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Chair

Mr. Michael Levitt

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● (0850)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.)): I'm going to call to order the 136th meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development and the continuation, the second day, of hearings on our study of the threats to liberal democracy in Europe.

We are very pleased to be joined for our first panel this morning by Dr. Yascha Mounk, from Washington, D.C. He's an associate professor at the school of advanced international studies and the Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins University. He's also a senior adviser at Protect Democracy and a senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund. Good morning, Dr. Mounk.

Also joining us here in Ottawa, from the University of Georgia, is Dr. Cas Mudde, professor of international affairs in the school of public and international affairs.

I want to welcome both of our guests—our witnesses—for joining us here. Dr. Mounk, I think we should start with you since you're with us on video conference and sometimes the lines go a little crazy. We'll begin with you, if you can take around 10 minutes. We'll move straight to Dr. Mudde, and then of course we'll open it up to all members because I'm sure they're going to have some insightful questions for you this morning.

With that, Dr. Mounk, please proceed.

Professor Yascha Mounk (Associate Professor, School of Advanced International Studies, and Senior Fellow, Agora Institute, Johns Hopkins University, As an Individual): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I want to apologize for not being able to be in Ottawa in person today. I hope to do so on another occasion.

I want to talk about three main points. The first is to just point out that populism is no longer a marginal political force in Europe. It's actually the defining force, and that is the main source of the fracture of liberal democracy at this point. The second is to explain how and why it is that populism is dangerous to liberal democracy, and the third is to speak a little bit about what I see as a potential impact on Canada in particular.

The first thing to point out is that, around the world, the four largest democracies are now arguably ruled by authoritarian populists, not just your neighbour to the south here in Washington, D.C., but also in Brazil, India and arguably Indonesia.

In Europe, the number of populist governments has shot up from about seven in the year 2000 to around 15 or 16 at this point. The average vote share that populist parties gain in national elections has increased from about 8% in 2000 to over 26% now, and the trend continues to rise. We're likely to see a record result for populist parties in upcoming elections for the European Parliament.

One really striking thing when you think of the famous phrase by Winston Churchill, “From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the [heart of Europe],” is that it's now actually possible to drive along the line of that iron curtain through countries like Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria and Italy, and never leave a country ruled by populists.

That is the first point. We need to stop thinking of these as insurgent political movements. We need to stop thinking of them as marginal political movements. They are now in many ways the dominant political force in large swaths of Europe.

The question is why that is dangerous to democracy. Why should we be talking about authoritarian populism in a hearing on threats to democracy? To understand that, I think it's helpful to think about the nature of populism, which Cas Mudde and others who are present here have researched a lot as well.

In my understanding, it is at first puzzling why we should think of some of the figures I've mentioned as being related at all. At first sight, it's not obvious why we should class people like Donald Trump in the United States, people like Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey, people like Viktor Orbán in Hungary and people like Hugo Chávez and now Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela as part of the same kind of political movement. After all, they have deep ideological differences, especially when it comes to economic policy, where some of them would be classified more as left wing and others more as right wing.

They also have very different enemies. Some of them, for example, tend to victimize and vilify Muslims. Others, Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey, for example, tend to victimize and vilify anybody who's not a Muslim. They don't have a set of common enemies.

The way to understand what does connect them, I think, is a rhetorical style, a way of thinking about politics and understanding the nature of politics. What they have in common is the claim that the real reason we have political problems is because of a political leader who is corrupt and self-serving and who cares more about various minority groups than about people who are “like you and me”.

Therefore, they conclude that the only way to deal with this problem is for somebody who truly represents the people to come along, throw out all of the current power structures and stand up for ordinary folk.

The distinctive move here is not just a claim that there are problems with the current government or the current set of politicians and that the opposition can do better or that politics needs some new faces and perhaps even new parties. All of that is a perfectly legitimate part of democratic politics. The distinctive element of these populist claims is to say that they and they alone can represent the people and that anybody who disagrees with them is, by nature of that fact, illegitimate.

That helps to explain why it is that, for a time, populists tend to do so much damage once they enter the government.

● (0855)

The things that we observe in a lot of these countries are that as soon as they get in, they start to delegitimize the opposition as traitors, rather than Her Majesty's loyal opposition. They start to talk about independent institutions that would limit their power and that might stand up to executive overreach, in the form of courts, for example, as “enemies of the people” or as “so-called judges”. They tend very strongly to attack the press, saying that it is working against the people if it is working against the government or criticizing the government.

If the way to understand our political systems is as liberal democracies that are committed both to individual freedom and to collective self-government, the first set of damages tends to be to the liberal element of the political system. It tends to undermine individual rights, in particular minority rights. It tends to run counter to the rule of law and the separation of powers.

But the damage isn't contained to that, because once these governments have managed to make the judiciary dependent on their will and their whim, once they have managed to limit the free press, once they have managed to vilify the opposition and change electoral rules in many countries, the democratic element itself comes under attack. We've seen that happen in countries, like Hungary, which are member states of the European Union, member states of NATO, which have had a long-standing democratic history for over the last 25 years, which political scientists believed to be safe from democratic backsliding. Viktor Orbán, a democratically elected prime minister, is no longer somebody who can be removed through free and fair elections at this point, in my opinion.

What kinds of impacts might this potentially have on Canada? I want to point out three primary things that I think you should worry about.

The first is about business and trade. Canadian companies working in Europe and other countries around the world rely on the rule of law. They assume that their investments will be safe for decades to come and that the success of their investments depends on the quality of their products rather than on political connections. Where populists come into power and undermine the rule of law, that can no longer be assured. You can have threats to private property, but more importantly you can have informal ways in which companies that don't toe a political line, companies that don't have allies among the increasingly powerful ruler, are going to be disadvantaged.

The second threat that is very important is to trade. You see a form of politics that is often not fact-based and that tends to incite irrational fears rather than scientific evidence. As we've seen in the ongoing process of ratification for the free trade agreement between Canada and the European Union, that can lead to all kinds of misinformation, which makes it much harder to persuade people to agree to important trade agreements.

The third point is, obviously, military. We've seen the rise, over time, of populists, and in some cases outright dictators in NATO member states. This has put an obvious strain on this very important military alliance. Populists often have sympathy for other dictatorial regimes so that we see a real rapprochement of many countries ruled by populists across Europe, or governments that have a strong populist element, with Russia and to some extent with China and other adversaries of liberal democracies such as Canada and the United States.

The last point I want to make encompasses all of that. One way of thinking about the threat to liberal democracy, and the threat, especially to the interests of Canada, is simply from existing populist governments, but I think even there there is a deeper strategic threat, which is uncertainty. It is very hard to sustain a military alliance and it is very hard to rely on free trade agreements when you don't know which country will fall next to authoritarian populism and may, therefore, cease to be a reliable partner in the military and the economic scenes.

● (0900)

The threat of populism comes not only through existing populist governments but also through making it much harder for nations like Canada to know what kind of relationship they will be able to enjoy with countries like Italy, France or even Germany, in five or 10 years.

Thank you very much.

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

We will now move straight to Dr. Mudde.

Professor Cas Mudde (Stanley Wade Shelton UGAF Professor of International Affairs, University of Georgia, As an Individual): Thank you very much and thanks to the committee for giving me the opportunity to speak here today.

Given that we study the same thing, we have quite a lot of overlap so what I will do is focus on some points that Yascha hasn't mentioned and elaborate on some of the points he did.

I agree that populism is the defining force at the moment. However, I think it's very important to remember that on average they get only about 20% of the vote, and that the percentage ranges from 70% or 80% in certain countries to almost zero in others. In the vast majority of countries of the EU, populists, whether of the right or the left, are a minority. The reason they define politics today is that other parties allow them to set the agenda. I think this is very important. We're not all Hungary where, by and large, free and fair elections are no longer around and you have to play by their rules.

In most countries, self-professed liberal democrats still set the rules and still control the media. However, they have pretty much given the public debate and the issues, as well as the issue framing, to the populists. I think that's an important point. It points to something that I think is much more problematic, something that is almost like an ideological vacuum.

