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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.)): I'd like to call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 89 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders; therefore, members are attending in person in the room as well as virtually through Zoom.

I'd like to make a few comments for the benefit of members and witnesses.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name.

You may speak in the official language of your choice. Interpretation services are available.

Although this room is equipped with a powerful audio system, feedback events can occur. These can be extremely harmful to interpreters and cause serious injuries. The most common cause of sound feedback is an earpiece worn too close to a microphone.

With regard to a speaking list, the committee clerk and I will do our best to maintain a consolidated order of speaking for all members, whether they are participating virtually or in person.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Wednesday, November 8, 2023, the committee will resume its study of Canada's diplomatic capacity.

I'd now like to welcome our witnesses.

From the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, we have Mr. Balkan Devlen, who, of course, is well known to many of you. He is the director of the transatlantic program at the institute.

We also have two witnesses from the Société nationale de l'Acadie. We're grateful to have Mr. Martin Théberge, president, as well as Ms. Véronique Mallet, executive director.

Mr. Devlen and one of the witnesses from the Société nationale will each have five minutes for their opening remarks, after which we will go to members for questions.

If you see me holding this up, that means we'd like you to wrap it up within 10 to 20 seconds.

We will start off with Mr. Devlen.

The floor is yours.

Dr. Balkan Devlen (Director, Transatlantic Program, Macdonald-Laurier Institute, As an Individual): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to give evidence to the committee on the current state and future of Canada's diplomatic capacity in a turbulent world.

The geopolitical landscape has undeniably transformed in the past decade. The return of great power competition to the centre stage, particularly between the United States and the People's Republic of China; the rise of regional powers such as India and Turkey as more assertive actors in international politics; democratic backsliding across the world; the emergence of an authoritarian axis between China, Russia and Iran; and, of course, the return of major war to Europe with Russia's unprovoked and illegal war of conquest against Ukraine, just to name a few, are key developments we witnessed in the past decade or so.

Here is the unfortunate reality: It is likely to get worse in the coming years.

What can Canada do in such a world?

I'd like to offer the following observations today, in the time allocated to me.

National interest should be the lens through which Canadian foreign policy should be formulated and pursued. Thanks to our fortunate geography, Canada's national interest manifests itself mainly in two key directions in foreign policy and foreign affairs.

First, our relationship with the United States is of paramount importance to Canada's security and prosperity. In fact, it is existential. Maintaining and cultivating this special relationship, regardless of who is in power in Canada and the United States, must be the first priority. It cannot be taken for granted, and we cannot afford to be complacent and assume all will be well. Canada is and should remain a good friend and a reliable ally to the United States and be able to demonstrate this fact in words and deeds.

Second, as a trading nation, our prosperity heavily depends on a well-functioning, stable and open international order. Canada should do its part in defending and maintaining such an order. This in practice means working with our allies and partners in multilateral and minilateral settings, and contributing to their prosperity and security.

Doing so, however, requires bringing something tangible to the table, rather than just words, to enhance the security and prosperity of others. In Canada's case, let me suggest that our natural resources, from energy to agriculture to critical minerals, are our biggest advantage and leverage.

Canada is, in most cases, in the top five in terms of production, reserves or exporting what the world wants and needs. Our foreign policy priority should be having the necessary infrastructure, policies and capabilities to get those resources to world markets. This would reduce our allies' and partners' reliance on authoritarian or unstable regimes for their energy security and the critical minerals that are essential for energy transition, while helping to feed the world's most vulnerable. This is an area where Canada can make a difference in the world while increasing our prosperity.

I'd like to conclude by saying that interest-based foreign policy does not mean ignoring values. In fact, interests are downstream from values. Our fundamental national interest is the protection of Canada's security and prosperity. However, it is not limited only to physical security and material well-being. It is also about our ability to continue to enjoy and practise our way of life, including values and rights, such as the rule of law, human rights, democracy, free markets and freedom of expression, press and assembly. Defending them against threats, foreign and domestic, is in the Canadian national interest.

This means working with allies and partners in international fora with intention, and not blindly following the convention. We should identify the multilateral organizations that continue to advance our interests and double down on them. At the same time, we should have a hard look at which tables we do not need to be at and leave them when they no longer serve our purposes. It also means thinking creatively about international groupings, including minilateral arrangements of like-minded states centred around specific issues.

• (1110)

To quote from a recent piece I wrote with two co-authors:

Canada needs to pivot its approach. While there's pride in our traditional image of being a cooperative country, the reality is that trying to be everywhere often means being nowhere.

It goes on:

With limited resources, we must take a discerning stance on where to invest Canada's energies and make sure that the intended results are achieved.

Thank you very much for the opportunity, and I am looking forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Devlen.

We now go to the Société nationale de l'Acadie.

You have the floor for five minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Thériage (President, Société nationale de l'Acadie): Good afternoon. Thank you for inviting us to come and explain the position of the Société nationale de l'Acadie, the SNA.

The Société nationale de l'Acadie, is the dean of Canadian francophone organizations. Since 1881, it has been working to defend the interests of the Acadian people. We are a non-profit federation

of four francophone associations and four youth associations that represent the Atlantic provinces, and we also have some members in Quebec and around the world, wherever there are Acadians.

Our raison d'être is unique in Canada. The SNA represents a language community and works to promote and defend the rights and of a distinct people. Our presentation today is directly related to a brief we submitted in August 2022 under the official languages support programs. We provided the clerk with a copy so that you can consult it.

Throughout my presentation, I will be alluding to public diplomacy. Public diplomacy, in the sense of a "discrete power" is a form of diplomacy that complements government. It acts in a variety of areas like culture, mobility and exchanges, particularly in matters pertaining to youth, education, the arts and the economy.

These are the powerful words spoken by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora of the Republic of Kosovo at the Citizen Diplomacy Summit in 2022. This is how she described the basis of public diplomacy:

...citizens can play a vital role in promoting the objectives of our department... they can act as very powerful advocates to increase our acceptance into the digital world and to build our economy and connect us with the rest of the world...

Acadia's considerable experience in international diplomacy goes back as far as the 1960s. It was at a historic meeting with General de Gaulle, the president of the Republic at the time, that the SNA forged a special relationship with France. This relationship has grown steadily through a succession of governments, for over 60 years.

Two years ago, a large Acadian delegation was received at the Élysée Palace by French President Emmanuel Macron. It was the only Canadian delegation to have been received at the palace since 2017. On this occasion, in response to my invitation, President Macron agreed to come to Canada for the Congrès mondial acadien to be held in Nova Scotia in August, 2024.

Last October in Paris, I had the honour of signing the renewal of the agreement between France and Acadia with the secretary of state to the minister for Europe and foreign affairs, who is responsible for development, la Francophonie and international partners. That makes the SNA the only non-governmental entity in the world to sign a bilateral agreement with France.

Since 2001, the SNA has also had a bilateral accord with the Wallonia-Brussels International agency on our relations with Belgian francophones. We are convinced that these kinds of agreements can foster much closer ties between Canada and its closest allies and partners.

Since 2005, the SNA has been an international non-governmental agency, or INGO, of la Francophonie, and it has been contributing actively to the INGOs of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, the OIF. The SNA regularly attends the Francophonie summits as part of Canada's accompanying delegation, thereby strengthening Canada's leadership role at the OIF.

In 2021, the SNA was also recognized as a non-governmental organization in an official partnership with UNESCO. Atlantic Canada's Acadia also has a unique geopolitical status in Canada, only a few nautical miles away from the French archipelago of Saint Pierre-et-Miquelon, whose population shares some of Acadia's history and heritage. This specific status led the SNA to play an active role on the Regional Joint Cooperation Commission between Atlantic Canada and Saint Pierre-et-Miquelon, on which it plays a preponderant role.

The SNA also plays a leading role in relations with Louisiana's Cajun community in matters of culture, French education, and youth mobilization.

We set an example for everyone of a stateless people with a strong civil society that plays a leading role in community government, youth and identity building; it has also become particularly well equipped to share its experience and knowhow around the world.

The measures and tools we have developed to promote our culture and our artists, in addition to encouraging francophone immigration and youth mobility, are unequaled in Canada. And yet, Canada still doesn't have a public diplomacy strategy, and the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development still doesn't have any policies that would provide appropriate space for linguistic duality, which the Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada requested in a 2004 study on the disappearance of the public diplomacy program, the PDP.

We had been hoping to see our public diplomacy efforts given appropriate recognition in the new action plan for official languages, when the new Official Languages Act included the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, DFAIT, for the first time. We were bitterly disappointed.

• (1115)

In connection with public diplomacy's major contribution to the development of the Acadian people, we recommend that the government of Canada develop a public diplomacy strategy and recognize the distinctiveness of Acadia and the organization that speaks on its behalf, the Société nationale de l'Acadie, as the principal stakeholder for public diplomacy and the promotion of French abroad.

It's time for the federal government to recognize this work and to provide us with the means to do it.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Théberge.

[English]

We will now go to the members.

