentially because they didn't expect to win, and when they did, they didn't have a plan and didn't have a clear idea of what Brexit was supposed to look like, and they therefore spent the last three years arguing about that. Even at the very, very end when they had to vote, they couldn't agree among themselves what it meant to leave the EU and what their new relationship with Europe should be. I think your point about not having a clear goal is very pertinent in this situation.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): Thank you very much.

The next speaker is Mr. Saini.

You have the floor for six minutes, Mr. Saini.

[*English*]

Mr. Raj Saini: Good morning. Thank you very much for being here.

Professor Applebaum, I would like to start with you.

You wrote a recent article where you said hypocrisy links the populists. I agree to some extent, but you mentioned and referenced Babis of the Czech Republic, where he has a holding company and employs foreigners. You talked about Orban running a golden visa program. You talked about Kaczynski, who has controlled a company. These people came into power and they aggregated all these interests, but there must be another central theme as to why there is all this xenophobia. Politically, if you look at, for example, Orban, to rail against immigrants, he doesn't have as many immigrants in his country.

What is the central theme circulating amongst them to make sure or to espouse a certain policy when, as Mr. Pankowski said, there's not even that much immigration in Poland? That becomes a central theme when they don't have that many immigrants. They're still able to win elections because of it.

Ms. Anne Applebaum: You're pointing to a really important point, and Mr. Pankowski was absolutely right in that this is anti-Semitism in countries without Jews, and Islamophobia in countries with no Muslims.

By the way, that is why the fact that it's taking place in the unreal world of the Internet is also so important. This is about creating fictitious threats to the nation, and then the creation of parties who can save the nation from that threat. It's a type of psychological drama: “We can protect the nation; we will say that we will keep it pure and we will keep it clean.”

Then, of course, when they come into power, they make that argument even more forcefully: “We're here protecting the nation; therefore, we can be corrupt and we can steal, because only we can ensure that you are safe.”

It's playing on people's fears about safety or about continued prosperity, and with the fact that they're now part of a global economy and really part of a global information system, people see and hear or perceive many more threats than they would if they were just walking down the street.

It is a way of psychologically running and winning elections.

Mr. Raj Saini: Okay.

Mr. Pankowski, I want to pick up on a point that my colleague Mr. Wrzesnewskyj made.

When we look at the Visegrad nations, three of those nations are tilted towards Russia, yet Poland is not. There are certain politicians who have some allegiance to Russia. Why is Poland not tilting toward Russia when everybody else is, including the AfD in Germany and including Matteo Salvini in Italy?

Poland has not completely tilted. Why is that?

Dr. Rafal Pankowski: Again, national history has a lot to do with that. There is part of the Polish nationalist right that is traditionally pro-Russian, but overall, the historically motivated hostility towards Russia is also strong. Thus, you have both elements among the Polish nationalists.

Many of them who publicly express their hostility to Russia at the same time are quite clearly modelling their political ideology on the current regime in Moscow. There is no doubt about that. There might be some rhetoric of hostility towards Russia in international discourse on one hand; on the other hand, you have some very clear inspirations in terms of the type of ideology they are promoting.

● (0935)

Mr. Raj Saini: I have one question for both of you.

Article 7 has been evoked against Poland and Hungary. It seems to me that for the EU, because of the rules of their parliament, the sanctions against Poland or Hungary can only be done in unanimity.

Technically, it seems to me that this has become normalized in Europe now. I'll start with the four Visegrad countries. When you look at those countries, article 7 has been invoked and the EU has no teeth to apply any sanctions. Do we not see the normalization of this type of xenophobia and what is the solution for us in North America to counteract that?

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): You have about 40 seconds.

Mr. Raj Saini: Really?

[*English*]

Ms. Anne Applebaum: Yes, absolutely, that's an accurate description of what's happened. There is normalization. The EU has accepted de facto that these things happen.