Today there are very few parties that defend what used to be the absolute consensus 20 years ago—things like economic integration, European integration and cultural integration. All of these things still happen but no one defends them. I think the best example was the "Remain" campaign during the EU referendum in the U.K., which, by and large, had nothing to say other than the alternative is worse. It never sold what the European Union did, and if you don't sell liberal democracy, if you don't tell people why it's good, it creates a space for those who have an agenda, even if it is a very problematic agenda.

I think it's also important to understand that populist rule is different from what we generally think authoritarian rule is. Authoritarian rule does things that go pretty much against the law. There are blatant violations of law. The clever populists, in contrast, stay within the law. They control the law, and there's no better example than Viktor Orbán in Hungary, who through a very well-timed set of changes has legally changed the whole system so it works for him.

American scholar Kim Lane Scheppele has referred to this as a "Frankenstate", and in a Frankenstate, every individual, specific law is totally democratic. Actually, Orbán almost always makes sure that each law also exists somewhere else. Whenever you criticize him on a law, he will say, for example, France has it. In other cases, he will say Germany has it, or Canada has it. However, when you put them all together, you have an illiberal democratic state.

In the simplest of things, various countries have first past the post. Some countries have only one electoral district. This is perfectly democratic, but if you have first past the post and only one district, then one gets everything. You can have two rules that are each pretty much democratic, but when they work together, they can create a massive problem. That is pretty much how the smarter populists work. Everything individually is almost impossible to criticize, but you have to assess it on how everything works together.

Let me focus on the international relations of the populists. There's a lot of speculation about a "populist international", but I do not believe such a thing exists. First of all, populism is divided ideologically. Left-wing populists rarely work together with right-wing populists.

● (0905)

However, even the radical right populists, who are by far the most important, share mostly a negative agenda. They share an anti-establishment agenda, which means that they are also anti-international establishment. They're Euroskeptic. They're skeptic about any multinationalism, be it NATO or the UN.

However, they differ on all kinds of different issues. For example, some parties are pretty much pro-American—the Dutch or the Poles—and many are anti-American, particularly in eastern and southern Europe. The position on Israel is very different. Some have become very pro-Israel, and others are still staunchly anti-Israel, bordering on anti-Semitic. They have very different positions on NATO, which is absolutely crucial to Baltic or Polish populist radical right parties, whereas some other parties see it skeptically.

They're skeptical about the UN, although that's more of a fascination or an obsession of the U.S. populist radical right than many others, but they're even very divided over the EU. Today, because of Brexit and the way it is going, there are very few parties that still openly call for an exit. Instead, quite a lot, in part because of their growing success, now don't want to get out of the EU. They want to transform the EU. They want to create an EU in their image, and this is very much what Viktor Orbán wants. It's to a certain extent what Matteo Salvini wants in Italy.

However, there, again, they have problems because in the end they're still nationalist, and their national interests are more important. A good example that we see is with regard to the so-called immigration crisis, which, of course, is crucial to the recent success of these parties.

Viktor Orbán in Hungary doesn't want to share and redistribute immigrants because that would mean that Hungary would get more, whereas Italy does want to redistribute immigrants because that would mean it would have fewer. Quite a lot of these points on which, in opposition, they have been very strong, they now find out are pretty problematic when they're in power. I think this is important. I agree with Yascha that the insecurity is problematic. I think the insecurity that comes out of the White House is much different from the insecurity that comes out of various other countries. Whatever Hungary does is much less important, obviously, than whatever the U.S. does.

However, if you look at it, in the end, very few of these governments have done fundamental things. I think Italy is a very good example. The new populist government came in with a lot of bravura. They were going to not do this and they were going to do that. In the end, they kind of rolled over. There is still damage to be done, but it's important that, so far, they haven't really offered an alternative. They mostly frustrate the existing order. Again, Donald Trump is a very good example. He doesn't blow up NATO. He doesn't blow up even the climate treaty. He just pulls out, which leaves space for others and confusion.

This is pretty much what populism is doing. It's a wake-up call to the liberal democratic forces, which are still in a majority, to actually come up with not just an anti-populist agenda, which would also be divisive and moral, but a positive liberal democratic alternative. I think that is lacking today.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Mudde, and to both of you.

We'll move straight into questions. I believe we're going to begin with MP Kusie, please.

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

Dr. Mounk, could you please expand on, in your opinion, U.S. populism versus European populism? What would you see as the similarities and as the differences, please?

● (0910)

Prof. Yascha Mounk: Thank you very much. That's obviously an important question.

I think there are a lot of ideological similarities. Again, I think the main driving force of how to understand populism is just the anti-establishment element, which basically delegitimizes anybody who disagrees with those forces. I think you see that very similarly, whether it is in the form of Donald Trump, the form of the Polish government, the form of the Hungarian government or the form of the larger rising populist movements, even in countries like Germany, Scandinavia and so on.

I think one important difference is that a lot of the European populist forces are actually better set up to undermine the political system because they have managed to build organizations so that when they come into government, they are able to appoint a lot of like-minded people. They are starting, in many countries in Europe, to have real bureaucratic experience and expertise, because they've been in parliament in many places now for about a decade. They've had experience in government in some places again and again, so I think their actual ability to pursue their agenda can sometimes be strong.

What we see in the United States is not the rise of a new populist party with a slow growth in strength that ultimately takes over the system, but a hostile takeover of a pre-existing political party by one populist. Now, obviously, I think Donald Trump has in the last two and a half years managed to create a circle of people around him, and he has managed to turn the Republican Party into a populist force to a much greater extent than people would have predicted when he was elected in the fall of 2016. But I do think that the combination of a lack of bureaucratic and government experience in Donald Trump himself, and the lack of a coherent organization around him that actually is deeply committed to his agenda, has somewhat frustrated what he has been able to do.

To me, the greater question is what will happen in the United States if populism remains in control of the Republican Party after 2020 or 2024 and you end up with a president and an administration, a cohort of people, who are actually ideologically committed to some of the things that Donald Trump stands for. I think at that point the damage to the system could be a lot more severe than what we're seeing at the moment.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you.

Dr. Mudde, you touched upon a concept within the evaluations of democracies called "forbearance", which is the gradual erosion of democracy over time.

I'm a former diplomat. My career was largely spent in the Americas, so I think of course of Maduro in Venezuela, where we saw the erosion of the legislative branch, the judicial branch and finally the media. Could you perhaps comment on the route forbearance has taken within these European populist nations, please?

Prof. Cas Mudde: The term "forbearance" is used in the Levitsky-Ziblatt book. By and large, it's argued that politicians should use that to protect overreach.

I think one of the things that populism shows, to a certain extent, is how feeble many systems are. Many liberal democratic systems are set up on the assumption of forbearance: that people will not use all the power they legally have. This has, to a large extent, happened for most of the time and, I would argue, also quite often because parties didn't have all the power.

There's a big difference between Hungary, for example, and Austria. In Austria, the right-wing populists have to share power with a different party, which has bent over backwards to them but overall still controls them, so the FPÖ is kind of forced to engage in forbearance. There is nothing that holds Orbán back. I would argue that a liberal democratic party would still have more forbearance than Orbán has, but if it would really have its own power only by itself, it would also push further.

I think one of the most remarkable things—I think the U.S. is the best example but there are many others—is that I see this as a teaching moment. I see this as a teaching moment to see how much of our system is actually not regulated and is purely based on pretty much trust, the trust that people will behave democratically.

● (0915)

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: That leads me to my last question. You discussed an ideological vacuum that creates the possibility for this populism. In your opinion, what creates the ideological vacuum? Really, that's what this is about. This is about filling a void.

Prof. Cas Mudde: I think it is success, to be honest. I think social democracy by and large has given in to its own success. Established welfare states have achieved most of their original program. Pretty similarly, the neo-liberals pretty much established ideological hegemony where everyone accepted the market, as does the Europeanist. Once you have success and pretty much everyone is on board—or at least act as if they're on board—you don't discuss it anymore. You don't really argue about why this is fundamentally good. You start to talk about details.