We'll start off with MP Hoback.

You have six minutes.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for being here in person. It sure makes it a lot easier than over Zoom.

I think I'll start with you, Mr. Devlen.

Do you think the skill sets at Global Affairs were the same in 2015 as what were required as of 2022? Do you think our roles at the embassies, serving abroad, should be functioning in the same manner, or have things changed?

Dr. Balkan Devlen: I would argue that, as the saying goes, personnel is policy. You need to have the proper set of skills, as well as resources given to those people to be able to pursue those goals and aims that the Government of Canada provides.

The world is not the same as it was in 2015. It has not been the same, at least for over a decade, but it is definitely not the same in the past eight to 10 years.

What we really need is to be able to provide, first and foremost, a clear direction from the Government of Canada to its diplomatic core and its associated employees, both here in Canada and abroad, to be able to target it, and that requires a clear overview of what needs to be done, what the skills are that need to be employed today, and whether the existing skills actually match the needs that Canada has today.

We cannot know without having a proper review of foreign policy.

Mr. Randy Hoback: If the policy's right, if they're properly instructed on what the policy should be, then they should have the skill sets within the embassy or within Global Affairs to execute that policy.

Is that fair to say?

• (1120)

Dr. Balkan Devlen: That is fair to say.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Do you think, as you're bringing new employees into Global Affairs, that the skill sets should be modernized and changed, reflecting today versus 20 years ago?

Dr. Balkan Devlen: Absolutely. We need to be paying attention. We need to be much more agile in terms of how we draw from this diverse population that we have in Canada, in terms of both linguistic and cultural abilities, but also technical skills.

We need to modernize the way Canadians can engage, contribute and serve their nation, without necessarily having to go through a 24-month process to bring people in. We need to be much more agile to provide for others to be able to contribute and get in.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I'm sorry, I have only six minutes. I don't mean to be rude.

Do you think it's fair, then, that we should have more Canadians taking education abroad and coming back into Global Affairs, instead of just feeding them through Canadian universities?

Dr. Balkan Devlen: I think it is important that more and more Canadians expand their horizons and have international experience. That, together with the existing multicultural nature of our nation, would enhance Canada's understanding of others, their interests and how those interests actually intersect with ours.

You cannot really do foreign policy from Ottawa; you need to be out there and understanding those issues.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I was down in the U.S. a couple of weeks ago, talking to a group of master's students from Canada, and they actually felt that unless they went to Ottawa U or Carleton, they would not get into Global Affairs, because they think differently.

Is that a standard opinion? Would you agree with that comment?

Dr. Balkan Devlen: I do not know enough about the specific requirements that Global Affairs has when it engages in personnel policy, but I would argue that we can have a sense by looking at where the people working for Global Affairs Canada did their university and graduate work. We can take a view on that from an empirical perspective.

Mr. Randy Hoback: How often do you think we should review the locations of missions, embassies and facilities like that? Is it something that should constantly be under review? Is it something that should be done on a five-year pattern, or are we good the way it is?

Dr. Balkan Devlen: I would suggest that it, again, follows through by clearly defining what our national interests are, where we need to focus our resources, and where we should have our embassies and presence to advance those interests.

As we plan them, we need to be regularly reviewing our ability to conduct foreign policy and advance our interests, and necessarily shift resources to pursue them, rather than being stuck in a place because we have been there for 25 years.

Mr. Randy Hoback: When the minister comes out and makes statements like the one she made a couple of weeks ago about being honest brokers and being very active, do you think we're spreading ourselves too thin? Do you think we're trying to do too much, and not having a bang on anything?

Dr. Balkan Devlen: I would say that we are spreading ourselves too thin, yes, especially today, with the rise of regional powers and others. This is not the world of the 1960s or 1970s. Honestly, no one is really looking towards Canada to be an honest broker. You need to be able to bring something to the table, to be able to have influence and to contribute meaningfully to the security and economic interests of other countries for them to listen to you. We cannot continue to lecture others and pretend that we are bringing something to the table.

Mr. Randy Hoback: If we don't have natural gas to sell, if we don't have petroleum products to sell, if we don't have critical minerals to sell.... What does Canada have for leverage right now, if we don't take advantage of the natural resources we have in place?

Dr. Balkan Devlen: That's why I suggested that we should use our biggest leverage, which is our natural resources. That would contribute not only to the prosperity and the security of our allies and partners, but also to Canadian prosperity. At the same time, it would elevate the world's most vulnerable, who are suffering.

Therefore, we need to really focus on what our strengths are and what our allies and partners are desperately asking of us. We need to listen to them and provide those resources to them.

The Chair: I'm afraid you're out of time, Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Six minutes is just never enough.

The Chair: We next go to Mr. Zuberi for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): I'd like to thank all the witnesses for being here.

I'll begin with Mr. Théberge.

Thank you for your testimony. You said that Acadians ought to have more of a presence in our diplomacy, which is something I find very interesting. It's a good idea.

Canada is an officially bilingual country. Our officials speak French and English.

How does official bilingualism and the bilingualism of our diplomats help us pursue our international commitments?

● (1125)

Mr. Martin Théberge: Let me begin by reminding you that the foreign affairs department, whose role includes the promotion of French and English abroad, is mentioned for the first time, to my knowledge, in the new Official Languages Act. Canada's bilingualism is therefore something we should turn to our advantage abroad.

I would also like to refer to a 2004 report prepared by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, following its study on the disappearance of the public diplomacy program, the PDP. I alluded to it in my opening address, but there are three quotes from this report I would like to highlight. I believe they would answer your question.

The first thing that it says is "Within DFAIT, the Public Diplomacy Program is widely seen as an important source of funding for projects relating to Canada's linguistic duality." Then it points out that: "The operation of the program is based on partnerships. It complements various federal programs that do not all have the same vision of duality. This raises the question of the integration of linguistic duality into federal government programs."

My view is that there's a lot of talk about linguistic duality in Canada, but very little outside of Canada. Civil society organizations should be given the space they need to play a role in this respect and be able to establish partnerships, as we at the Société nationale de l'Acadie have been doing, to support Canadian government measures.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thank you.

The use of French is growing around the world, particularly in Africa. How does our ability to express ourselves in French in our diplomatic and trade dealings influence our international relations and commitments?

Mr. Martin Th  berge: In much of what we do, we come up against the fact that foreigners believe that in Canada, French is only spoken in Quebec. They are often surprised to learn that French is also spoken elsewhere in Canada. I live in Halifax, Ms. Mallet lives in Moncton and we work hard internationally to familiarize people with Atlantic Canada. Acadia also extends to Quebec. People are rapidly becoming aware of the fact that French is not only spoken in Quebec. The more we talk about it, the more people become interested, and that opens the door to economic and other exchanges and collaborations. We also do a lot in terms of youth education and promotion.

It opens the door to many opportunities.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: With respect to Africa, do you have any specific ideas about how we could become more involved on that continent?

Mr. Martin Th  berge: We are exploring that. For example, a great deal of recruitment is being done for African international students in our educational institutions, whether at Universit   de Moncton or Universit   Sainte-Anne. Not only that, but the Soci  t   nationale de l'Acadie manages the Comit   atlantique sur l'immigration francophone, which promotes Atlantic Canada as a place to live in French or in English.

All kinds of things are being done, including youth and student mobility. We could do more if we had support to do so.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Devlen, I have 90 seconds remaining.

In your opening remarks, you said that Canada should be engaged with multilateral organizations. It's not that we aren't already, but you were indicating that we should consider other engagements or thickening other engagements. Do you want to elaborate on that in the next 60 seconds?

Dr. Balkan Devlen: Sure. Engaging in multilateral organizations for the sake of engaging in them is not necessarily in our interest. What the trends suggest in the past 10 to 15 years is an increasing number of minilateral arrangements, be it AUKUS or be it various trilateral forums that are emerging as the centre of gravity when it comes to international diplomacy.

Canada needs to focus on what part of minilateral settings—for example, our own quad that we mentioned, of South Korea, Japan, Canada and the United States when it comes to northeast Asia—we need to focus on, on where we need to engage, and whether that is better served in a traditional multilateral organization such as the UN or in smaller groupings of like-minded states. We need to take good stock of that.

• (1130)

The Chair: Thank you, MP Zuberi.

[Translation]

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. St  phane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would also like to thank the witnesses for being here today, to inform our deliberations on the modernization of Canadian diplomacy.

I am among those who think that a confident government devotes more resources to supporting parliamentary diplomacy, public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy. Indeed, these different forms of diplomacy strengthen traditional diplomacy. Conversely, an apprehensive government will tend to see parliamentary diplomacy, public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy as potential threats and will cut back on the resources allocated to them.

As I was listening to Mr. Th  berge, I was rather impressed by everything that the Soci  t   nationale de l'Acadie had been able to accomplish without any support from a public diplomacy program. Would the Soci  t   nationale de l'Acadie be able to do a lot more if it were to receive funding to support Canadian diplomacy? In other words, what would be the benefits for Canada if it were to invest in fields like public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy?