I think Canada both continuing its representation and its discussion of the importance of liberal democracy is really important for your foreign policy and also for all the members of your political class to continue, but I would also stress to think hard about the Internet and think hard about how it is and why it is that this populist anti-democratic and xenophobic messaging is spreading so fast and in so many countries simultaneously. It seems to me that your country could play an important role in changing that reality.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): Thank you very much, Ms. Applebaum and Mr. Saini.

Mr. Sidhu, you have the floor for three minutes.

[*English*]

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

Thank you both for being here this morning.

I have a question for Professor Applebaum.

Recently you wrote an opinion piece about Russia's influence on Germany's far right. It seems that your opinion is that Russia's influence on world powers such as Germany and the United States is part of the effort to dismantle NATO. If that's the case, is this time for your suggestion to modernize NATO if NATO is to survive?

Ms. Anne Applebaum: Yes, I agree, absolutely, that one of Russia's clear geopolitical goals is to dismantle NATO as well as the European Union and to get American troops and North American troops out of Europe. So, yes, we're beginning to understand that Russia's assault on the west is not just military; it's also in the world of cyber, as one previous committee member mentioned, as well as in the information space. If you want to keep NATO together, if you care about it, and if it's an important institution for your security, then adding some of these other spheres to the concept of what defence means would be, yes, very important and very central, I think.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: I'll share my time with Mr. Wrzesnewskyj.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you, Mr. Sidhu.

Dr. Pankowski, yesterday marked the 15th anniversary of the EU's largest single enlargement, the historic accession of former Soviet republics in countries of the former eastern bloc. The same day, far-right nationalists running in the upcoming EU parliamentary elections held an anti-EU sovereignty march through the streets of Warsaw. There were chants of “This is Poland, not Polin”, the Hebrew term for Poland.

For additional context, one of the largest independence day events in Poland is the annual march in Warsaw. It's organized by an alliance of far-right radical nationalist groups. In 2017 they had banners and slogans such as “white Europe of brotherly nations”, chants of “pure Poland”, “white Poland”and “refugees get out”. In 2018, the mayor of Warsaw tried to ban the march to no avail, partially because the organizers and the government coordinated a joint initiative for Poland's centennial of regaining independence. The symbols of radical nationalist groups that organized the event were prominent. Italian neo-fascist group Forza Nuova was also there, among other far-right visitors from around Europe.

Poland's independence day is meant to be a patriotic event. How do the lines between patriotism, nationalism and racism become blurred and then erased in Poland?

● (0940)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): Inasmuch as I would like to hear the answer to this, we are at the end of the three minutes allocated. I'm sorry about that.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: A written answer would be appreciated. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): We can call for written answers to the questions that have been asked. Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Kusie, you have the floor for three minutes.

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

[*English*]

Given the situations in Poland and Hungary, I referenced Madeleine Albright's recent book *Fascism: A Warning*. I wonder, Professor Pankowski, if you could please comment on the similarities between Europe presently and pre-World War II Europe with consideration for the great power struggle of Russia, China and the U.S. and the way forward in consideration of that scenario given the present context.

Dr. Rafal Pankowski: Obviously this is the kind of analogy that is made quite often nowadays. I would be cautious. I would not use it too easily. We are not witnessing the 1930s. On the other hand it is impossible not to notice that there are elements of our social and political reality that can be compared to the 1930s. There are movements that can be compared if we accept that fascism is the politics of total cultural homogeneity. There are movements out there, such as those marching in Warsaw on the 11th of November—or, in fact, yesterday—that have a very similar ideology. Even if they don't wear the swastika on their forehead, the ideology of total cultural homogeneity of hostility against all minorities is very present. In the Polish case, it is summed up by the slogan "Poland for the Polish", which is also a slogan from the 1930s that symbolizes a hostility against all types of minority communities.

Some of those groups actually take their names from the groups that existed in Poland in the 1930s, such as the All-Polish Youth or the National-Radical Camp. That was actually banned in Poland in 1934 for inciting hatred. Today a group with the same name, the same symbolism and the same ideology is allowed to march in the streets of Warsaw, after the Holocaust, in the 21st century. In my view, that is truly alarming.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): You have 30 seconds.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you.