That's fine when things go well, but if you have a great recession and then you have a so-called refugee crisis, you have to come up with a bit more than tweaks here and tweaks there. Because of success, we have kind of lost our fundamental ideological debate.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: It's almost like international osmosis.

Thank you very much, Professor.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now move to MP Saini please.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Good morning and welcome to both of you.

Dr. Mounk, I'm going to start with you first. You wrote something that was a bit concerning to me and I hope you can help me to understand more. You've written that nationalism is likely to remain a defining political force for the foreseeable future. You've also written that the only way to keep the destructive potential of nationalism in check is to fight for a society in which collective identity transcends ethnic and religious boundaries.

What I've taken from some of the things you've written is that there is a very fine line between patriotism and nationalism.

If you were going to give advice, how do you maintain a strong sense of positive patriotism and fight against a negative type of nationalism?

Prof. Yascha Mounk: That's an important question. To put it into context a little bit, I grew up Jewish in Germany and certainly a defensive nationalism or even patriotism did not come naturally to me, as you can imagine in that situation.

As I was growing up, I had the hope that we could overcome certain forms of nationalism completely and leave them behind in the 20th century, which they so cruelly shaped. When you look around the world today, you see that nationalism remains an incredibly powerful force in all parts of the world. That's something that connects the democratic world even with non-democratic parts of the world.

Especially in places where we've tried to suppress nationalism a bit, it is now rearing its head again in its ugliest form because people are saying, "I'm not being allowed to express this kind of identity, so I'm going to show you."

You made a distinction, which a lot of people in academic literature make as well, between patriotism and nationalism. I'm a little skeptical of that distinction because I think it's a little too easy for us. It says that there's a great form of this that is positive and all about solidarity and wonderful things, and that's patriotism. Then there's a dangerous form that's terrible and so on, and that's nationalism.

I think we're actually talking about the same phenomenon, which can find expression in positive and negative ways. For me, I think of nationalism as a half-domesticated animal. Our task is not to vanquish it. It's to keep domesticating it. It will always remain dangerous but the best thing we can do is to try to interpret it in a way that's inclusive and that ensures that we have a notion of what it is to be German or Italian. I think Canada already is leading on this, in that people of different ethnicities, religions or national origins can be seen as and feel fully Canadian. I think that patriotism or nationalism that is based on that inclusive notion is the best response to the exclusionary nationalism, rather than trying to say it's vanquishable all together.

Mr. Raj Saini: Dr. Mudde, I have a question for you.

You've written extensively about the European elections in May. One thing that you've written about is that now Mr. Salvini is taking more of a leadership role. You have the European Conservatives and Reformists party and the Europe of Nations and Freedom party. You have written that, because of Brexit and some of the changes in the European Parliament, these will create something called an "ECR-plus". Within the ECR-plus, you will have Mr. Salvini and Mr. Kaczynski in leadership roles. You talk about the radical right parties, saying that sometimes these parties have achieved some level of success. You mentioned about 20%.

There are other parties now. You have the Alternative for Germany party and the Vox party in Spain.

Will the European elections be a reflection of the domestic feeling in those countries or is it vice versa? I'm trying to find that link. Are countries becoming more radical right and, therefore, that expression will be in the European election?

The second point I have is that when you talk about radical parties and about some of the political systems in Europe, a lot of these radical right parties will become mainstream because the more centrist parties will need their support for governance.

Those are the two questions I have for you.

● (0920)

Prof. Cas Mudde: Thank you very much. These are good but also complex questions.

Simplistically stated, European elections have always been primarily domestic elections in the sense that the issues being discussed are domestic issues rather than European. This has changed a little bit, particularly in countries that have held referendums on European issues. Then they become a bit more about Europe as well. The two are very closely related anyway, because the national elite is always the European elite as well.

I expect, by and large, populism in general and the populist radical right to do a little better in 2019 for the simple reason that they already did better in 2014 and in 2009. Certain parties are going to disappear; others are going to come up.

The key question is not so much how many seats they win overall but how many seats they can bring together in one group. On that, I must say it's difficult to speculate. Salvini had his big meeting where he was going to present the new group. In the end, there was no Kaczynski and there was no Orbán. To me, personally, I think the only person who can bring all of them together is Orbán.

A lot of the smaller parties, particularly west European parties, don't want to be lead by Kaczynski and Law and Justice. They think it's too Catholic, too parochial. They see Orbán as a European player, but Orbán will ride out the European People's Party as long as he can, because they can protect him better than any new group.

The issue of mainstreaming is extremely important. This applies particularly to the populist radical right and much more towards their nativism kind of xenophobic nationalism than towards their populism, for obvious reasons. It's a bit more difficult to be populist when you're part of the decades-old mainstream. It is increasingly difficult to see boundaries objectively between certain mainstream parties and certain populist radical right parties. There's the Conservative Party in Britain, at this moment, and UKIP, for example. There's Les Républicains in France and le Rassemblement national. There's ÖVP and FPÖ, and CSU Bavaria and AfD.

In all of these, there are differences, I still believe. However, if you just look at what they say during campaigns, you can clearly see that they've moved together, and it's not the radical right that has moved. They still say exactly the same. It is the mainstream right and, in certain countries, the mainstream left that has moved towards the radical right.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next is MP Caron, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

My first question is for you, Mr. Mudde.

I was intrigued by the idea that there was a void to be filled, that social democracy had accomplished what it set out to accomplish, that the lack of debate had opened the door to neo-liberalism, which then accomplished everything it had to accomplish, and the lack of debate opened the door to the authoritarian populism we are seeing today.

First, I'd like to know why the void was filled by populism instead of some other leanings.

Second, I'd like to know how, in accordance with our Liberal democratic rules, we can create institutional security structures to prevent this type of situation, especially these days, when more authoritarian or more populist groups promote mistrust in the elites. On top of that, social media exacerbates it all. I'm thinking about the phenomenon of fake news.

How can we establish this type of institutional security, in accordance with our existing system and rules?

● (0925)

[*English*]

Prof. Cas Mudde: Obviously, I don't have the right answer because I've been shouting several answers for the last few decades.

I think what is absolutely crucial is that the response is not aimed at defeating the populist. If we did defeat the populist, we would still have that distrust. We would still have that sense that liberal democracy isn't functioning well. The response has to come in strengthening liberal democracy. By definition, if you strengthen liberal democracy, you weaken populism.

How do you do that? First and foremost, you do it by being honest and by accepting that various things did not work perfectly. It is pretty important because in the current anti-populist mode we're in, we have made them the evil ones and us the good ones, as if everything were great before. I think it is crucial that ideology is brought back. People don't just want to know how to make a certain policy. They want to understand why. They want to understand why we have a European Union. Most people are not going to support that just for economic arguments. Of course, if they do, then a great recession is the end of it.

The argument initially was “no more war,” and that has completely disappeared. Similarly, social democratic parties have pretty much given up on the key ideology of international solidarity, and the Christian Democratic party is the same. I think an ideological renewal, as well as an explanation of why we support liberal democracy. The protection of minorities is not about one specific minority. Everyone, at a certain point in time, can and will be a minority and that system will then profit them.

It can only be strengthened through a positive agenda. Let's be frank here. The trust in the system was lost over various decades. It will not be won back by one great PR campaign. It has to be won back by a clear, ideological agenda that is then implemented consistently.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: That you very much. It's really interesting.

Mr. Mounk, you spoke about the issue of trade being used as a kind of lightning rod for fear, that creates fear and that leads to a kind of populism. Two days ago we heard from Mr. Galston, who told us that trade also acts as an economic catalyst for the conditions that lead to authoritarian populism. Populists often try to attract a segment of the population that feels neglected economically. One example would be workers in the declining manufacturing sectors whom our systems seem to have abandoned.

Do you think that the fear is based on the economic discourse of trade and free trade? Does trade also create the conditions to help grow this populism?

Prof. Yascha Mounk: This is a very important question.

In recent years, there has been a big debate in Canada, the United States and Europe over whether populism was tied strictly to the economy or whether it was also caused by identity, immigration or perhaps social networks. I think it is all three.

