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<v SPEAKER_1>Hello again, and welcome to Global Exchange, part of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute's Podcast Network.

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<v SPEAKER_1>I'm your host, Colin Robertson.

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<v SPEAKER_1>On this episode that we're recording on January the 5th, we look at the coming year and challenges facing the democracies with Ian Brodie and Darrell Bricker.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Darrell as Chief Executive Officer is Ipsos Public Affairs and co-author of a new book, Breaking Point, The New Big Shifts Putting Canada at Risk.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Ian is Canadian Global Affairs Institute Program Director, Professor at the University of Calgary, and author of a weekly substack.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Ian and Darrell, welcome back.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Thanks for having me on.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Good to see you.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Some context for listeners.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Darrell, Ian and I all participated in the Halifax International Security Forum in November, that each year at its annual conference takes stock of democracy and how to sustain and advance it through robust collective defence, deterrence and security.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Ipsos releases a poll tracking critical security threats and issues in the leading democracies that we'll discuss as part of this podcast today.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Assessments of the democracies as we begin 2026 make for grim reading.

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<v SPEAKER_1>According to Freedom House, quote, violence and the repression of political opponents during elections ongoing, armed conflicts and the spread of authoritarian practices contributed to the 19th year of a decline in freedom.

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<v SPEAKER_1>The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2025 report reported a, quote, troubling trend.

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<v SPEAKER_1>More than half of all countries assessed have declined in at least one key aspect of democratic performance over the past five years.

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<v SPEAKER_1>And those are representation, rights, rule of law, and participation.

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<v SPEAKER_1>The four pillars of democracy are under strain with unprecedented global declines in judicial, independence, press freedom, and electoral integrity.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Even high-performing democracies are not immune as shifting political landscapes and weakening institutions challenge long-held assumptions about democratic resilience.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Democratic solidarity will be critical in the coming year, including security threats from multiple armed conflicts, deepening repression in both entrenched and emerging democracies, and democratically elected leaders who seek to advance their goals by overriding traditional checks and balances on their power.

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<v SPEAKER_1>So let's get started.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Darrell, I'd want to move to you.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Can you share with the audience description of your poll and what countries you did, and how we're doing in terms of the tracking?

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<v SPEAKER_1>Because you've been doing this for a number of years.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, I was just looking back, Ian, to, or sorry, Colin, to the first one we did.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think it was about 2013.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So we've been doing it for a long time.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And we've gradually expanded the number of countries over the years to 30 now.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So we're doing interviews in 30 different countries on probably about a 20-minute questionnaire on everything that's happening in foreign affairs.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So what are the big priorities?

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<v SPEAKER_2>What threats do people care about?

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<v SPEAKER_2>And issues just like the one that you mentioned, which was democracy.

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<v SPEAKER_2>What is the state of democracy?

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I would say on the state of democracy that the general global sentiment is that it is desirable but under threat.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So the reports that you were mentioning are fairly reflective of public opinion.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Now, I should say there are countries where you can't do this type of interviewing.

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<v SPEAKER_2>You can't really do it in Saudi Arabia.

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<v SPEAKER_2>You can't do it in China.

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<v SPEAKER_2>You can't do it in places probably in which populations are really interested in expanding democracy.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And the very fact that you can't do the surveying there demonstrates the threat that those democratic institutions may be under in those various places.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But I would say that people still see democracy as very desirable.

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<v SPEAKER_2>They don't see it, interestingly enough, as being restricted to the Western capitalist countries.

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<v SPEAKER_2>They feel it's something that everybody should be able to aspire to.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But I think that the big thing in all of this is that it's seen from through a very local perspective.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So one person's democracy isn't the same as another person's type of democracy.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But the general concept, the word, the terminology is something that people support.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Your poll also showed, and again, I guess you distinguished between the various countries, that optimism for the future was at a new low.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Why do you think that is?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Well, it's interesting where people are optimistic and pessimistic.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So you're asking about the countries that we interview.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And we interview in the Global South, we interview in the Global North.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, obviously, it's easier to do it in the Western democracies.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But we also interview places like South Africa.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We interview in Latin America.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We interview in some Asian countries.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But what's really interesting is that the countries that you figure that people should be the least optimistic, that's people who are living in, say, for example, the developing markets in which the difficulty of getting by from day to day is fairly extreme, that they would be the ones who would be the most depressed.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And then people who are living in, for example, the middle tier of Western democracies, say the Nordic countries or France or places like that, that those people would be the most optimistic.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And it's actually the exact reverse.