We are seeing here in the Canadian political context the words "white supremacy" thrown around a lot. Certainly, while these types of terms and these actions are something that we should never stand for as a society, I can't help but wonder if, in using these terms, it creates more division and perhaps sours some would-be historically classical liberals into a misrepresentation and a misuse of the word.

Can you comment on that briefly, Professor Pankowski?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): I'm sorry, but you're at the end of your time.

I would invite you to submit a question in writing to get an answer in writing.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): Ms. Applebaum, Mr. Pankowski, thank you for your excellent presentations. It was very interesting.

We will now suspend the meeting for two minutes to prepare for the second panel.

Thank you very much.

● (0940)

(Pause)

● (0945)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): We'll now move to the second panel. We have two guests again. The first is Professor Daniel Ziblatt, who holds the Eaton Chair of the Science of Government. He is also acting director of the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies at Harvard University. His research focuses on democratization, democratic collapse, political parties, state-building and historical political economy, with an emphasis on Europe from the 19th century to the present. He is the co-author of the book *How Democracies Die*, to which a number of people referred during this study. Mr. Ziblatt appears by videoconference from Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Welcome to the committee, Mr. Ziblatt. I hope I'm saying your name correctly.

Our second guest, who is here with us, is Michael Williams, Professor of International Politics at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Ottawa. Mr. Williams is also a senior researcher with the Global Right project, seeking to better understand the international foreign policy agenda of radical conservatism and its potential impact on the world order. In 2011, Mr. Williams co-authored the book *Security Beyond the State: Private Security in International Politics*.

We'll start with Mr. Ziblatt from Cambridge, for ten minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Ziblatt (Eaton Professor of the Science of Government, Center for European Studies, Harvard University, As an Individual): Thank you for allowing me to have the chance to speak to you today. I'm sorry I can't be there in person.

Is liberal democracy in crisis in Europe? I want to begin today with two facts. As we all know, social scientists tend to disagree on a lot of things, but there are two pretty solid pieces of evidence they do agree on. First is that old democracies don't die; that is, the longer a democracy has been around, the probability that a democracy will break down decreases. The second fact is that rich democracies don't die. No democracy with $22,000 U.S. per capita income or more has ever broken down. So rich, old democracies don't die. This means Europe, especially the core of western Europe, should be safe. But something significant has changed in our lifetime. The way that democracies die has changed.

During the 20th century, democracies used to die at the hands of men with guns. During the Cold War, three out of every four democratic breakdowns took the form of a military coup. Today, most democracies die in much more subtle ways. They die not at the hands of generals, but at the hands of elected leaders. Presidents and prime ministers use the very institutions of democracy to subvert it: elections, plebiscites, acts of parliament, supreme court rulings. This is Hugo Chavez, Vladimir Putin, Erdogan in Turkey and Viktor Orban in Hungary, in the heart of Europe.

What's so dangerously insidious about this electoral road to autocracy is that it happens behind a facade of democracy. There are no tanks in the streets. The constitution remains intact. There are elections. Parliaments continue to function. As a result, many citizens often aren't fully aware of what's happening until it's too late. In 2011, which was 12 years into Hugo Chavez' presidency, a survey showed that a majority of Venezuelans still believed they were living under a democracy.

Could this really happen in Europe? As I have said, this has already happened on the eastern edges of the European Union, in Hungary, under Viktor Orban. In 2010, Orban's party came to power legally, constitutionally and democratically, but armed with a constitutional supermajority over the past nine years, it has followed a pattern that my co-author, Steve Levitsky, and I identify in our book *How Democracies Die*. Once in power, it captured the referees of the political game: the courts. It sidelined rivals and critics: the media and universities. It tilted the playing field to make it harder and harder for an incumbent to lose by altering electoral rules. This is a playbook that has also been repeated in Poland, with only a little less success.