To fully understand, we first need to look at the idea of social status. For example, populist movements are the strongest and receive the most support from people in the most isolated, rural areas, with a bit less economic growth. This is what we see as the rationale for support of populist movements in almost all countries. It's clear that the economy is a factor.

Am I rich or do I have a good job? That's not the question, because lots of people who vote for populism have good jobs. Do I see a future for my region? that's the question. Do I have a reason to be optimistic? Will the region I live in and where I want my children to live be better off in 20 years? Will I be in a part of the country that is being overlooked? Will my children have to move to the capital or to a big city to have opportunities? These are very important questions.

Immigration, or change, is also connected here, in the sense that people are trying to determine who is a real member of a society, for example. Imagine a small town 40 years ago, where many people who may not have been the wealthiest, most intelligent or most skilled could at least tell themselves that they were German and not one of those Turkish immigrants, that they were men and that this gave them some privileges, or that they were not black or weren't from Asia. A lot of these people feel as though they've lost their social status. They're rebelling against this loss of social status, which can be a significant catalyst.

Social networks are important, because they give these frustrated people a way into the political arena and a way to dominate political discourse in a way that may not have been possible 20 or 30 years ago.

● (0930)

Mr. Guy Caron: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next is MP Sidhu, please.

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

Thank you both for sharing your wisdom with us this morning. My question goes to Professor Mounk.

Last year, you wrote an article titled "How Liberals Can Reclaim Nationalism". In this article, you wrote that the situation regarding nationalism is similar in Canada and the United States, as in the European countries. Therefore, I am curious whether it is your belief that nationalism is on the rise in Canada.

How do we address this issue in a democratic country like Canada?

Prof. Yascha Mounk: I had the opportunity, in response to a question by another member, to say a bit about my conception of patriotism and nationalism. It's interesting to think it through in the Canadian context. I think there's one important difference between Canada and the United States on the one side and western Europe on the other side. That is, most European countries had a very strong mono-ethnic and monocultural conception of citizenship and nationhood until very recently. Let's say you went into the streets of Berlin or Rome or Stockholm in 1960 and you asked people, "Who really belongs in this society?" Most would have given you a very straightforward answer, such as, "People who look more or less like me. People who have been in this part of the world for many generations." That has started to change in Europe, but it's a more recent change. It's a change that hasn't yet been fully accepted in large parts of the population.

I think the situation in the United States, and in Canada perhaps especially, is a little different. These have always been multi-ethnic societies. These have always been societies based on immigration. I think the idea of what makes someone a Canadian—their citizenship and their allegiance to a certain set of values and common rules—has much deeper historical roots. The similarity, of course, is that 30 to 40 years ago, in Canada as in Europe, some groups were privileged. They had real advantages on the basis of their skin colour, their religion, and so on and so forth. Canada has come a long way in overcoming that, but it hasn't overcome it completely. As well, some of the people who used to have those privileges are resentful. They feel that their social status is being threatened in exactly the way I was outlining in response to the last question.

I think the way to deal with that is to continue to cultivate a healthy patriotism, as Canada does with its strong allegiance to the flag and other things. I also think it is important to emphasize what we all have in common. We need to—

● (0935)

Mr. Jati Sidhu: If I may, Professor, do you believe Canada is a good example of a liberal democracy?

Prof. Yascha Mounk: I'm not going to say anything else to this committee.

I do believe that, of course. I do think it's important for it to do two things at the same time. First, emphasize and ensure that everybody has the same opportunities, irrespective of origin and skin colour. I also think it's important to cultivate a real sense of people having things in common across different groups. At times, perhaps, I see a danger in some societies, and perhaps that's more developed in Canada than in other places, to emphasize and celebrate differences over similarities. I think for the long-term future of a society where people have solidarity across those boundaries, that can be counterproductive.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: My next question, Professor Mounk, is in relation to a decline of democracy. To what do you attribute the decline? Is it pure ignorance, or is it that people are being smart and using populism as the other word—to put it a little stronger, as a wolf in sheep's clothing? To me, or to my understanding, populism is in between democracy and nationalism. Do you think the trend is smart people hiding in that, in being smart and law-abiding but still, at the end of the day, being the controllers? What do you have to say?

Prof. Cas Mudde: I don't think it's necessarily a matter of intelligence. I'm also very skeptical about so-called "fake news" and the better informed supporting liberal democratic policies and the less informed supporting populist policies. I think a lot has to do with self-perceived economic and cultural, as well as gender, interests.

Study after study shows that urban people with higher levels of education, for example, support European integration. People have said that it's because they're smarter. No, they're better educated and live in urban centres and these are the people and the places that profit the most from European integration. If you're less educated and you live in the industrial periphery, like the Rust Belt, you get less out of that. I think both have self-interest. I don't think, systematically, people make decisions that are that much different.

Does that mean the liberal democrats have failed those people who now vote for the populist radical right? Are these the so-called "losers" of modernization? Only a small subset of them are. This is one of the biggest problems. We have this cliché image of white working-class men, pretty much, who are the support base of these parties, but it's only a small portion of the larger point.

On top of that, many of these men have not been hit hardest by the system. Non-white minorities have been hit much harder. Women have been hit much harder. It's about, first of all, whether you feel grievances, and—I think this is very important—whether those grievances are acknowledged by the broader community. This is where we all play a role. After Trump won, we had article after article about the poor white male in the Rust Belt, who yes, has issues, but what about older African-American men and women who live in the depleted cities? They were again written out of the story, so they don't get a voice. I think it's a bit more complex.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next is MP Vandenbeld, please.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): I'm going to give the first question to Borys, and then I'll go.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): These will actually be two, hopefully quick, questions and answers.

First, if Hungary were not a member of the EU today, do you think they would be able to join the EU? Can I have a quick yes or no, Professor Mudde?

Prof. Cas Mudde: Yes, for the simple reason that EU politics is about power politics, and the EPP would still want them in.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Professor Mounk.

Prof. Yascha Mounk: That's a very pessimistic answer. Unfortunately, Dr. Mudde may be right, but certainly they would not, under any circumstances, fulfill the criteria by which, in theory, the EU would decide that.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: That's exactly what I'm getting at. What we've been watching, since his election in the last free and fair elections in Hungary in 2010, is the slow democratic suicide of the Hungarian state with Orbán as the architect. It appears that it's being done with the inept assistance of the EU. There's approximately 90 million euros in assistance per week going to Hungary, a lot of which potentially—or so it appears—ends up in Orbán's oligarchic allies' pockets.

Professor Mounk, you said—and most people agree—that 2010 was the last time there were free and fair elections. They had elections in 2014 and 2018. By most measures, people would say those were not free and fair, yet Hungary is being allowed to use these EU elections for Orbán's plan for a takeover. Everyone's aware of it. They're using the EPP as a vehicle, under a slogan about God, family and nation, for a takeover of the EU. It's being done in plain sight. You don't have democratic elections in Hungary. He's sending a cadre of people into the European Parliament. I'd like it if you could quickly comment on that issue.

● (0940)

Prof. Yascha Mounk: Is this question for me?

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Sure, yes.

Prof. Yascha Mounk: One good point is that there's no bright line between when elections are free and fair and when they are not. What we've seen in Hungary is the slow corrosion of the democratic system, so it's very difficult to know at which point elections were no longer free and fair. The 2014 election was probably on the cusp. There were some irregularities, but I may still have called it mostly free and fair. At this point the country is no longer one that has a free and fair democracy. When I was in Hungary for research just a couple of weeks ago, I was struck by how afraid ordinary people are to speak about politics—because they're actually afraid of real repercussions.

I think that the situation in Hungary is a sign of the utter failure of the political establishment in Europe to take seriously the threat of a return to populism. The fact that Fidesz is still a member of the European People's Party is, frankly, shameful. Europeans are hugely underestimating the way in which this threatens the very survival of the European Union.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you.

I'd like to go to this notion of political party capture that's come up in both your testimonies. I know Mr. Mounk, you said these are no longer marginal. We usually think of this as a small group of people who, maybe because of the proportional representation systems, are able to get into political office but are not the vast majority. Now you've stated they tend to be dominant.