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<v SPEAKER_2>People who are the most pessimistic about the future tend to be people in the Western democracies.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think right at the bottom of the list this year, either one or two was France.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Interesting.

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<v SPEAKER_1>I also noticed that disinformation, and I guess you put misinformation in that as well, is now perceived as a real threat.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Do you want to comment on that?

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<v SPEAKER_1>Because I know this is something you've been watching for a number of years and have commented on.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah.

00:06:06.680 --> 00:06:27.300

<v SPEAKER_2>So this is one of the things that when you ask people about democracy and the functioning of democracy in their countries, yes, they feel that there's potentially a bit of an authoritarian threat, but also they're feeling like it's something that's been infiltrated by people who are ill-intended, either from within a country or even more specifically from outside the country.

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<v SPEAKER_2>This idea that there are foreign entities, people who have malevolent intentions towards the democracy of that country, they could be intervening.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And one of the things that I did say when we were commenting on this when we were in Halifax was, you know, there's this perception that, you know, the next war is just on the horizon.

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<v SPEAKER_2>If you go out and you ask the general population, their view is that they're actually combatants in a war right now.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, the biggest threat that they feel in their lives is cyberhacking, cyberattacks and disinformation, which they feel that they're confronting every time they pick up their phone, every time they get on a call like this, they feel they're in a position where they're actually combatants and whatever that next war is going to be, and it's already started.

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<v SPEAKER_1>So Darrell, who do we trust?

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<v SPEAKER_1>Because we have the media, which is critical.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Institutions, which seems to have lower trust.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Is it our neighbors?

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<v SPEAKER_1>Is it community papers?

00:07:19.060 --> 00:07:20.620
<v SPEAKER_1>Who do you look to?

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<v SPEAKER_1>Or what sources should we be looking to?

00:07:22.980 --> 00:07:25.420
<v SPEAKER_1>And who do people come back to it again?

00:07:25.420 --> 00:07:26.280
<v SPEAKER_1>Trust?

00:07:26.280 --> 00:07:33.760
<v SPEAKER_2>Well, you've seen significant declines around the world in people's trust for media, but it hasn't really been replaced by anything.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So when you ask people, let's just deal with Canada for a second.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So you ask them, what's their number one source of information on what's going on?

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<v SPEAKER_2>You know, where do you get your news?

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's television news.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Number two tends to be newspapers.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Number three tends to be radio.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So very traditional methods.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But you've seen a huge rise, obviously, in social media platforms as a way to access information.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But the ones that tend to do the best in terms of credibility are the ones that are behind the brands that they know from the more traditional media.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So the global mail website is more credible than some website from the United States on politics that's going on.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Or if you listen to CFRB in Toronto, the fact that you have the CFRB logo when you go into the website there through that mechanism or CAKNW in Vancouver, that has a level of credibility that any other online radio stations wouldn't have.

00:08:32.080 --> 00:08:39.920

<v SPEAKER_2>So it's this interesting mix of different points of access, but coming back to the brands that they traditionally have always trusted.

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<v SPEAKER_1>But taking you back to where you began, you said television actually has the most influence, because you have the impression that social media is now, particularly with younger people, if you're sort of under 35 or under 25, that's what they entirely rely upon.

00:08:52.680 --> 00:08:59.640

<v SPEAKER_1>But what you're saying is, in fact, no television, radio, traditional papers still have some influence.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, they're not exclusive.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, obviously, there are people that go to a more diverse set of sources for information.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But when you ask them which ones they actually trust, and even younger people, they tend to trust those more traditional brands.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So there still is a gatekeeping function that's being met by media.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's one of the concerns that we have that there's so much pressure, I would say, on traditional media in Canada, everywhere from the CBC and questioning of its credibility down to newspapers that are having a hard time to survive.

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<v SPEAKER_2>That still is the media environment that has the credibility for the public.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So I don't think anytime soon it's going to be replaced by random feeds on Facebook as the most credible or effective mechanism for getting through what people would consider to be trustworthy information.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Government news sites tend to do, information sites tend to do pretty well.