What about the core of western Europe? Even though these democracies are richer and older, the fact that democracies now die at the ballot box means that perhaps we are in a new world and a new set of rules may apply. Indeed, in western Europe, in many countries for the first time since the end of World War II, illiberal anti-system radical right political parties are either in power, on the threshold of power or being elected to parliament for the first time. Most recently, just this week, Spain's Vox party made it into Spain's parliament, the first time a far-right party has made it into parliament since Franco. This is the Alternative for Germany, Sweden Democrats and Italy's Lega Nord, just to name a few.

If these parties single-handedly gain power without coalition partners, as they have in Poland and Hungary, would they inflict such serious damage on democracy as they have in Poland and Hungary? I believe the answer is yes. A core and underappreciated precondition of Europe's post-World War II order, and democratic order and democratic stabilization from post-Nazi Germany to post-Franco Spain has been not only a social democratic party of the left, but a robust and democratic centre right. As Franz-Josef Strauss, the Bavarian conservative, put it in the 1980s, for democracy to survive in Germany, there cannot be a party to the right of Germany's Christian Democrats. This condition held through the entire postwar period until 2017. It is no longer true. The biggest opposition party in the German parliament today is a radical right party to the right of the Christian Democratic Party and this has upended Germany's political equilibrium.

● (0950)

Given all of this, there are two important questions to consider.

First, how do we know these parties truly are a threat to democracy and not just expressing the disaffection of marginalized voices that can be integrated into stable, democratic political systems? To answer this question, we have to have a set of criteria to assess whether parties and politicians are genuine threats to democracy or not.

With this sort of question in mind, in my book with Steve Levitsky, we devised a kind of early warning system, what we call litmus tests, to identify politicians and parties before they get into office who might pose a threat to democracy once they are in office. This is critical, because if democracies die at the ballot box, it's important to be able to identify politicians ahead of time who might be threats to democracy once they are in office.

We propose four criteria. First, does a politician reject the rules of the game? For example, do they challenge the legitimacy of elections? Do they reject the legitimacy of the constitution? Do they endorse or support extra-constitutional means of changing government? Second, does a politician or party publicly deny the legitimacy of their opposition? For example, do they describe their rivals as subversives, traitors or criminals? Third, does a politician or party tolerate or encourage violence, or do they align with or fail to condemn supporters who use violence? Fourth, does a politician or party express a readiness to curtail the civil liberties of opponents, including the media?

If a politician or political party tests positive on a single one of those criteria before getting into office, we should be worried. In Europe, we have seen radical right parties at times passing some of these tests. When they do, and if they do, they are a threat to democracy.

The second question is: What has caused this rising tide of Europe's new illiberal radical parties? Analysts usually refer to two kinds of factors to explain the rise of Europe's illiberal radical right: first, economic factors, and second, cultural factors connected to immigration. For example, analysts often argue that slowing wage growth, increasing economic inequality and unemployment have all generated voter disaffection with democracy in Europe.

There's a lot to this, but it's not the whole story. It's striking that a country such as Poland, that has had uninterrupted economic growth since the early 2000s, and escaped the 2008 financial crisis essentially unscathed, not only has a strong and illiberal political party, but one that is currently in power. A country like Spain, which suffered some of the worst fallout of the 2008 financial crisis, with unemployment rates reaching over 26% at the high point, has until this year not had a populist radical right party in parliament. Economics matters, but it's not the whole story.

Others argue that the causes are cultural. The rise of the radical right has come as the percentage of national populations of immigrants in Europe has increased. The radical right has thrived in response to the refugee crisis, it is often thought, but there are puzzles here too. Cross-nationally, the places where the radical right has done best—Poland and Hungary—are precisely where there are the fewest foreign-born residents—less than 5%. Countries like Spain and Germany, where foreign-born residents reach over 10%—double—have experienced much more sporadic radical right movements.