I think, Mr. Mudde, you were saying that the mainstream political parties, the liberal democratic political parties, are allowing these smaller groups to frame the issues and the agenda. To what extent is this a rise in the number of people who support this kind of populism or is it that within the political systems more room is being given inside parties and inside parliaments to give them space?

Prof. Cas Mudde: I think both. Clearly, populist parties have been growing, particularly in the 21st century. However, their sentiments.... Again, we speak primarily about the populist radical right and the integration of nativism and authoritarianism rather than necessarily anti-establishment sentiments, but you see all that to the extent that in certain cases you barely need to have a populist radical right-wing government to have the same type of discourse, at least, and to a certain extent even policies.

I think my own country, the Netherlands, is a very good example. The current government is formed in a very complex way with four parties to keep out the radical right, to keep out Geert Wilders, yet both the VVD, which the Prime Minister is from, as well as the CDA, the Christian Democrats, campaigned on agendas that were almost like copies of Geert Wilders.

The Austrian government at the moment is also a very good example of how that works. The ÖVP, which is a conservative party, is clearly the dominant party in the coalition in terms of power, yet it has adopted a lot of aspects of the FPÖ. It's not just the FPÖ becoming bigger. It is that voices that are similar to it, for whatever reason—strategic or ideological—are now also important within mainstream parties.

● (0945)

The Chair: Thank you.

Time is up. I see we only have a few minutes left, so we're going to go straight to MP Kusie to finish off.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you, Chair.

As a member of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the current situation going on here in our Government of Canada.

Dr. Mounk, in terms of the elements of forbearance, you mentioned the judicial system being manipulated, little or no regard for the rule of law and the media being manipulated. I'm sure you may have heard of the recent SNC-Lavalin scandal going on here in Canada, where the Prime Minister and his chief of staff allegedly attempted to influence the Attorney General, who resisted, to create a deferred prosecution agreement for this large corporation. The primary secretary, in support of that, said they'll spin the media so the story played better.

There, within the story itself, we see three of these elements: the manipulation of the judiciary, no regard for the rule of law and attempted manipulation of the media. However, we are supposed to be studying here, as a model democracy, how to set a good example and how to help other democracies that are challenged by the upholding of these same principles that are eroding.

Given this, what advice would you have for our government here in Canada and what advice would you have for the Canadian public, please?

Prof. Yascha Mounk: I'd like to thank the member for throwing me these softball questions.

I would say that liberal democracy lives off a very clear separation of powers and it lives off independent institutions, including in particular independent prosecutorial services that are not subject to government pressure. I am far from an expert in Canadian politics, and I can't comment on the details that you alluded to, but what I would say is that there is always a danger in liberal democratic systems that any government will be tempted to overstep the boundaries of its appropriate authority or that it may try, in various ways, to influence independent agencies about politically sensitive matters. It is absolutely important for liberal democracy that opposition parties stand up to that and for the media to report those things critically.

I would also want to emphasize that there's a real distinction between governments that are committed to liberal democratic values, and don't always live up to their own standards when they are in a complicated situation—and that should be condemned—and authoritarian populists who don't acknowledge the legitimacy and the importance of those distinctions in principle and go out of their way to try to undermine the ability of those kinds of institutions and norms to actually safeguard the political system.

We all as citizens need to be very watchful when governments fall foul of those rules in any kind of way. However, as a political scientist who has studied the impact of populist governments compared with the impact of non-populist governments, it is very clear that the danger to democracy is very serious when this is part of an ideological approach and a consistent set of attacks on institutions, rather than when it is a regular scandal, which you get in every democracy in the history of the world, where people sometimes fail to live up to the standards that they set out for themselves.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Mr. Mudde, would you care to comment on this as well, please?

Prof. Cas Mudde: I agree. This is one of the reasons why sometimes the critique of populists and the populist radical right is so hard. No liberal democracy is perfect and several slip up regularly. What you actually see is that, overall, populists do particularly well in countries that slip up regularly. Hungary was not working perfectly before Orbán came. Italy has a long history of populism for a very good reason.

At the same time, some of them are successful in countries that are considered to be the cleanest, like Sweden or the Netherlands or whatever. It's important to keep perspective, but it also shows the importance of opposition. What you see in the countries like Hungary, for example, is that, to a large extent, with Orbán's power, he's very popular but he also has no opposition, because the opposition, particularly the social democrats, were involved in massive corruption and then split.

Left to their own devices, I personally would trust no one. That's why opposition is important. There is also a major difference between someone who believes, in principle, that there is a legitimate opposition but just under certain circumstances would wish them not to be powerful, and someone who believes that there is no legitimate opposition. They will always go further. This is an important issue.

In my own country of the Netherlands, there is a lot of corruption coming out of the governing party as well, which should be dealt with both by the media and politics much more pronouncedly, if only so that you don't leave issues like this only to the populists, because then they can profit from it.

● (0950)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you.

The Chair: That brings us to the end of our time on this first panel.

Gentleman, I want to thank you for your insightful testimony and for joining us here in Ottawa and from Washington.

With that, we will suspend briefly while the other panel is set up.

● (0950)

(Pause)

● (1000)

The Chair: We are resuming the meeting.

I want to thank our second panel of guests who are joining us this morning. Zoe Dugal, deputy director of field operations for CANADEM is joining us from Kiev, Ukraine, and Dr. Lucan Way, professor of political science at University of Toronto, is joining us from Moscow, Russia.

I want to thank you both for being with us this morning.

Perhaps, Ms. Dugal, we can start with you and then we can go to Dr. Way. Then we'll open it up to questions from the members.

If you could each take around 10 minutes, that would be fantastic.

Ms. Zoe Dugal (Deputy Director, Field Operations, CANADEM (Canada's Civilian Response Corps)): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and honourable members of the committee, for giving me this opportunity to address you today.

I will make a brief statement. I'm calling you from Ukraine. This is where I'm working now, implementing some projects for the Canadian government. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have at the end.

In my opinion, the main threat to liberal democracy in Europe today is a crisis of identities. Over the past 70 years, Europe has moved from the chaos of World War II and the tensions of the Cold War to a period of economic and social progress under the governance system of the European Union. In the context of globalization and world co-operation from the 1990s on, the European Union expanded and opened itself to the world through trade and diplomacy. Individual national identities incorporated into a global European identity. European countries that were not part of the EU aspired to join.

This has led a number of European leaders to complacency over democracy. They took for granted that, after the defeat of fascism and communism, Europeans had universally accepted that liberal democracy was the only possible form of governance. The EU became mired in bureaucracy and the European Parliament failed to bring enthusiasm in voters. The 2008 financial crisis brought resentment against liberalism in countries most affected by the crisis. As well, the influx of migrants and refugees has tested, and continues to test, the limits of European openness.

In some European countries this crisis of identity is exacerbated by Russian aggression. The Russian Federation still considers many states to be within its sphere of influence. Therefore, the fear of seeing these states turn to the European Union, NATO and other symbols of western democracy has pushed the Russian Federation to intervene militarily in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova and to offer veiled threats to the Baltic States.

The reaction has been a turn to populism in a lot of European countries. In most cases, voters have turned to far right movements. What these movements offer voters is an identity that is defined, constrained and familiar, promoting traditional values and a limited place for women in society. However, they also advocate for the fight against corruption, which makes them popular with a number of sectors of the population. They generally take an anti-establishment stance and promote a narrow vision of national identities that excludes all perceived “others”, which often means national minorities, immigrants, refugees, LGBTQ, etc. In some of the countries experiencing Russian aggression, far right movements use the threat of invasion to promote nationalism, order and the repression of dissenting voices, a kind of movement to rally around the flag.

The younger population in particular, representing the next generation, is becoming more and more attracted to these far right movements. This stems from being on the “losing” side of the status quo, disenfranchised by economic and political structures of society. As we see in Ukraine, youth have become highly skeptical of traditional politics and political parties. This is due to the slow pace of reform and the loss of the fight against corruption.