Ms. V  ronique Mallet (Executive Director, Soci  t   nationale de l'Acadie): Thank you for your question.

There are certainly benefits. I could discuss those of the past few years. Imagine what we could do if adequate funds had been invested!

As for what public diplomacy brings to Acadia, it spreads the benefits throughout the Atlantic provinces. Were it not for the international work that Acadia, and hence its mouthpiece, the SNA, Atlantic Canada's international efforts would mostly be limited to relations with New England.

Public diplomacy makes it possible for the entire region to maintain relations abroad, with countries it does not generally do business with. I'll give you an example.

Two years ago, President Macron asked us to put together an Acadian delegation to accompany Ms. Antonine Maillet to the l'  lys  e. We also invited Mr. Colton LeBlanc, the minister of Acadian affairs and la Francophonie for Nova Scotia. He was a young minister and part of a government that had been elected only two months earlier. It was in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, with borders about to be closed and travel limited. Mr. LeBlanc came with us, and when he returned the following week, he told his colleagues in cabinet what he had experienced. He told them that President Macron had promised to come to Nova Scotia, at the invitation of the delegation. This young minister had therefore opened the door to collaboration between France and Nova Scotia. We would never have expected that to happen.

Since then, the Premier of Nova Scotia has been to France on two occasions, to forge further ties and establish relations. Not only that, but the Premier of Nova Scotia has also been to France since then. So there have been benefits for government.

This has also had an impact on our work. One of our initiatives was the strategy to promote Acadian artists internationally, called SPAASI. We were able to demonstrate that every dollar invested in this program by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency generated five dollars for Acadian artists. Since the launch of SPAASI 25 years ago, benefits from abroad for Acadian artists have totalled \$200 million. That's nothing to sneeze at.

And the 1999 summit generated \$78 million in benefits for the region.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Are you talking about the Sommet de la Francophonie de Moncton?

Ms. Véronique Mallet: That's the one.

Francophone immigration to the region also increased by 77% between 1996 and 2011, and by 37% since 2011. That's significant.

As for the economic impact of international students, there was a major change in international student recruitment following the summit. In New Brunswick alone since 1999, the economic impact of international students has totalled \$310 million. The France-Acadia scholarships were created in 1969, following the signing of the first France-Acadia agreement. Thanks to the scholarships, 350 Acadians were able to study in France. Since the 1990s, the Acadia-France scholarships, funded by Acadia, have enabled French students to come and study in Acadia. A half-million dollar fund has made it possible for approximately 50 French scholarship recipients to come and study here.

Over the past 50 years, these scholarships have also generated Acadian leadership.

So there are major benefits, but our means are limited. One can only imagine how significant these might have been had we had the resources to introduce certain programs.

• (1135)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Thériault, you referred to some recommendations from the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, but I understand that none of these recommendations has been implemented.

Mr. Martin Thériault: It's true that not one of these recommendations was implemented. That was the purpose of our 2022 brief and it is why we are here to testify today. Everything Ms. Mallet has just explained makes me think of a Club Med advertisement: "Imagine having the means to get there!"

Then there's the example of our visit to the Élysée. President Macron made four promises. I mentioned one of them, his visit to the Acadian world congress to be held next August. He had also promised to establish an international French lycée in Acadia, in Saint John, New Brunswick. There was also the issue of keeping the consulate open, when its closing was repeatedly threatened. Lastly, there is Acadia's presence at the Cité internationale de la langue française.

Promises were made. There are a lot of promises, but we have very few resources. Imagine if we had some!

[English]

The Chair: We now go to Madam McPherson.

You have six minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you all very much for being here today.

I want to thank you for bringing up the fact that there are a lot of French speakers outside of Quebec. I represent the French quarter in Alberta, and about 20% of my riding is French. It's an important thing to note, but my questions today are for you, Mr. Devlen.

In an article in 2021, you spoke about the need to align our foreign policy with public opinion, and I've struggled with this for a very long time. I've thought about this in terms of our international development efforts, and one thing I wonder about is the fact that, first of all, in recent years—over the last 15 years or so—there have been massive cuts to public engagement and massive cuts to public education with regard to public opinion around global citizenship. The implications of that are that we're no longer talking about it in schools, in media and in universities the way we used to do. On the other hand, we're saying that we should align with public opinion when we have not invested in making sure that Canadians are engaged in public opinion.

Could you talk about the implications of that? Then, if this is the case, if we have a population whose public opinion has not been informed by some of these initiatives, should we be trying to align with that public opinion?

I'd love to hear your thoughts on that.

Dr. Balkan Devlen: Thank you very much, and I think that's a very, very important question, particularly given the fact that in a democracy we need to be able to have citizens' support when it comes to pursuing our national interest. That requires a well-informed citizenry that is informed about the importance of why and where Canada engages in the world, why we pursue particular foreign policies and how that advances the interests of everyday people.

That requires, as you pointed out, a sustained effort, particularly in a country as fortunate as Canada, which does not have to deal with the threats that many other countries in the world deal with. We are surrounded by three oceans and a very friendly superpower, and we have been, in the past 150 years, part of the group that shaped the international order, so our citizens are comfortable ignoring international politics.

Now, the fact that it is changing today—that we no longer have the luxury of assuming that bad things happen to other people in faraway places—should be a wake-up call, not only for the government but for civil society, media and others to engage regularly with everyday Canadians and explain to them and inform them, and there has to be a feedback mechanism. There has to be a back-and-forth to address their concerns and explain how pursuing our foreign policy interests is also about increasing their security and prosperity, and that requires investment. If we don't do that, we will lose the democratic legitimacy of pursuing what we are doing.

• (1140)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Also, I would say that our foreign policy right now picks and chooses when we need to align with public opinion.

For example, you will often hear the government say that it doesn't support increases to development assistance because there isn't public support for that, yet we see, for example, with the call for a ceasefire in Gaza between Israel and Hamas, a Mainstreet poll that says that 71% of Canadians do support a ceasefire, and the government chooses not to do that.

We pick and choose when we want to use public opinion as a legitimizing force for our foreign policy, which is obviously a very big problem.

We're also talking today about diplomacy, though, and Canada's diplomatic role, and I would say, too, that what we have here is a focus on trade, which I think is important. However, from my perspective, trade is a reward you get when you do the hard work of diplomacy, development and all these other foreign policy issues, which I don't think we've done.

Could you talk a little about that and perhaps about how some of the things that we see Canadian companies doing abroad are quite detrimental to our reputation? How might they harm our bigger foreign policy goals?

Dr. Balkan Devlen: Let me just address the first point about the democratic alignment as well, and then I'll talk about how we can actually engage in diplomacy in advancing our interests.

On the aligning component, it is also important to note that leadership does matter. No one is really expecting the public to lead in these particular issues. It is the job of the elected representatives in a represented democracy to be able to lead in this and engage. It is the job of the government and the elected representatives to make the case to the public that pursuing certain policies is in the national interest.

It is not about blindly following what the public and the public mood does. Foreign policy is in no country a public sport, in a way; it is always government elite-led. However, it is important that it is aligned with the broader interests of the public, and that requires constant interaction with the people, rather than assuming and picking and choosing places where we believe it is aligned.

On the diplomacy front, I agree that we need to do the legwork, but that also requires focused attention on what our strengths are, what we can bring to the table. We should avoid basically lecturing to other countries without offering something substantial in improv-

ing their security, improving their well-being or increasing their prosperity. Just talking to the people will not necessarily get us there, but we also need to listen to other countries, our allies and partners, not necessarily go there with our own perceptions of what is good for other countries. We need to listen to their needs—what they are hoping to get out of an engagement with Canada, and whether those desires and aspirations align with our interest. That's where I think the diplomacy component is key.

I would add one more point—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Devlen. I'm afraid you're way over time.

We will now go to the second round.

We start off with Mr. Aboultaif for three minutes.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Thank you.

Mr. Devlen, you said that geography is our best friend. Could it also be our worst enemy?

Dr. Balkan Devlen: In terms of thinking carefully about foreign policy and the need to put resources into it, it could be a curse as well.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: How can we leverage that good geography that we have? Are we doing so? Are we able to do so? If you can give some examples, it would be great.

Dr. Balkan Devlen: I think we could leverage our safe and secure position in a much more effective way in the world. Our geography, as I said, blessed us with a presence in two of the largest oceans—the Atlantic and the Pacific—as well as in the Arctic, which is increasingly becoming important in international politics. We are fortunate enough to have a neighbour that we have a very long and friendly relationship with. That means that apart from maintaining those two key areas that I mentioned—good relations with the United States and a stable, open international order that our prosperity depends on—everything else is, in a way, a luxury for Canada to engage in.

As a rich country, we are in a place where we can put resources into addressing questions where we can leverage our resources, geography and position to help solve the world's problems, because we have to deal with only two basic things, rather than 20 different things like other countries.