Likewise, as in the United States, inside countries in Europe, it's precisely in those regions and provinces in a country like Germany, with not many foreign-born residents—eastern Germany—where radical right sentiment is highest. In urban areas where there are many immigrants, radical right sentiment is almost non-existent.

Again, it's not that immigration doesn't matter, but all of this suggests what I think of as a third factor that actually matters more than these other two. The success of Europe's radical right is rooted in failures of Europe's mainstream political parties.

Two failures are worth mentioning. First, there was the move to the ideological centre by social democratic parties and labour parties in Europe in the 1990s. Tony Blair's new labour and Gerhard Schroeder's *neue mitte* may have been smart and actually necessary electorally, but it came with a cost. It left many working-class voters with the view that they no longer had a choice. The centre-right and the centre-left were now virtually indistinguishable. The first failure on the part of the centre-left was a failure to offer something clearly different, leaving a potential pool of voters feeling abandoned, and available for the populist radical right.

● (0955)

There was also a second failure. Because the centre-left moved to the centre on economic questions, many parties and politicians on the centre-right—Christian Democrats and Conservatives—began to search for new cultural issues to run on, including by drawing a hard line on immigration. It was in the 1990s that many centre-right politicians in Germany, for example, began to talk about threats of immigration, adopting nativist and nationalist slogans that were even picked up in some instances by the small radical right.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): I apologize. I will ask you to wrap up your presentation in about 30 to 45 seconds.

Mr. Daniel Ziblatt: Yes.

This move left these issues salient in voters' minds, and when the centre-right failed to deliver, the appeals of the populist right only grew.

To conclude, on the eastern edges of post-communist Europe, democracy is vulnerable. In the core of western Europe, the sky might not be falling, but it's clearly darkening.

The good news—and this is my final word—is that the process of democratic rights idea is not due to economic unstoppable forces. Mainstream politicians, if creative and responsible, can offer politics that address the concerns of voters, but does so in a way that keeps the most dangerous threats of democracy out of parliament and office.

Thank you.

● (1000)

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): Thank you very much, Mr. Ziblatt.

I am very sorry that the time for presentations is so limited. It is even more so for the questions and answers that follow.

I will now give the floor to Michael Williams for about 10 minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Williams (Professor, International Politics, University of Ottawa, As an Individual): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, everyone, for the invitation to speak to you today on what I think is a remarkably important issue. It's very heartening to see you taking it with such seriousness.

I'm not going to go over some of the empirics, which many of you know inside out. I want to pick up on Professor Ziblatt's last point, because I want to suggest to you that to understand what is going on in Europe and in fact more broadly in the word, we have to understand that there is a new ideological struggle taking place. In other words, what is taking place right now is not simply a question of an ill-defined populism. It's not simply a question of economic dislocation. It is certainly not the re-rise of fascism.

What's taking place is much more complicated than that. In fact, it arises out of a series of intellectual, political and cultural strategies, which have been developing for more than two decades. It's the level of ideas, the level of ideologies, that we have to take more seriously if we're going to understand the way in which all of these things fit together.

It seems to me that one of the biggest problems we have in understanding the rise of what I call the radical right or radical conservatism is that we fall back on clichés, and our two favourite ones are populism and fascism. Populism is great, because it seems to identify something we just don't like. It's happening, and it's kind of the rise of the great unwashed. We're really not sure what's happening, but it's bad. The problem with it is precisely its ill-defined nature. Fascism really does not get at what is happening in contemporary Europe, or in fact more broadly, in the United States on the radical right.

What I want to suggest is that we can understand populism in a much more systematic way, which is in fact the way that ideologues of modern populist movements have understood it. We can understand it on a basis of two axes. The first is what we might call a vertical axis, which is the divide between the people and the elite. Almost all populist movements will make this divide. The people are defined in some way, and the elite are defined as their opponents—those who undermine or oppose the people. The second is what we might call a horizontal axis, that is, a divide between the people and those who are outside the people. What makes a populist movement really powerful is the way in which it is able to combine these two axes—the way in which the elite and the outside are fused in a very specific political rhetoric.