Many Europeans are at a crossroads today, where they need to make a decision about the kind of society they want to live in. This choice is between inclusion and diversity on the one side, and exclusion and uniformity on the other side. If I may use a metaphor, European societies must choose between being Canada or being Serbia.

Canada can play an important role in the promotion of liberal democracy around the world and in Europe by, first and foremost, leading by example. Canada has a history of promoting inclusion and diversity. However, this has not always been an easy and straightforward road, with many setbacks, even violent ones—for example, Quebec in the 1970s. It is also still a work in progress on many fronts, with the full integration, respect and [*Technical Difficulty—Editor*]

● (1005)

The Chair: We can still hear you.

Ms. Zoe Dugal: I'm sorry. The video had gone off. Thank you. I was saying that it is still a work in progress with the full integration, respect and recognition of our indigenous peoples not yet achieved.

In my opinion, this is why Canada is a good example to the world. We should not be shy to show our successes, be open about our struggles and discuss our experiences with liberal democracy. In other words, in my opinion, we can show the world that the path to diversity, openness and inclusion is difficult and requires hard work and compromise, but that it is both possible and highly desirable. Canada's federal system of governance is a good example of how to recognize and promote diversity while also creating a national identity that inspires all citizens.

The Canadian government can promote liberal democracy in Europe by supporting democratic reforms in emerging democracies. This can include the fight against corruption, for example, transparency of government processes, the promotion of free elections and a responsible role for parliaments. For example, through funding from Global Affairs Canada, CANADEM is currently managing an election observation mission in Ukraine to observe both the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2019.

In addition, Canada should invest and play an active role in international institutions such as the UN, the OSCE and other multilateral organizations. Canada's role in peacekeeping in history under the UN banner and its support to the OSCE's special monitoring mission to Ukraine are good examples of this. These mechanisms, while imperfect and requiring improvement, are crucial to a world order based on liberalism and democracy.

I thank you for your time and I'm ready to answer any questions you would like to ask me.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Dr. Way, please proceed.

Professor Lucan Way (Professor of Political Science, University of Toronto, As an Individual): I'm in Moscow—rather apropos.

Liberal democracy is under a threat in Europe and the world today. On the one hand, it's worth pointing out that the number of democracies in the world has not declined by a significant number. There were 86 democracies in 2000, 87 in 2010 and 86 today. The number of democracies in the world is still at a historical high. I think that's just important to keep in mind to temper some of the pessimism. Nevertheless, there are real reasons to worry.

First, countries such as Hungary that were once considered consolidated can no longer, in my opinion, be called democracies. In such cases, the main threats to liberal democracy come less from violent attacks on the opposition or obvious democratic violations, but instead arise from less visible, but systematic, attempts to create an uneven playing field by packing the courts and buying out opposition media in order to eliminate alternative sources of information.

While such measures rarely inspire headlines, they create a fundamentally uneven playing field that reduces political competition and seriously harms the democratic process. For example, Viktor Orbán in Hungary has not engaged in large-scale vote fraud or killed any journalists, as has occurred here. However, his government has used a variety of legal mechanisms—gerrymandering and the selective distribution of government advertising—to seriously undermine critical media, as well as the opposition's capacity to compete for power. As a result, I do not think that Hungary can be called a democracy.

At the same time, in many western European democracies, politics have been infected by the rise of populist forces that often rely on racist, anti-Semitic and Islamophobic appeals. Such appeals foment intolerance and intensify polarization, undermining the compromise that is critical to democratic governance. The rise of populism clearly presents a threat to the the transatlantic alliances. A number of these parties, including the National Front in France and the far right alternative for Germany, opposed NATO, as well the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement. In turn, many have, of course, received support from Putin in the form of misinformation campaigns on the Internet or, in some cases, direct funding.

Russian money has also been used to undermine pro-EU and pro-NATO forces in Macedonia, Montenegro, the Czech Republic, Ukraine and many other cases. How do we explain the emergence of such populist threats to liberal democracy? It's helpful to distinguish between bottom-up and top-down factors.

Bottom-up factors include the resentment and fears generated by immigration, which were just mentioned, and a backlash against perceived changes in European culture. A number of studies have demonstrated a link between immigration and support for far right political forces. In particular, the refugee crisis of 2015 increased the salience of immigration and strengthened the hand of right-wing parties. In Hungary, Viktor Orbán's decision to build a fence on the Serbian border in response to the refugee crisis contributed to a dramatic increase in support for his party. Similarly, in Poland, the refugee crisis appears to have bolstered support for far right parties.

Furthermore, the presence of immigrants with different languages and cultures reinforces the impression that traditional norms and values are disappearing. Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris argue that such perceived threats to traditional European culture, both from immigrants and from shifts in cultural values among the young, have generated what they call a “cultural backlash” among older and less educated parts of the population that has motivated them to support far right parties. At the same time, many studies suggest that the political attitudes fuelling support for far right populism—anti-immigrant attitudes, disenchantment with democracy—have remained relatively stable since the early 2000s. Indeed, a range of studies show that overall tolerance of differences in race and sexuality has increased over the last 50 years.

This fact points to the importance of top-down factors in explaining the rise of populism—namely the increased use of culturalist and xenophobic appeals by parties such as Fidesz in Hungary. Such parties have likely emerged less because attitudes have changed and more because political entrepreneurs have figured out how to tap into a reservoir of populist sentiment that existed all along.

● (1010)

In several ways, the traditional centre-left in Europe has created an opening for populist appeals. First, populists have been aided by the fact that many mainstream centre-left parties have adopted liberal stances on lifestyle questions, thereby distancing themselves from less educated and older cohorts who support more traditional views on heterosexuality and gender roles.

Furthermore, as Sheri Berman has argued, nationalist appeals have been indirectly facilitated by the left-right consensus on the economy that emerged in the 1990s and 2000s over support for deregulation and neo-liberalism.

Dalston Ward argued that when parties cannot differentiate themselves on the economy, they activate other non-economic issues around which to compete. The economic consensus has encouraged some parties to make environmental appeals, but many other parties to foment resentment towards minorities. In Poland, for example, parties now differentiate themselves along what can be called the “axis of values” between secular liberal cosmopolitans and religious authoritarian nationalists, more than by differences in economic policy. The left-right consensus on economic issues can also encourage the emergence of new anti-liberal parties, such as the Alternative for Germany, created in 2013.

The left-right consensus on the economy has also meant that the traditional left was unable to capitalize on the resentments generated by rising inequality and the financial crisis, thereby creating an opening for populist political forces. Indeed, the mainstream centre-left has witnessed significant declines in recent years in France, Germany, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and even Scandinavia.

In many cases, populist parties have filled the void by combining authoritarian nationalism with left-wing economic appeals. Thus, a number of far right parties—the Freedom Party in Austria, the National Front in France and the Alternative for Germany—have shifted from supporting lower taxes and cuts in the welfare state to now supporting greater social protections.

More generally, the rise of populism can be seen as a result of failures by mainstream parties to sufficiently address the legitimate concerns of those left behind. In turn, this analysis points to ways in which Canada can support liberal democracy and reduce the appeal of populism. First of all, I agree with everything that was said in the previous talk. I just want to add one other thing, which is that the rise of populism has been driven in part by voters who feel that their concerns are not represented by mainstream parties and who are, therefore, attracted to populist alternatives.

With this in mind, the Canadian government should support democratically minded forces that represent a diversity of views on the economy and economic reform in emerging democracies. After the Cold War, there was a temptation in places like Russia to exclusively back political leaders who supported radical economic reform, and to pay little or no attention to those who opposed or were hurt by economic changes.

Today in Ukraine—which I think is on everyone's mind—the natural focus has been on groups from western Ukraine that are the strongest proponents of much needed economic reform. I completely understand the focus on this group. However, the recent rise of the outsider comedian Volodymyr Zelensky, who actively courted votes from southeastern Ukraine, shows the potential dangers, in my view, that arise when the political class ignores significant parts of the electorate. Ultimately, democracy will be most stable when mainstream democratic parties exist that represent all groups in society.