• (1145)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: We've put in as many resources as we can. Norway's put more into development than we have. They have not even one-fifth of the population of Canada. The role of Canada on the international stage is also part of the policy within our allies. Do you believe that we have lost any independence in our position on international issues over the last two decades?

Dr. Balkan Devlen: I would say it's not so much the loss of independence as an increasing irrelevance in the sense that, unless we address the needs and concerns of our allies and bring the capabilities and resources to the table, we're not going to be asked for our opinion. Our influence will decrease, and we will not necessarily be top of mind when allies come together to address common challenges.

It's not so much the loss of independence as the loss of influence, I would say.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Abouttaif.

We'll now go to MP Longfield.

Welcome to our committee. You have the floor for three minutes.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to spend my time with Mr. Devlen.

Your title of director of transatlantic programs stood out to me.

I've been a member of a discussion group among Germany, Canada and the United States on climate change and the opportunities it brings from a clean-technology point of view. I was president of the Guelph Chamber of Commerce. Our mayor was involved in this dialogue with Berlin and the United States. We met at our consulate office in our embassy in Berlin. To add to Mr. Bergeron's list, there's also environmental diplomacy and opportunities. Our embassy brought together some businesses and municipalities to look at how we're reacting to the opportunities that climate change brings. We were able to attract a business from Denmark. It's located in Guelph because of our diplomatic efforts at our embassy.

COP28 just wound up. There are a lot of opportunities coming out globally. Canada is in a leading role, in terms of clean technology.

Could you talk about how our diplomatic service needs to be able to respond to these new opportunities that climate change brings to Canada?

Dr. Balkan Devlen: Thank you very much. I think that's a very important point.

I was, together with some other colleagues, in Berlin in October. We had a chance to talk to some stakeholders there and to engage with our embassy. One of the key topics was how Canada can contribute to European energy security, including clean energy and technology.

What is very clear to me, from our European allies and friends, as well as from our Pacific allies and friends, is that there is a demand for Canadian energy—Canadian clean tech—to be part of it. Here, I include the nuclear part, too, which is an increasingly important part of the energy mix. It is being recognized by the world, by our European allies and others. We need to be able to provide it. We have the technology. We have the resources in northern Saskatchewan, for example. The same goes for other technologies.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: We have very limited time.

On clean tech, when I look at Germany and what they've done on district energy.... We are at the very early stages. They've pretty much tapped out some parts of their market.

Looking for international opportunities, if we took on district energy as a theme, would that be something we could develop?

Dr. Balkan Devlen: I'm not necessarily an expert in that particular technology, so I won't be able to comment on it.

What I can say is this: One amazing thing our German allies did was to move very fast when they needed to adapt. That included setting up an offshore LNG terminal within 18 months. Doing something like that here in Canada takes years.

I think we need to be much more agile in getting those resources out. Our allies show it can be done.

• (1150)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go to Mr. Bergeron.

You have a minute and a half.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: First of all, I'd like to point out to my colleague Mr. Longfield that public diplomacy can include environmental groups.

Mr. Théberge, my understanding is that the Canadian government decided to withhold \$3 million of its funding for the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie because of internal organizational issues.

Do you know how this money is being spent and whether the cutback is permanent?

Mr. Martin Théberge: Thank you for that excellent question.

Three million dollars were withheld from Canada's voluntary contribution to the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, the OIF, for the governments own reasons. It's known that a small portion of this amount, about \$100,000, was transferred to a number of partners. To our knowledge, the \$2.9 million still remains but has not been allocated. It's money that Canada has earmarked for diplomacy.

The money could be transferred on the basis of the "by, for and with" principle for Canada's communities and it could still be used for that purpose. I will return to what I was saying earlier: Just imagine what the Société nationale de l'Acadie could do in its diplomatic work if it had funds.

Is this withholding of funds from the OIF permanent? We don't know. We'd like it to be allocated in the future. It could return to the OIF, but it could also be given to public diplomacy organizations like the Société nationale de l'Acadie in recognition of the impact of their work on Canadian diplomacy.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Next, we'll go to MP McPherson. You have a minute and a half.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Devlen, very quickly, when I asked you questions earlier, you were talking a bit about coming to the table with something concrete. We know that developing our relationships with emerging economies is key.

Could you, in the very short time we have, talk a bit about the steps Canada should be taking to develop those relationships with emerging economies and the role that those three pillars of diplomacy, trade and development play?

Dr. Balkan Devlen: We need to be paying attention to where we can leverage our resources, as I pointed out—where we can leverage our strengths. Engaging with the emerging economies that will be hungry for energy, minerals and other resources is an important step. That needs to go beyond just government engagement. We need to be able to talk to private sector and civil society organizations as well as the government in those countries.

We need to leverage our own capabilities, including civil society organizations and our multicultural ability to engage. Quebec and its experience could actually help quite a lot with the federal government when it comes to engaging in French Africa, for example. It is going to be the most populous continent in the world.

Our engagement with Africa is very limited, despite the fact that we are a member of both the Commonwealth and la Francophonie, the OIF. It is a resource with which we need to engage a lot more. We need to do it in a multi-formatted way, not only government to government but also including the private sector and civil society.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next, we have Mr. Chong. You have three minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Devlen, for appearing.

You recently co-wrote an article indicating that the UN has shown itself to be irrelevant on things that matter. You wrote that in our current era, multilateralism has been overtaken by unilateral agreements between like-minded states, arrangements such as the quadrilateral security dialogue and AUKUS.

Global Affairs Canada, in its discussion paper, “Future of Diplomacy”, recommends strengthening Canada's presence at the UN.

Do you agree with that recommendation? Why or why not?

Dr. Balkan Devlen: Canada's resources can be better put to use in specific unilateral arrangements, rather than doubling down on the UN system. The UN, as we have witnessed in the past 10-15 years, is increasingly deadlocked and increasingly irrelevant in terms of solving the global problems that we have. It doesn't mean completely withdrawing or not providing resources to the United Nations. It is about identifying where we can actually make a difference and whether our services, our strengths and our interests are better served in a unilateral setting instead of getting bogged down in the UN.

• (1155)

Hon. Michael Chong: You also recommended that Canada focus its efforts internationally by withdrawing its membership in

certain global institutions, such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Would you also extend that to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank?

Dr. Balkan Devlen: Absolutely. We actually make the case in the piece that we should not be part of China's international development bank, which is used for communist parties.

Hon. Michael Chong: Why do you think we should withdraw from the EBRD?

Dr. Balkan Devlen: The primary function of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is to engage in development aid that is right now mostly at an advanced level in developing countries. Our resources can very well be pointed out to other places, such as Africa, for example. We should engage in both digital and physical infrastructure development there, rather than continuing to fund what was initially formulated as a post-war European reconstruction organization.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you.

I have no further questions, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Chong.

We'll now go for the final question to MP Oliphant.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Good day, everyone.

Thank you, Mr. Thériège and Ms. Mallet.

Civil society definitely has to make its contribution. I also agree with Mr. Bergeron about the other forms of diplomacy, such as public diplomacy, parliamentary diplomacy and cultural diplomacy.

Is it only a matter of grants and money, or should a structure be recommended for global affairs?

Mr. Martin Thériège: I would mention two things. The study is about Canada's diplomatic capacities. As you said, public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy can provide enormous support to government diplomacy.

For us, the strategy to promote Acadian artists internationally, called SPAASI, promoted artists and their works abroad. It's a very good example of leverage.

I would also point to the France-Acadia agreement, which was renewed last October. The agreement had three main thrusts, the promotion of Acadian and French culture and language, the socio-economic component, and the youth mobility component. Under the agreement, an action plan would be developed over a ten-year period. This would enable us to come up with measures that could be assessed with a view to identifying the impacts of the action plan.

If the Government of Canada were to agree to develop a diplomatic strategy that included civic diplomacy, public diplomacy, and cultural diplomacy, and to give us the means to develop this action plan on a firm basis as a way of supporting and complementing the Canadian government's measures, it would be a win-win situation for everyone, and not just Acadia.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Does your association, and others, have a role to play in protecting minority languages? I'm not just talking about the French language and Acadian culture, but minority languages around the world.

Ms. Véronique Mallet: That's an excellent question.

Your colleague spoke to us earlier about Canada's duality and the manner in which it is promoted abroad. One of Canada's strengths on the international stage is its ability to maintain this linguistic duality. Acadia is an excellent example of a civil society that has succeeded, against all odds, to exist and flourish.

We could share our organizational approach for civil society in a calm dialogue with the government. We have some very good ideas to offer the world.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

At this point, on behalf of the entire committee, I would like to thank all three of our witnesses: Mr. Devlen, Mr. Théberge and Madame Mallet. We're very grateful for your time and for your perspectives as well.

I will suspend very briefly, for a couple of minutes. I see that the witnesses for our next panel are actually in the room, so it shouldn't take more than two minutes.

• (1155) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1200)

The Chair: Welcome back, everyone.

I would now like to welcome our second panel of witnesses. We're grateful to have with us today Mr. Charles Burton, senior fellow, Macdonald-Laurier Institute, and Mr. Ardi Imseis, assistant professor, faculty of law, Queen's University. From the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, we're very fortunate to have with us today Mr. Colin Robertson.