If we look at the contemporary far right in Europe, one of the most interesting things is the way that it's been able to do this with the primary adversary being defined as liberal globalization; that is, internally, these liberal elites who attack the interests of the people. Those liberal elites are explicitly globalist, globalized. They are the representatives of global capital. They are the representatives of international human rights. They reside in international NGOs. They come from abroad. They make linkages.

The ideology of contemporary radical right populism, then, revolves around this fusion of a vertical and a horizontal axis in opposition to liberal globalization. This is a strategy that one can trace back. It emerged—for those of you who are interested in these kinds of things—in France, in roughly 1968. It's been around for almost half a century. It has only really picked up power in the last 10 years.

This is not, therefore, simply an inchoate political spasm. It has to be understood as part of a political, ideological struggle. It's also an ideological struggle that these people understand as specifically cultural; that is, the attack on global liberal culture is an explicit part of its political orientation. National culture—local culture—is seen as that which is threatened, precisely by universal global values attached to liberalism.

In this way then, what the contemporary radical right seeks to do is to create an ideological movement within states but also across states. One of the most fascinating things about contemporary radical nationalism is that it is explicitly internationalist. It sees itself as forming a series of movements of movements, and it sees itself as doing so in a pan-European way and also, potentially, in a pan-western way.

● (1005)

This is, to some degree, a civilizational ideology. The best illustrations of this come from three people. One person you already mentioned, Matteo Salvini, makes this argument explicitly. He also makes it in alliance with Aleksandr Dugin, out of Russia. They both make it in alliance with somebody with whom I'm sure you're all very familiar, a rather dishevelled man by the name of Steve Bannon.

Steve Bannon just founded something called the Academy for the Judeo-Christian West. This is designed to be an intellectual and cultural training school for a cadre of radical conservative academics, policy-makers and bureaucrats. It is mirrored by the school that has been started in Lyon by Marion Maréchal-Le Pen. It has exactly the same agenda.

In other words, what we're seeing here is not simply chaos. What we're seeing is something that can be understood as an ideological and strategic political struggle.

It's a struggle that is also not simply explicitly illiberal. This is one of the biggest problems in countering it. It often manifests what we might paradoxically call “illiberal illiberalism”. If you look at the far right in northern Europe, for instance, one of its major political points is what it sees as a defence of liberal values—free speech, secularism—and the argument that the defence of these values requires illiberal measures, specifically against those civilizations they present as threatening to them. Islam is the one that usually comes to mind when we talk about the north European far right.

Within this coalition and these movements, there are massive tensions. There is no doubt about that. What we are seeing here is not a systematic bloc. What we are seeing is an attempt to build a cultural, political and ideological movement that understands what it is doing, that has a systematic and structured political rhetoric and that seeks systematically to attack liberal values and global values, doing so in ways that link up to local conditions. If one is thinking about how to confront it, the only way to do so is to take it seriously as an ideology as well as a set of social upheavals.

That's all I will say for now.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): Thank you very much.

First, I want to clarify something. We have been informed that a vote will likely be held at 10:35 a.m. I would like us to continue the meeting until about 10:20 a.m. Each speaker will therefore have three minutes, for a total of about 10 minutes.

Do we have unanimous consent to proceed in this way?

[*English*]

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Yes.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): We have unanimous consent. Thank you very much.

Each party will therefore have three minutes.

I'm going to give the floor to Mrs. Kusie.

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

[*English*]

Mr. Ziblatt, it's so special to have you here today. I'm a huge fan of yours. I've read your book. I'm going to say something really selfish here. It's my birthday. I kind of feel like I'm talking to the Brad Pitt of democracy on my birthday. Thank you so much. It's truly a thrill.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Ask him for a signed copy of the book.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Well, I thought you were going to be here, so I brought it for you to sign. You can see that I've made notes and everything. Truly, this is a thrill.

Thank you to the clerk and staff for having Mr. Ziblatt here today.