Thanks.

● (1015)

The Chair: Thank you very much. Let's move straight into questions. We'll begin with MP Kusie, please.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you very much, Ms. Dugal and Mr. Way, for being here today. My interest, in addition to the examination within this committee, is also to evaluate Canada's position from an executive level, in communication and coordination with other nations and other multilateral organizations, to determine how we can support these flailing democracies as well as developing democracies.

First, I would turn to what is now referred to as the great power struggle between, of course, the historic power of the United States and the more recently emerged Russia, as well as China. What role do these three great powers play in either encouraging democracy or defeating democracy? Russia, obviously, is a more obvious example, as Ms. Dugal and other witnesses have alluded to, but perhaps we can focus more on the United States and China.

Again, I reference it a lot here but certainly in Venezuela.... I was a diplomat for 15 years, most of the time in the Americas. We've seen Maduro's success. When I say "success" I mean that any semblance of governance he has maintained is largely the result of receiving resources support from two or three of these great powers. Would you comment on the role of those, please. I'll start with Ms. Dugal, please.

● (1020)

Ms. Zoe Dugal: I must say I am not an expert on the role of China so I will not touch on that. The role of the United States has been historically to promote democracy around the world. Having said that, they've had a very interventionist approach to things throughout the Cold War and beyond. With the new administration in the U.S. we feel like this is changing. The support for democracy has not been necessarily at the top of the agenda of the U.S. administration in the last two years. This has been seen here in Ukraine whereby there is less pressure from the U.S. government to push reforms and to look at how democracy can be pushed forward and supported.

The case of Venezuela, I think, is.... We used to have these doctrines around the UN and things like that, for example, the responsibility to protect, which Canada was instrumental in developing. These things have been falling a bit by the wayside in the last few years. For me, it's unfortunate because I think we had a number of mechanisms that were in place to support the populations directly when there was a case that warranted such intervention by a multilateral mechanism, without infringing necessarily on sovereignty, but in a way to "responsibilize" the world on a humanitarian crisis, for example.

The case of Venezuela would have been, in my mind, something that would have called for a "responsibility to protect" in terms of how the Americans could respond but also the world through the UN.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Dr. Way, can you comment, please?

Prof. Lucan Way: Yes, I can.

Both Russia and China have been increasingly active on the world stage as you know. Russia especially has been interfering in the domestic politics of the former Soviet Union since the early 1990s—in a number of Ukrainian elections, in 1994, 2004 and others. What's remarkable in the last four or five years is that Russia, for the first time, has begun to intervene in western elections. Since 2014 we've counted, in my study, 20 different elections in western Europe and North America where they've intervened in a variety of ways by promoting misinformation campaigns and the like. Obviously, Russia represents an existential threat to Ukrainian democracy. I don't have to tell any of you that.

At the same, for China, it had intervened but for the most part I think it's rather agnostic when it comes to regime type. I think both Russia and China are primarily interested in promoting the development of pro-Russian or pro-Chinese governments, rather than imposing authoritarianism per se. I think that's important to keep in mind.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you.

I will move on to my next question. As a Conservative, and comparative to many of my official opposition colleagues, I still do believe in the purpose of the UN. I just believe that the necessity for a significant United Nations reform remains. However, I don't see any other organization with such an international reach of presence, so I prefer, myself, to work within it albeit with major reforms.

Do you feel that this organization would have any role to play in terms of enforcing democracy internationally? This is to both of you, please.

Ms. Zoe Dugal: Yes, absolutely, I feel exactly like you. The UN is the only game in town, let's say. It is the only place where all of us are represented. Of course it needs reform, and most of these multilateral organizations do need reform, but they are the only way to go, in my opinion. It's always, in my opinion, better to talk about things and try to resolve them in a collegial manner throughout the world rather than going it alone.

I always find it a little interesting that people say that the UN is irrelevant, and I don't see how this is possible in today's world. The UN is even more relevant than it has ever been because the crises are mounting. It's not just the threats to democracy. It's also climate change and other topics where we need more collaboration rather than less.

● (1025)

The Chair: I'm going to have to cut it off there because we're over time.

We will now move to MP Saini please.

Mr. Raj Saini: Professor Way, I would like to start with you because in your opening remarks you spoke a lot about Hungary and about Fidesz. I have a few questions for you on using Hungary as a sort of test case for the rest of Europe.

In Hungary there has been a democratic erosion, but it has been done in a very subtle way and sometimes in a very overt way. As for some of the overt ways that are done, you mentioned gerrymandering, that the opposition doesn't have an outlet, and that the ruling party does advertising and controls some 500 of the news outlets in Hungary. They control the mass media and a lot of times even companies or corporations in Hungary have stopped advertising on opposition stations for fear of any retribution.

The picture you've described is one where the opposition really has no chance to compete in a free and fair election because the tools that are offered to the ruling party are not offered to the opposition party. Is that a trend line throughout the countries where we see this type of process? How is the opposition ever going to have a chance to succeed if the tools for that success are limited to them?

Prof. Lucan Way: I completely agree with you. I don't think that's the only problem with the opposition in Hungary. It's also quite split. It's not just the government's fault, but certainly, with these more subtle legal mechanisms, I don't think they mean that the elections are meaningless. The vote is still counted and, in principle, I think if the opposition was able to unite, they would have a chance of winning, but it's obviously quite hard, and in that sense, undemocratic.

Mr. Raj Saini: One of the things, which I'm sure you can appreciate, is that a lot of these autocratic leaders, whether they're in Visegrád nations or across Europe, are very close to each other in one way or the other. It seems that there has been no motivation for the opposition in different countries to also come together, because I think that the problems they're facing in Hungary are similar to those they're facing in Poland and other places.

Why has there been no unification of the opposition as there has been in the leadership of these countries?

Prof. Lucan Way: That's the $100,000 question. I'm not an expert on Hungarian politics, but I suspect that Orbán might be involved. It's very much in his interest to divide the opposition. This was a similar tactic used by Milosevic in Serbia in the 1990s, where they would sort of buy off certain members of the opposition basically to encourage splits in the opposition and prevent any kind of unity.

I should also add that the EU has played a pernicious role in Hungary partly because of Hungary's membership in the European People's Party. At the European level, there's been very little pressure on Hungary to democratize. I think the EU deserves some blame for the failure of democracy in Hungary.

Mr. Raj Saini: You led me to my third question because, as you know, last year the European Parliament voted to invoke article 7 to censure Hungary, and now that question is going to the European leadership of the 28 countries. As you know, to censure, to provide sanctions or to do anything against Hungary, they need unanimity. Right now Poland has been very vociferous in saying that they will not provide that unanimity. If this carries on, if one country defends another country because of their domestic political situation, you've created a new normal now in Europe, have you not?

If this is what it takes to get elected, then any opposition party will have to confine themselves to the political dialogue of the day, whether it's right or not. We're also seeing the same consequence in the European Parliament or even in certain other countries where you have the radical right parties. Because of the political situation there, the main party must depend on the radical right to maintain power. How is that going to go forward? It seems to me that across Europe this has become the new norm.

Prof. Lucan Way: I completely agree and I think that's deeply troubling.

When they see that Hungary gets away with it, it encourages other potential autocrats to behave similarly. I'm in full agreement with your pessimism.

Mr. Raj Saini: Thank you.

Do I have more time?

The Chair: You have a minute and a half.

Mr. Raj Saini: Okay.

I didn't know I was going have a chance to ask, but I have a final question.

When you look at the Schengen agreement because of the immigration, what is your opinion on that? Should it be strengthened? Should it be changed? Should there be better border controls, less border controls? I'm surprised that the Schengen agreement is in place, but some countries adhere to it and some countries don't.

● (1030)

Prof. Lucan Way: In general, my own research has shown that integration greatly facilitates democracy, and the best way to ultimately redemocratize places like Hungary and to encourage greater democracy in the former Soviet Union is by strengthening ties between them, which includes immigration and so on. I'm not an expert on the Schengen agreement, but in principle I think it's important to encourage as much openness as possible.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Caron, you have the floor.