Welcome. As you are aware, given that you have been here for the past hour, you will each be provided with five minutes for your opening remarks, after which we will open it to questions from the members.

We will start off with Mr. Burton.

Mr. Burton, you have five minutes for your opening remarks.

• (1205)

Dr. Charles Burton (Senior Fellow, Macdonald-Laurier Institute, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

China's relations with the west, particularly China's strategies of hybrid warfare and the Chinese Communist Party's influence operations in western nations, are my area of expertise.

I was educated in China, subsequently worked with the Communications Security Establishment and had two diplomatic postings to Canada's embassy in Beijing earlier on in my career.

What Canada is facing today is an increasingly corrosive challenge from China's Communist Party-state-military-civilian-market People's Republic of China regime complex. China's strategic intent in Canada is severely at odds with our interests and values.

However, Global Affairs Canada's response to China's comprehensive and coordinated malign challenge to our democratic institutions has been, to be frank about it, pathetically weak and highly ineffective.

Indeed, the Senate's "Rising to the Challenge: Empowering Canada's foreign service" report, which just came out, says that foreign language capacity at Global Affairs Canada has diminished in recent decades, with an insufficient number of staff who can speak Mandarin, Russian and Arabic.

If you then look at the Global Affairs June 2023 "Future of Diplomacy: Transforming Global Affairs Canada" discussion paper, it says, along similar lines:

foreign service officers with in-depth expertise in specific geographies and issue areas...have increasingly felt disadvantaged over time, including in promotional processes, where emphasis has been placed on management competencies, rather than geographic, linguistic or issue-area expertise.

In response, the report says:

The department is coordinating an investment of \$35 million over 5 years to build China-focused analytical capacity across its global mission network.

In my view, this is much too little, much too late. Anyway, this is belied by the report in the National Post last week on how last August, as a cost-cutting measure, Global Affairs was suspending all foreign-language programs offered at missions until March 31, 2024.

Furthermore, GAC's adopting of a country-agnostic diplomatic approach to China does not take into account that our Canadian institutions are not compatible and have no genuine counterparts with those of China's Leninist system.

What I mean to say is that the most important role of the Chinese ambassador in Ottawa is to be head of the embassy's Chinese Communist Party committee. The ambassador oversees a massive network outside of legitimate embassy and consulate premises, including the police stations and proxy organizations that enable interference in our elections and other democratic processes and which direct Chinese businesses in Canada to engage in a wide range of grey-zone and espionage activities to transfer sensitive technologies to the Beijing regime.

The resultant paucity of in-depth China-specific expertise within Global Affairs Canada means that our diplomats are readily flim-flammed by sophisticated Chinese regime interlocutors and Canadian special interests that are beholden to the Chinese regime interests.

Another issue I feel I should raise is the tendency of foreign service officers retiring from the public service to undertake roles effectively enabling the PRC agenda in Canada. What I mean is that they go into lucrative positions in agencies such as the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada or the Canada China Business Council or law firms and other enterprises with close relationships with business networks of the Chinese regime.

Such post-government sinecures are not available to civil servants who, while in positions of public trust, were identified by the Chinese Embassy as having been proactive in seeking to defend Canada's security against the malign activities of the Chinese regime. We are more and more aware that the Chinese authorities maintain a lot of lists and files on all of us, facilitated by AI. This reality has a dampening effect on the rigour with which GAC seeks to defend Canada's security and sovereignty against China's very serious challenge to us.

• (1210)

We talk a lot about China, but we do little. The upshot is that, sadly, thanks to our Canadian naivety, greed and passivity, time and time again, China comes up on top to the damage of Canadian national interests of security and sovereignty.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Burton.

We go next to Professor Imseis.

You have five minutes, sir.

Dr. Ardi Imseis (Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, Queen's University, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In brief, I have three simple points.

First, Canada's declared commitment to the rules-based international legal order is crucial to maintaining its moral standing in the world. Upholding international law as the only normative yardstick on the international plane is essential if Canada's future diplomacy initiative is to succeed.

Second, for Canada's declared commitment to international law to result in concrete diplomatic and reputational gains on the international plane, it must both be and be seen by others to be credible. Credibility is everything, and in a world where geopolitical tumult is on the rise, it is in Canada's national interest to cultivate and protect its credibility.

Third, by all objective accounts, unfortunately, Canada has failed to maintain its credibility when it comes to upholding international law in practice. This is evidenced by very clear double standards applied by Canada, which derive from an apparent prioritization of political preferences and alliances over the universal application of norms and the rule of law.

To illustrate, let us consider Canada's position on two of the most high-profile conflicts raging today: occupied Ukraine and occupied Palestine.

In Ukraine, Canada has appropriately and consistently affirmed its opposition to Russia's aggression, annexation and occupation. Canada's position is rooted in two key principles of international law: first, the prohibition on territorial conquest, and second, the obligation to respect the right of peoples to self-determination. Because these norms are peremptory in nature, derogation from them is not permitted in international law. As such, all states, including Canada, have an obligation neither to recognize their violation nor to do anything to aid or assist them.

In Palestine, while Canada's official position remains that Israel is an occupying power there and that Israeli settlements are unlawful, the government has pursued a policy that aids and assists in the maintenance of this violation. It does this by allowing for the duty-free import of Israeli settlement products under the Canada-Israel free trade agreement. Under CIFTA, Israeli territory is defined in a manner that includes the occupied Palestinian territory, thereby violating the prohibition on territorial conquest and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. The Attorney General of Canada now takes the position that it is reasonable to label Israeli settlement products as "products of Israel" when they are imported into Canada, even though these products are actually produced in occupied Palestine.

On its face, CIFTA is an unlawful treaty under international law for being in violation of the two peremptory norms that I earlier noted. In addition, the terms of CIFTA do not comport with Canada's obligations under Security Council Resolution 2334 "to distinguish, in [its] relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967".

Canada is also clearly in breach of its obligation to respect, and to ensure respect of, the terms of the fourth Geneva Convention, as well as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in this respect, which identify settlements as war crimes. These conventions have been incorporated into the domestic legislation of Canada, as you all know.

Given the unprecedented situation in Palestine now, I must raise two further points about Canada's position that do clear harm to its reputation globally.

The first is Canada's position that despite the crisis of impunity that prevails in the Middle East, Palestine should not be allowed to seek redress at the International Criminal Court or the International Court of Justice. These mechanisms are central in upholding the rules-based international legal order, given they encourage states to resolve disputes pacifically rather than through the use of force. If anything is apparent from the current events, we need more, not less law. We need more pacific dispute resolution, not less of it. Why, then, would Canada actively take measures to oppose Palestine's recourse to justice through these mechanisms?

Relatedly, some two months into the most recent hostilities, which have resulted in the killing of over 18,000 Palestinians—two-thirds of whom are women and children—1,200 Israelis and the injury of 50,000 Palestinians and 5,000 Israelis, it is inexplicable that Canada refuses to join the majority of states in calling for a general ceasefire. With every day that passes, hundreds more are killed and millions remain subjected to starvation as a tool of war. Gaza is being razed through wholesale indiscriminate Israeli bombardment, and the spectre of permanent forcible transfer of all 2.3 million Gazans out of Gaza looms large. Surely, if peace is to prevail, an immediate cessation of hostilities is the least Canada could and should be calling for.

• (1215)

Thank you for your time. I'll conclude there. I'm happy to take questions in the Q and A.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Imseis.

We now go to Mr. Robertson.

Mr. Robertson, you have five minutes.

Mr. Colin Robertson (Fellow, Canadian Global Affairs Institute): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My observations on diplomatic capacity are based on 33 years in Canada's foreign service and 15 years with the Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

We need diplomatic capacity to advance our objectives internationally. This is hard in a world that is messier, meaner and multi-centred. It is even harder when the political divide of our times is open versus closed, with no consensus on shared norms or rules, especially when it comes to human rights. It is further complicated with social media spewing disinformation and misinformation aimed at destabilizing and dividing democracies.

Diplomatic capacity relies on both hard and soft power. This means a robust foreign service to serve individual Canadians and Canadian interests. This also means a muscular armed forces to ensure deterrence and collective security, as well as well-funded development assistance to deal with global inequities and support fellow democracies.

We are no longer the helpful fixer we once were. We can play that role, but to do so, we must strengthen our diplomatic capacity.

As a first step, I encourage you to endorse and fund the recommendations in the recent Senate report, "More than a Vocation: Canada's Need for a 21st Century Foreign Service".

My second observation is that the United States will always be our preponderant relationship, our partner in trade, our ally in defence and security and our co-steward in managing our shared environment. We can't change geography, nor would we want to.

We think we know all about the United States. We don't. I encourage parliamentarians to travel to the U.S. and cultivate members of Congress, whether through local, regional or policy interests. These relationships pay big dividends, especially as the U.S. tires of overseas entanglements and becomes more insular, if not isolationist.