Since I only have three minutes, I'm going to move into a concept.... I am a big fan of your evaluation of the four key indicators of authoritarian behaviour. Since I will not have enough time with three minutes, if given permission by the clerk, I will submit, in writing, a request for you to do an evaluation of the Canadian government. Recently, we have certainly seen a rejection and weakness of democratic rules of the game, a denial of legitimacy of political opponents, for sure—although more internally—and a readiness to curtail civil liberties. I will be asking, in writing, for you to do an evaluation on Canada.

I want to talk briefly about another concept, which you didn't really touch on in your opening remarks, but which I really appreciated seeing in your book. It is called “forbearance”, which is something else I am seeing significantly here in our Canadian system and our Canadian processes.

For example, we are seeing a significant use of time allocation by the present government to cut down debate. It is using the rules to do this. I'm not sure it would be fair to say that they have been historically abided by in this case.

There is something more disturbing to me. I am the vice-chair of the House procedure committee, and a case came before it that was clearly one of contempt of Parliament. However, the current government did not want to wear that it was contempt of Parliament, and therefore, the final report's wording was softened.

How do we eliminate forbearance?

● (1010)

Mr. Daniel Ziblatt: Well, I don't think you're interested in eliminating forbearance. You want to support forbearance.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Excuse me. I meant supporting forbearance.

Mr. Daniel Ziblatt: Forbearance is an unwritten rule. It's about showing self-restraint. All political entities require unwritten rules. Parliaments, countries as a whole, any organization require self-limits on power. One of the things that drives the elimination of forbearance in our mind is polarization. When each side views the other side as deeply threatening, then of course you'll use extreme measures to block the other side. The driver of the erosion of forbearance is polarization.

In the United States, a context that I know better than the Canadian context as the political parties regard each other as existential enemies, they begin to use any means necessary to stop the other side. One sees this in parliaments.

One also sees this in the German parliament. In the face of the radical right in Germany, parliamentary procedures are being used to exclude the radical right from debate. We're in this kind of funny dilemma where the radical right can now point to the mainstream parties and say, “We're not the ones breaking the rules; you are.”

The point I would make is to just highlight the importance of forbearance. In order for our institutions to work, people need to use self-restraint with them, and there's a cost to our institutions of behaving without self-restraint. Alerting people to that cost is not just about winning and losing elections; it's about the viability and the future of sustaining a set of institutions. This requires forbearance. Bringing this up is really a critical point.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: I wish I had two hours.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): Thank you, Professor Ziblatt.

Mr. Wrzesnewskyj, you have the floor for three minutes.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

Professor Ziblatt and Professor Williams, we saw how democracy died in Germany in the 1930s and its tragic consequences. Many would argue that democracy has died in Hungary and is being subverted in countries such as Poland. However, we're also seeing a new act for which there isn't a historical precedent. It is what the previous panellist, Professor Anne Applebaum, called the “populist international”. Professor Williams referenced in his introductory remarks their attempts to gain leverage control of the European Parliament.

Professor Ziblatt, you said that democratic states can die at the ballot box. Do you foresee the possibility, a danger, of the death of the EU at the hands of a united populist international?

Mr. Daniel Ziblatt: The May elections are absolutely critical, and I think people are downplaying the potential threat. The estimates are that they'll gain 170 or so seats of a parliament that has over 500 members. Some say that's not a big deal, but I think it is a big deal. The parliament as it has existed to date in the European Union is dominated by the EPP, the centre-right group, and there's a very real possibility that as these groups get organized in the ways that Professor Williams described, the EU could become dysfunctional.

I think the European Union is not a democracy; its member states are, but the fear that I would have about these parties is that they dismantle the European Union. If they do that, it does undermine democracy within nation-states. The thing to focus on is the degree of Euroscepticism that these parties often offer.