Mr. Guy Caron: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'll start with you, Mr. Way. You have an interesting perspective. You think that one of the reasons for the rise in authoritarianism and populism is the fact that political parties are no longer as different in terms of their economic agendas. Many parties now have similar economic agendas. Do you think the people are looking for other ways to be heard, with what may be different concerns?

Another witness who spoke today today told us that one of the solutions to combat today's authoritarianism and populism would be a return to ideology. He said that traditional political parties have moved away from ideology itself, leaving room for other parties that use issues like immigration or the decline of the manufacturing sector as lightning rods to attract these people.

What do you think about this potential solution for the traditional parties in our Liberal democracy?

[*English*]

Prof. Lucan Way: I think that the traditional parties, the central left parties, need to begin representing the interests of their older constituents. In the 1990s and 2000s, there developed a kind of technocratic ethos where there was the idea that economic policies were outside of politics and should be left to the experts.

I think that's a very dangerous trend. Parties, in the traditional sense, need to represent their constituents, many of whom are losers in reform. Again, that's why I think that Canada should support a diversity in economic views among the parties in Europe and the former Soviet Union.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Another point you raised is tolerance. Immigration can be a polarizing social issue. Canada is a welcoming country and needs immigrants right now. We have seen other waves of immigration in the past, for example, during the first half of the 20th century. Sure, both the world and Canada have experienced conflicts since then, but immigration has never had such broad social implications as it does today.

Why is the topic of immigration in Canada these days so polarizing, compared to the early 20th century?

[*English*]

Prof. Lucan Way: I have to say that is outside my area of expertise, but I believe that Canada represents a model in its openness right now. I agree with the previous speaker that a big role that Canada can play is acting as a model of tolerance in a world in which there are very few tolerant governments.

I very much agree with you. I think that immigration is absolutely necessary for both the economy and also in terms of spreading liberalism. Ultimately, liberalism is going to be spread by increasing openness and the like.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Thank you, Mr. Way.

Ms. Dugal, do you have any thoughts on this?

Ms. Zoe Dugal: I completely agree with you that immigration plays a very big role in Liberal democracies. Canada is one example of that. I sincerely believe that it's important to focus on how immigration contributes to diversity, which makes us better off. Diversity is an intrinsic value in Canada, which is a land of immigrants. Diversity is in our genes. Every person born in Canada is born into a country in which minorities, immigrants and all kinds of groups live together, including some that have been here for centuries. From childhood, we are taught the value of assimilation.

Europe, however, is not necessarily like that. It's the birthplace of the nation-state and has always been a continent divided into nations that work together, sure, but that are not necessarily integrated. I think it's almost miraculous that the European Union came to be. This organization must continue to evolve. It will however have to be reinvigorated, since it unfortunately no longer inspires Europeans.

The purpose of diversity is therefore to make us better off, not just economically, but also culturally and politically. I believe that Canada has an important role to play in demonstrating this aspect.

● (1035)

Mr. Guy Caron: Thank you very much.

I have one last question. I may have misunderstood, and correct me if that's the case. I think you said that it would be justified to put pressure on certain countries where populism is emerging. This was the case in Venezuela, for example.

I'm not talking about military intervention, of course, but sanctions or other forms of pressure. What could justify putting pressure on Venezuela over other countries that may be experiencing the same situation but that we hear less about? I'm thinking about Honduras, where we're also seeing a kind of authoritarianism.

Ms. Zoe Dugal: The responsibility to protect is a doctrine that defines where and when to intervene. We obviously must always assess the situation. The idea is that we should intervene when the population is suffering from the existing regime and when this regime has turned against the population. I used the example of Venezuela because its population is wanting for everything. This country is experiencing a humanitarian crisis that calls for international intervention because its government does not seem to want to protect its population. There are other examples in the world that I could have used. That said, international intervention would be justified in a similar situation, according to this doctrine.

Normally, the world operates on the principle of the sovereignty of nations. We must therefore not intervene everywhere, because that would be completely unjustified. The responsibility to protect only calls for international intervention when a state turns against its population and is causing suffering. In the case of Venezuela, I think that this principle applies.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now move to what's going to be our last question.

We'll have MP Wrzesnewskyj, please.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to pull a few things together here. Our study is about the threats to liberal democracy, but we will be issuing recommendations in our report.

I'd like to move to how Canada—other than being a shining example perhaps—can proactively engage internationally. It also pulls in the whole concept of the responsibility to protect. Some people think of it strictly in the terms of Libya and bombing, but I think there are other models where we can demonstrate that responsibility to protect.

That's why I turn to you, Ms. Dugal. We are doing something that is unique. The word is improperly used too often, but in Ukraine our CANADEM mission—200 electoral observers, engaging grassroots Canadians directly on behalf of fair and free elections—has proven to be incredibly successful, and it's not our first time. We've been doing this since 2004. We're actually standing shoulder to shoulder with the people in defence of liberal democracy, and arguably on the front line of the most important geopolitical battle for liberal democracy today.

I'd like you to just tell us whether or not you believe we should look at duplicating this particular model of direct engagement by Canada in other places beyond Ukraine. We've done it in Ukraine now for 14 years. It's successful, it's proven to be successful and we're doing it again. Could you comment about that?

● (1040)

Ms. Zoe Dugal: Yes. I agree with you. I think it's exactly what you're saying. We are standing with the Ukrainian people to look at their progress as a democracy, and we're supporting them. Of course, we are analyzing the election and observing it, but it's also the presence of these 200 observers that are a mixture of Canadians. We've managed to get people from all the provinces and two territories, who are a mixture of ages, a mixture of Ukrainian Canadians and others, and so on. We are showing the diversity of Canada—I think this is an important point—and we are showing our presence in Ukraine as a support to the Ukrainian democratization process. The elections have been evolving and we also have this presence such that we can say that we were here in 2004, in 2010, in 2012 and so on, so that there is some kind of continuity in what we observe and what we recommend to the Ukrainian government and state.

Otherwise, I think, yes, we have a reason to go to Ukraine, because Canada and Ukraine have a very strong relationship and we have a huge diaspora in Canada of Ukrainian Canadians, but we have other diasporas also. Some election processes in other countries would also warrant Canada's involvement and attention, let's say. We could start with countries from which we have diasporas in Canada. We have many Haitian Canadians, for example, and there are many examples all over Europe, Latin America and Africa where we can, let's say, use these people who are Canadians but who have different backgrounds to also inspire and guide us in these missions.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you.

You've actually taken this to the next point that I wanted to make, which is the fact that we can be doing this sort of work not just in nascent democracies but in sliding democracies. I referenced Ukraine as fighting the most important geopolitical front-line battle for Liberal democracy, but as Professor Way mentioned, there's a battle behind the lines in Europe itself that Putin in many ways is financing. We have a large Hungarian diaspora in Canada. There are elections coming up in 2022.

I have a quick question for you once again, Ms. Dugal, and then I'll flip over to Professor Way.

Do you think we could prepare a similar mission, perhaps different in scale but similar, for Hungary in 2022?

Ms. Zoe Dugal: Yes, I think that would be a great idea. I think the expertise within Canada is there to put such missions in place, both in terms of logistics and in terms of content and methodology. Of course, these missions always have to be accepted by the country where they are deployed. In the case of Ukraine, this has never been a problem. There are excellent relationships between Canada and Ukraine.

I cannot comment specifically on the Hungarian case. Of course, Hungary would first have to welcome international observers. If this were the case, then I think we would have the right resources to put this in place.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: I have been signalled that my time is up. Thank you for your answers.

The Chair: Thank you both for your testimony this morning. Thank you to all the witnesses on both of our panels.

Before we adjourn, I just want to let committee members know that the Arctic report was tabled yesterday. We then did the follow-up press conference, which I think went very well, and there have already been a number of articles and reports covering the report that seemed to be quite favourable.

I just want to thank members again, especially our analysts and our clerk for the logistics and the substance of the work they did on this report, a report that, I will remind everybody, was passed unanimously. Thank you to all.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.