As to managing Uncle Sam, remember three things.

First, our influence abroad hinges on our perceived access in Washington and our understanding of Americans. For its part, the United States is always interested in our intelligence and the constructive ideas that we can bring to the table. Again, this requires an active and agile global diplomacy, including being in places the United States is not, such as Pyongyang, Tehran and Havana.

Second, as Brian Mulroney put it, we can disagree without being disagreeable. Americans can take criticisms. What they cannot stand is dithering or obfuscation.

Finally, avoid preachiness. Heed Lester Pearson's advice that "as American difficulties increase, we should resist any temptation to become smug and superior", and, "Our own experience, as we wrestle with our own problems, gives us no ground for any such conviction."

My third observation is that we balance our bilateral U.S. relationship with an active multilateralism aimed at creating norms and rules. We need to re-embrace functionalism, meaning that if you have interests and competence, you earn and deserve a seat at the table. Functionalism is how small and medium powers level the playing field against big powers, who would return us to a system based on spheres of influence, where big dictates to small.

In conclusion, more than most nations, Canadians' sense of self-identity is realized by how we act and are seen to act abroad. More than most, Canada's prosperity depends on our ability to trade and invest abroad and to attract talented newcomers. This means strengthening our diplomatic capacity with a similar commitment to strengthening our armed forces and diplomatic assistance.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Robertson.

Now we open it up to questions from the members, and we go first to Mr. Epp.

You have five minutes, sir.

• (1220)

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses. Technology is wonderful. In person is far better.

Let me begin with you, Mr. Burton. You have been critical of Canada's depletion of our hard power. Many call for Canada's role in the world to contain soft power. Can we have soft power without hard power?

Dr. Charles Burton: No.

Mr. Dave Epp: Mr. Robertson.

Mr. Colin Robertson: No. Years ago, Mr. Pearson's son, Jeff Pearson, was a Canadian diplomat and became our ambassador to the UN and in Moscow. We were having lunch, and we were talking about all the things we were doing.

Pearson turned to me and said that what the government of the time had forgotten was that you can't do soft power without hard power. Something his father fundamentally understood was that we were so successful in that post-war period—the so-called “golden era”—in large part because we had hard power to back up that soft power. That was something that Pearson and the diplomats of that era understood. I think both governments of that era also understood.

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you.

I'll go back to Mr. Burton.

Canada was not included in the 2021 “three eyes” agreement to counter Chinese influence.

Why?

Dr. Charles Burton: I was in Washington three weeks ago, and we talked about this.

Frankly, particularly under our current Prime Minister, I think there's a feeling that Canada is not deserving of being part of these important multilateral, or what we call “minilateral”, institutions. We just don't bring enough to the table. Our Prime Minister's statement that we would never meet the 2% went down like a stone into a still pond.

There's a lot of rhetoric, but just not enough coming forward with what needs to be there to be considered a responsible stakeholder in these institutions.

That's not to speak of issues of leakiness in terms of our maintaining confidential documents that are shared among the Five Eyes.

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you.

You mentioned that Canada doesn't bring enough to the table. A witness in the first round, Mr. Balkan Devlen, basically testified that Canada's priorities for our foreign service should be around, obviously, our U.S. relationship, our trading relationship and what Canada brings to the table.

Do you agree with that statement from a prioritization perspective?

I'll go to Mr. Burton to start.

Dr. Charles Burton: I think certainly we shouldn't work at odds to the United States. There's no question that they are our main partner and we need to continue to rely on the U.S.

I don't agree that we should be entirely oriented toward trade. I think we have to pay much more attention to the security threat from Russia and China, particularly in our north, and the security threat that seeks to undermine us everywhere.

When I learned that the Chinese were trying to go after Mr. Chong's family to pressure Mr. Chong, I thought that there's a serious problem here that we should be addressing much more rigorously.

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you.

Mr. Robertson, you testified at the Senate study on a similar basis. Given that study and those 29 recommendations, what are we doing here?

What can we add around this table, specifically, that the Senate didn't cover?

Mr. Colin Robertson: I think that's a pretty comprehensive report, so I would encourage you to look at the recommendations, pick out the ones you think are the most salient, and support them.

It all comes down to money in the end, and, in some cases, probably a redeployment of resources.

One comment made in the Senate report is that foreign affairs is top-heavy; it's too home-based and not “foreign” enough, as they put it. I certainly concur with that.

Support that. I believe that the minister and the deputy minister would like to go down that way, but I think encouragement from this committee would help.

I think we need more people. We need more foreign service and fewer bean-counters. That's ultimately what we need.

There are situations: We talk about Gaza and we talk about Ukraine. We simply don't have the capacity to meet this anymore. Our armed forces are in a similar position, but it's our foreign service in particular. Remember, the foreign service is roughly the same size as it was when I joined almost 50 years ago, yet Canada is a third bigger. If we want to play, we have to pay for these things.

Again, I underline that it's all part of a whole—

Mr. Dave Epp: If I can, I want to get in one more question for you. It's along the same vein. It's exactly where I wanted to go.

Given resource constraints, where would you prioritize it? You were critical of cutting the language studies instead of chopping the top-heavy part.

Where would you prioritize, and what could we do less of?

Mr. Colin Robertson: Language is really important. We have made the case. You have to be able to understand and empathize with the cultures. Cutting back language is completely short-sighted, especially in a country like our own, where we have people who can probably do....

This means a whole new look at how, bluntly, we do the human resources within foreign affairs. It's probably a reallocation of where we put the resources. Again, less home-based and more foreign is what you want a foreign service for.

I spent half of my career abroad. People today spend maybe 10% of their career abroad. That's not a very effective foreign service.

• (1225)

The Chair: Thank you.

We next go to MP Alghabra.

You have five minutes.

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I regret not being there with all of you, but I'm grateful for the opportunity to ask our witnesses questions.

We often talk about foreign policy being shaped by promoting our values and defending our interests. There's another factor that is understood but rarely spoken about publicly, which is politics. In a democracy, there is a role for citizens and civil society to participate in shaping our policies, but it's not [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

I guess my question is, if we are to offer, as a committee, recommendations to government on how to promote the participation of civil society and of citizens in shaping policy, yet protect against the cynical perspective that policies can be bought and sold, what would you offer to us that we could study or recommend as a committee to the government?

Maybe I will start with Professor Imseis.

Dr. Ardi Imseis: I think it's doing exactly what you're doing here. Meet with people who are in the know, collect information and make sure there are value bases, as well, that the government operates under.

We are told, for instance, that we share values with various countries in the world with whom we share tight, strong relations, yet those countries are engaged in violations of the most basic principles of international law we claim also to have fidelity towards, so clearly our values aren't worth that much when we consider other competing factors.

It's important for our civil service, regardless of who's in power, to work towards ensuring that values are kept tight, strong and in line with the broader, more progressive middle-power politics. That is what Canada's footprint should be on the international plane.

Thank you.

Hon. Omar Alghabra: Mr. Robertson.

Mr. Colin Robertson: Well, one of the things I know this committee has been debating is, do you do a foreign policy review?

What I'd like to see is what we did in the nineties when we had a joint parliamentary committee of the Senate and the House that toured the country looking at our broad foreign relationships, which included defence and development as well.

I think parliamentarians are the best placed to listen to Canadians. You represent Canadians. In crossing the country, you'll get that wide perspective of views.

They came out with a report in about six months. That's much more effective than throwing it to Global Affairs, where doing these things is like a visit from the Dementors. It takes years and years before we get anything out. Look at our Indo-Pacific strategy, which took five or six years, and we're still wrestling with an Arctic framework.

I would say to you as parliamentarians that if you say, "Let's do this," and you can do it in six months, I think that would make a lot of sense, and you would come out with the bare bones: "Here's what Canadian interests are and here's how our values support our interests, but here's what we as parliamentarians think you should focus on."

I find that sometimes it's impossible within Global Affairs or some of the departments to be able to agree on anything about where our priorities should be. That's the role of government, and I think that takes us back to parliamentarians and your role to get out, listen, report and list those priorities.

Hon. Omar Alghabra: I have one last question.

Professor Imseis, you referred to this—values—but we also talked about interests. What happens when there's a tension between values and interests? We know that sometimes that happens with, for example, our biggest trading partner, the United States. How do we resolve these tensions or these questions when they surface?

Dr. Ardi Imseis: In my respectful view, one example of where there was a negative for us was that in what I think was about 10 years, we twice tried to get a seat on the Security Council of the United Nations and twice lost out to much smaller countries, relatively speaking: to Ireland, I think, and to Norway, if my recollection serves, both of whom have a much broader and larger footprint on the international plane, both of whom have much deeper ties to the global south and both of whom basically have their ears on the ground based on values of what the world community actually expects in the 21st century.

We've failed to meet the challenge not once but twice, and it was because we dropped the ball on our values and didn't adhere to them.

• (1230)

The Chair: Thank you.

You have 10 seconds remaining, MP Alghabra.