Mr. Michael Williams: This is where the pre-war analogy becomes difficult because contemporary populists don't present themselves as anti-democratic. Their argument against the EU—I completely agree with Professor Ziblatt—is that it is an anti-democratic institution. Their representation of the EU is as a liberal hegemonic project that wants to foist on them radical free markets and elite-defined human rights, and which therefore needs to be opposed precisely in the name of democracy.

When one is assaulting them at this level or trying to take them on at this level—and this has been a consistent problem for the defenders of the EU—the EU's democratic status becomes a real problem if you define democracy back as a national public, which is precisely what the radical right has done. To take them on effectively, we cannot simply look at them as anti-democratic, because that is a label that both they and their supporters will absolutely reject. They will say, "What we are trying to do is actually rescue democracy from these undemocratic, elitist institutions that have no connection to us." Therefore, the EU's dilemma is to try find a response that is effective. It's difficult.

● (1015)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): Thank you, Professor Williams.

[*Translation*]

I'm going to ask questions for three minutes.

[*English*]

I'd like to have an answer from both of you. I'll start with you, Professor Ziblatt.

We're talking about the tool of delegitimizing openness used by authoritarian parties. The thing is, if we want to protect and strengthen Liberal democracy, we need to strengthen the structure in the institutions themselves. If we strengthen freedom of the press, if we strengthen the validity of the evidence-based decisions that have to be made, then it might be seen and used by those parties to actually promote and let us view that they are fighting.

How do we fight this effectively? How do we fight those arguments that are being used to delegitimize the process and delegitimize the attempt to strengthen the democratic process itself?

Hopefully we will have time to hear from Professor Williams.

Mr. Daniel Ziblatt: I'll try to be quick.

When you have political parties that are not committed to democratic rules and to truth, and so on, in a political system there are no easy answers. They pose a series of dilemmas. Do you crack down on them? Do you treat them as illegitimate, but then run the risk of reinforcing their appeal? Or do you ignore them and run the risk that they gain in popularity? There are really no good answers. I think there's a series of bad options and worse options.

One of the critical points that, I think, merge out of historical records is that one does need to act with forbearance. In other words, one does need to act with self-restraint. One does need to try to treat these other parties as legitimate representatives of the people who have voted for them.

On the other hand, one has to beat them electorally. I think that at the end of the day, the point of a democracy is that you can win in elections, and this sends a message to parties that what they're offering doesn't work.

It's critical to not limit their access to institutions, on the one hand, but on the other hand, one has to draw a hard line and not form coalitions, for instance, with them.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): Thank you very much.

Professor Williams.

Mr. Michael Williams: I think one of the crucial things here—and this is something you know more about than I do—is political rhetoric. It's vital not to allow the right to cast every issue within the overarching logic that they wish to do. And the overarching logic that they wish to do is to cast every issue within either a national or a global culture war. A crucial thing is to try to disallow them from occupying that political landscape.

The most effective interventions I've seen with the radical right are those that try to push them on precisely what they would do. But one can make the mistake of playing into the framing of the issue that they have already established, because they actually have an ideological framework, because they have a systematic rhetoric, they understand exactly the moves that are useful for them.

I'll give you one example on this that I really like. It comes from Mr. Steve Bannon. He has a wonderful line that whenever he's being interviewed, all he does is wait for the person to say "identity", and as soon as they say it, he's got them. One has to avoid falling into that trap.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Guy Caron): Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Before we adjourn, I would like to say that, if you have written questions for our witnesses, from either the first or second panel, please send them to the clerk before noon on Friday.

[*English*]

I would like to thank both of our guests.

I'm sorry for the shortened version of this panel, but it was really interesting.

[*Translation*]

I have a few comments to make before we leave.

Don't forget the meeting of the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure, which will be held on Monday, May 6, at 12:15 p.m.

The deadline for written questions to the witnesses from April 30 is today at 5 p.m. Please send them in writing to the clerk.

By tomorrow, could you also confirm with the clerk your attendance at the May 8 lunch with the official from the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Republic of Latvia.

Thank you very much, everyone, including our witnesses.

The meeting is adjourned.