Hon. Omar Alghabra: Maybe Mr. Robertson can follow up on that.

Mr. Colin Robertson: I think your values inform your interests, and I think sometimes we make a false dichotomy between the two, so I don't get.... I think that becomes a circular argument. Ultimately, your values should inform your interests.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now go to Mr. Bergeron.

You have five minutes, sir.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Robertson, you were present during the discussion we had a few moments ago, with the representatives of the Société nationale de l'Acadie.

In an article published in *Policy* magazine in May 2022, you wrote that the government should fully implement the recommendations of the Senate report entitled "Cultural Diplomacy at the Front Stage of Canada's Foreign Policy", and particularly the recommendation pertaining to the establishment of a global cultural diplomacy strategy that would be provided with resources and then assessed afterwards.

Can you tell us more about that?

[English]

Mr. Colin Robertson: Well, I think that Senate report was excellent. Throughout my career, cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, was a big piece of what we did.

It needs to be funded properly, though. As we heard again in this committee, the funding for these programs has been eviscerated and they don't take place, yet they are hugely valuable.

I was posted in Los Angeles. We did a major campaign to try to win the Oscar for one of our great films that came out of Quebec—Denys Arcand's film. We were successful by working closely with the Quebec office there, and with the Canadian performers.

This raised our profile, because it then allowed me to go in and talk about other things, like the meat and potatoes trade and investment. If we're excellent in culture, then they think that this country has something. This country does have superb culture.

I endorse that Senate report, but unfortunately it's fallen by the wayside. I hope that doesn't happen to the other Senate report, which has just come out.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: You mentioned relations with the Quebec delegation in Los Angeles.

In that same article, you said that there had to be an emphasis on partnerships with provincial representatives, and particularly those in Quebec, which has a highly developed system of offices abroad.

Can you tell us more about this other recommendation?

Mr. Colin Robertson: Of course.

I spent most of my career overseas, and on every one of my postings, there was a Quebec delegation. I found that we could work very well together. That was the best way of doing things, because

the Quebec delegation could do things that I could not. Together, we were a powerhouse. We worked well together in every area, whether trade or the environment. Frankly, it goes much more smoothly overseas than in Ottawa, because at the end of the day, we all have the same goals and targets.

As I have said on many occasions, collaboration among the Quebec delegations and the ones from other provinces, not to mention the federal government's, is very important because it opens doors to promote our industries, our interests, and our values.

Together, we are a powerhouse.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: It could also be done with a number of civil society representatives, like the Société nationale de l'Acadie, as was mentioned earlier.

To conclude, Mr. Robertson, in that same article, you further pointed out that there had to be fewer partisan appointments.

Do you think that partisan appointments in the foreign service are an growing trend and that they undermine not only the foreign service's credibility, but also perhaps the enthusiasm and motivation of those who work in Canada?

• (1235)

Mr. Colin Robertson: Yes.

At the beginning, I found that everyone worked together to promote Canada's national interests. Over time, I found that politics got in the way every now and then, which is only natural, because that's the way things are. However, I would like to point out that it's very important for you, the parliamentarians, and your committee, to also work together.

If all parliamentarians supported plans to improve our foreign service, it would help us enormously. The government needs to hear that.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Nevertheless, do you feel that there are more and more partisan appointments?

[English]

The Chair: I'm afraid you're out of time, sir.

Madam McPherson, you have five minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all three of you for your testimony today. It's been very enlightening.

Mr. Imseis, I'm going to ask you a few questions.

You spoke about credibility being everything. You spoke about Canadian values and how our foreign policy needs to be grounded in those values. I wonder if you could speak to the case of Yemen, the Saudi-led coalition and Canada's approach to this conflict.

Over the course of the war, Canada issued many statements condemning the Houthis but neglected to ever name the Saudi coalition, despite many reports of bombings of schools, hospitals and markets.

Canada has, of course, exported weapons to the coalition during this conflict. What are your concerns about that?

Dr. Ardi Imseis: As members of the committee know, I had the great pleasure of being named by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the UN commission of inquiry on Yemen. I served in that capacity for two years, between 2019 and 2021, and had a front row seat to Canada's position. I was very pleased to see—and this is to the credit of Canada's mission in Geneva in particular—the great support that was provided to our work at the commission of inquiry by the Canadians in Geneva. As a matter of principle, they were there fighting for our mission, fighting for the renewal of our mandate, tooth and nail, with other like-minded states. That, to me, demonstrated that our foreign policy was moving in the right way, at least in terms of our values concerning accountability.

On the other hand, and this is the counter intuitive bit to it, this was the same Canadian government that was supplying arms to the Saudi-led coalition, and on which we at the commission of inquiry were reporting on an annual basis. This was a matter of public record, so we felt compelled to speak to it. Canada certainly isn't the largest arms supplier to the parties to the conflict in Yemen—that is to say, to the Saudi-led coalition—but it is among the largest, so there is an incongruity. On the one hand, Canada seeks accountability through the United Nations commission of inquiry, on which I served, and for good reason. On the other hand, it's focused on supplying arms to one of the parties of the conflict that we had found in our reports and in our investigations and that we had reasonable grounds to believe was indiscriminately bombarding the civilian population across the country.

It's that example that highlights my concern about congruity between what Canada says it believes in on the one hand and what, in fact, it does on the other. My heart goes out to and great credit goes out to the people in our Geneva mission. It can't be easy to be a diplomat and explain this to the world when you're confronted by it. As an independent academic, as a member of the commission of inquiry and as a proud Canadian, I know there was no way I could, in good conscience, do this work otherwise. The credibility of the work of the commission of inquiry would otherwise be called into question if I didn't speak to Canada's arms trade. This is a problem.

Ms. Heather McPherson: For me, one of the big issues is that the rest of the world watches the way Canada picks and chooses how it applies international law, how it supports the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice. That is hugely problematic. As you mentioned, there are the Security Council seats that we've lost. There are many emerging economies that... The global south is looking at the decisions that Canada makes, and it doesn't see us as a legitimate, ethical actor anymore. We are losing that reputational benefit that Canada, as a country, has had.

You spoke a lot about what's happening, the horrific atrocities that we're seeing in Gaza right now. I want you to speak a bit about the issue of recognition of the state of Palestine. Should we, as a committee, be pushing the Canadian government to recognize the

state of Palestine? Would that help in moving the political and justice processes forward?

• (1240)

Dr. Ardi Imseis: The short answer is yes. I have no doubt about that for the following reason.

The Canadian government claims that it supports the two-state solution. One of those states is recognized by Canada and has long been, since 1949. We actually had a role to play in the partition of Palestine. You all know the role of Justice Ivan Rand, who served on UNSCOP.

At the same time, one other party that is under foreign military occupation, now going on 56 years, is a state juridically at international law, recognized by 139 member states of the United Nations. Canada is an outlier. There is no rhyme or reason that it wouldn't extend recognition to the territory of Palestine, being an occupied territory, for the following reason: Israel, as an occupying power, is not sovereign and cannot be sovereign in that territory. Whyever would we not extend recognition to it in the hope that we could engage two states, with responsibilities and obligations on both states under international law, and push them towards peace?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

We next go to Mr. Chong.

Mr. Chong, you have three minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I read the Senate report last week, and one of the recommendations that really surprised me the most was recommendation 8: "The Government of Canada should ensure that Global Affairs Canada's senior officials, including deputy ministers, have in-depth knowledge of and experience in international affairs." I was surprised that this recommendation even needed to be made in the Senate report.

However, I want to focus on what the purpose of this hearing is all about, and that's the machinery of government and how GAC manages our diplomacy. My first question is on how two of the recommendations concern reaffirming the central agency status of Global Affairs Canada and seeking separate agency status for Global Affairs Canada. I wonder if Mr. Burton and Mr. Robertson could comment on that.

Dr. Charles Burton: I would certainly like to see Global Affairs Canada more removed from the politics of the day. If these provisions would allow for that, it's a good idea.

Ultimately what we need are more resources and more effective deployment of resources.

Hon. Michael Chong: Do we need more resources, or do we need to reallocate resources? Two of the recommendations in the Senate report concerned shifting resources around. The first was to reduce the number of senior managers—ADMs, DMs and directors general—in the department to reallocate those savings elsewhere. The second was to push down decision-making to mid-level bureaucrats and away from the bottlenecks that are currently in place because of the concentration of decision-making in senior management.

Dr. Charles Burton: I definitely strongly support that, in the sense that we have to make the most of what resources we have. I've written a bit about this. I think that we should be more focused on the north in a serious way and not in a rhetorical way. Other areas will have to be set aside. We can't be everywhere all the time.

I absolutely agree with you in terms of reducing the numbers of higher-level bureaucrats. Everybody in foreign affairs wants to become a director general or an ambassador, and I think that, over years, the increase in the higher ranks has been responding to those career aspirations. It doesn't serve Canada's interest.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Robertson, could you comment on that?

Mr. Colin Robertson: I'll just say that the report is excellent, in large part because the driving forces behind it, as you know, are the chair and the vice-chair, both of whom are former deputies at foreign affairs. They've put their century of experience together into that report.

That's why this report is so important. You get a subtlety in the recommendations that comes only from that long experience of having sat in the chair and confronted all the problems.

Hon. Michael Chong: I have a very quick question.

The report recommends that GAC replace public service entrance—

• (1245)

The Chair: I'm afraid you're out of time, Mr. Chong. It's been well over three minutes.

Mr. Oliphant, go ahead for three minutes, please.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Thank you, all, for your contribution today.

I do feel a little push in the defensive mode. I try not to be, but to riff off Mark Twain, the reports of our death, I think, are greatly exaggerated. I want to mention a couple of things about that.

Right now, with the Commonwealth, Canada's position and opinion are very much sought after on the situation in Guyana and the threat from Venezuela. It is something we are continually asked for leadership on. You may not know that, but Canada's position in many of our large organizations, like la Francophonie and the Commonwealth, is still quite strong.

I would also suggest that, when the leaders of the initiative from the Gulf and Arab Muslim states approached the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and went to the presidency of the EU, Spain, they added Canada. Of their mission around the

world, they looked at the five large powers of the permanent members, as well as Canada and Spain, as the presidency of EU.

Just to be fair to people who are listening at home today, it would be incumbent upon us to recognize that Canada's leadership may not be as strong as it should be. We'll take these recommendations, but it is not finished yet.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to take this opportunity, unfortunately—and I don't like doing this, but with the possibility of the House rising quickly—to move a motion that I have on the order paper, on the notice. That is the motion with respect to studying Africa.

It reads:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), following the establishment of a dedicated mission and permanent observer to the African Union; recognizing Canada's shared interests and co-operation with countries on the African continent within multilateral organizations including la Francophonie, the Commonwealth and the United Nations, as well as strong people-to-people ties between Africans and Canadians; and with a view to continuing to strengthen Canada's efforts to collaborate with African partners on shared priorities:

(a) the Committee undertake a study on Canada's approach to Africa;

(b) that such a study examine:

(i) Canada's diplomatic and geopolitical engagement with countries on the African continent, including how such engagement coordinates with Canada's International Assistance Program and Canada's work on a Canada-Africa economic co-operation strategy,

(ii) the political and security situation in the Sahel including the impacts on Canadians and Canadian interests, and

(iii) Canada's development and humanitarian assistance in sub-Saharan Africa;

(c) that it consist of a minimum of six meetings;

(d) that the committee report its findings to the House; and

(e) that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request a comprehensive government response.

I have copies of that available. It was sent out, I believe, on Thursday. I'd like to speak to it for a moment.

Hon. Michael Chong: No. I don't want us to speak to it. We want to continue to interview the witnesses first.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Yes, but under the Standing Orders, I am able to move a motion.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I move we adjourn debate on the motion.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: It's non-debatable.

The Chair: We'll put that to a vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Thank you.

We will proceed with our hearing, and we'll go to Mr. Bergeron for a minute and a half.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, before today's meeting, we had attempted to have a discussion with our government colleagues, and as the government has moved its motion, I am moving the following motion:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee study diplomatic relations between India and Canada; that it allocate a minimum of four meetings to hear witnesses; and that the committee report its observations and recommendations to the House.

We have also provided a copy of this motion in both official languages.

Mr. Chair, since it is the wish of the committee, I will return to our witnesses.

According to the recent report of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, some former members of the Global Affairs Canada legal affairs branch have expressed concerns about the loss of legal expertise at the department. We saw this last week when we asked questions about what was happening in Israel and Palestine. The government representatives were unable to tell us whether, in their opinion, what was happening constituted a violation of international humanitarian law.

Mr. Imseis, do you feel there should be concerns about declining expertise in legal matters at the Department of Foreign Affairs?

[*English*]

Dr. Ardi Imseis: Frankly, there's no other explanation for it. The legal principles at play in occupied Palestine are so abundantly clear and well known, at least to the executive of this country, because we wax lyrical about them when it comes to Ukraine: the inadmissibility of acquisition of territory through force, the right of peoples to self-determination, and so on.

To my mind, either folks at GAC or in the PM's office don't know the law, that same law, as it applies to occupied Palestine, or they are otherwise playing at something altogether different, and that is being selective with international law when it serves our purposes as perceived by our government, and claiming otherwise, that we have a fidelity to it across the board.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Imseis.

Next, we have MP McPherson.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: On a point of order, in the last round I moved a motion, and I have the right to speak to that motion. I actually verbally asked for the right to speak to the motion. Mr. Chong interrupted me while I was moving my motion.

I need it on the record that I have the right to speak to a motion when I move it. It doesn't matter when it happens in the meeting. If I have the floor, I can move a motion, and I can speak to it. I asked for the right to speak to it. I want it on the record that I was not able to speak to it before I was interrupted and Mr. Chong was recognized.

Hon. Michael Chong: On a point of order, I disagree. I think the chair did a wonderful job in providing me the floor to move the motion to adjourn. Mr. Chair, I sustain your decision to give me the floor, at which point I moved the motion to adjourn debate so we could actually hear from the witnesses we have called today to testify about the future of diplomacy.

Mr. Chair, I support your decision to give me the floor to adjourn debate, which I took advantage of. I thank you for that, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: On that point of order, Mr. Chair, I was not challenging your decision. I will respect your decision. However, I think it was wrong and I don't think it followed the rules of order that we have for this committee.

That was my point. I wanted it on the record. I hope in the future that.... It happens when any member moves a motion. It can happen at any time during their talk. That then stops the clock on the time. It does interrupt the witnesses, and I apologize for that, but I fear that as we near the end of the session, the analysts, etc., could actually do some work over the holidays on a new piece of work.

We've been talking about doing Africa work for quite a while. We've been talking about not spending enough time on development. We've been talking about not spending enough time on the conflicts in the Sahel and not enough time on the—

• (1255)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Chair, on a point of order, we don't have to do this at all right now. Of course, we already have decided as a committee that we would be studying the Israel and Palestine issues, and the Iran issues, two of the motions that I had brought forward. We won't be looking at this issue until after we come back anyway.

There is absolutely no reason for Mr. Oliphant to raise this issue at this time. It would be much more appropriate for him to do that during a committee business meeting, so that we could hear from the experts we've brought before us today to talk about some very important issues.

Mr. Oliphant is, in fact, interrupting only the last speaker, and that is me. I would prefer it if he would allow—

The Chair: No, there's another round after you as well.

Ms. Heather McPherson: That's my mistake, but I would prefer that we were able to address this. Studying Africa—

The Chair: For committee business....

Ms. Heather McPherson: —is very important, but I think that's something we can do in February, when we return from our constituency break.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): On that point of order, I want to invite Mr. Chong to share his indignation with his Conservative colleagues on the environment committee, because it's been a recurrent issue that the Conservatives bring motions and we cannot interview witnesses. Please share it.

The Chair: I think that's debate, Ms. Chatel.

Thank you.

We now go to Madam McPherson.

You have a minute and a half.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank all the witnesses for being here. Of course, there are always some shenanigans that happen during committees, so thank you for your patience.

Mr. Imseis, you spoke about the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice. We know that those are two of the only options Palestinians have to actually have non-violent or pacific dispute settlement. Would it not be in the best interests of all to utilize those mechanisms, to support the ICC and the ICJ, to have Canada give that support? Perhaps you could talk about that and the implications when we support those calls within Ukraine and don't support them in other contexts, like in Palestine.

Dr. Ardi Imseis: You're absolutely right. We have no credibility, because we take a double standard.

These two courts are, as you said, two of the only mechanisms that can be utilized to seek justice in the situation in Palestine, and not merely for Palestinian victims but also for Israeli ones. It strikes one as incredible that the Government of Canada would utilize those mechanisms, the ICC—indeed, Canada was at the heart of the creation of the ICC—and the ICJ, now, in matters concerning Iran and Syria, yet deny the option available for the people of Palestine and other victims, including Israelis, to utilize these mechanisms. The message this sends is that no, you may not resolve this conflict through pacific means and, by the way, if you're Palestinian, you can't use violence at all to end the occupation of your territory, now going on 56 years. Occupation is meant to be a temporary circumstance. This one has lasted generations.

If you can't use violence and you can't use non-violent legal means, what else is left?

This goes to Canada's credibility on the international plane.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Imseis.

We next go to, from the Conservative side—

Yes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

It's now 1 p.m., and I have to leave.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay. There was one more.... There are two minutes left.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Chair, I move that we adjourn.

Hon. Michael Chong: And they wonder why our diplomacy is going—

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Because the Conservatives made us spend 30 hours doing an absolutely useless activity, we may be a bit tired and crabby. Let's just get over that.

The Chair: Okay, I will adjourn the meeting. Just before I do so—

An hon. member: No, you have to adjourn. If there's a motion to adjourn, then we adjourn the meeting.

The Chair: Yes, that's true, actually.

The meeting stands adjourned.

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