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<v SPEAKER_2>If you go back to the COVID circumstance, if you ask people the most credible sources of information on COVID, they would tell you government news sites, information sites.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Interesting.

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<v SPEAKER_1>That's encouraging.

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<v SPEAKER_1>It's a question of sustaining that.

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<v SPEAKER_1>I guess there's an incentive there for governments to sustain these sites because if they were seen as credible, that's what you have to do going forward.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Other threats you've talked about, I'm looking, I think traditionally we talk about nuclear, biological, chemical, climate seen as a threat, migration.

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<v SPEAKER_1>What are the other threats that are on the horizon or very much in people's minds these days?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Well, it's disinformation, AI, people are feeling threatened by.

00:10:40.220 --> 00:10:53.140

<v SPEAKER_2>Depending on where we are in the weather cycle, like say, for example, if in the United States and you're in a hurricane cycle, people are more concerned about things like natural disasters.

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<v SPEAKER_2>What's really dropped off is concern about things, for

example, like a pandemic that's gone way down.

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<v SPEAKER_2>One of the things that's really interesting from year to year is in most places, this idea of traditional military conflict is not really seen as a serious threat.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And to the extent that it is seen as a serious threat, the public thinks that of all the threats that it could confront, it's the one that their governments are best prepared to deal with.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's the non-traditional threats that are the ones that really peak their interests and the ones they feel that their governments are least prepared to deal with.

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<v SPEAKER_1>But I have the impression that polling tells us that, certainly in the case of Canadians, we're now prepared to put more money in defence, partly because we are concerned about the threats of conflict.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, and not exclusively Canada.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, what's interesting when you take a look at the threat profiles and the way people are looking at threats these days.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I'll just talk about the United States and Canada.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Canada, we have a real, pardon me, what I would call an anxiety mindset.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's this sense that everything that I used to be able to count on, I can't count on anymore.

00:12:06.080 --> 00:12:14.760

<v SPEAKER_2>Whether it's public institutions, particularly our relationship with the United States and what's been happening with Donald Trump has really shaken up Canadians.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So this sense that the world has become very uncertain and that they're very anxious about it, which is different from the United States, which has more of a siege mentality, where it feels

like the world's kind of coming at it.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And it's not creating a sense of anxiety as much as it's creating, as I said before, more of a siege type of a mentality.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And so when you go country by country, you see different types of threat profiles and different types of reactions to what the threats are that exist out there.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Would we be closer to the Europeans in that sense then?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Most definitely, most definitely.

00:12:48.260 --> 00:12:59.340

<v SPEAKER_2>There's this sense of, I don't want to say helplessness, that's maybe too strong a word, but this sense that we've become kind of detached from what we felt we could control.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, we had our elbows up moment during the course of the election campaign that lasted for about the six weeks of the campaign.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But after that, we moved back to this real sense of anxiety.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So people may have a sense that we need to do something about what's going on in the United States.

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<v SPEAKER_2>They may even have some sense of specifically what we should be doing, but there's really a level of discomfort as to whether or not we're able to do it, or we are doing it.

00:13:26.960 --> 00:13:41.140

<v SPEAKER_2>And Mark Kearney is our Prime Minister right now, even though people really stand strongly behind him in terms of being the right person to deal with this moment, their expectations about what he's able to achieve are actually quite low.

00:13:41.140 --> 00:13:49.220

<v SPEAKER_2>So if you go out and you interview the public, Canadian public today and you ask them, so do you think Mark Kearney is going to be able to get a good trade deal with the United States over the

space the next 12 months?

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<v SPEAKER_2>And the answer is about a third.

00:13:51.500 --> 00:13:52.120

<v SPEAKER_1>Interesting.

00:13:52.120 --> 00:13:53.880

<v SPEAKER_2>That's possible.

00:13:53.880 --> 00:13:54.920

<v SPEAKER_1>Interesting.

00:13:54.920 --> 00:14:09.780

<v SPEAKER_1>Ian, come in on this because we were all three at Halifax, and if there were two countries that I thought got a lot of attention, deservedly so, it was Ukraine, obviously, because of the conflict, but also Taiwan.

00:14:09.780 --> 00:14:18.140

<v SPEAKER_1>What were your takeaways from Halifax in terms of countries under threat, democracies under threat?

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<v SPEAKER_3>On reflection, I think back to the year earlier, where there was a very high-profile political delegation from Ukraine that had come, and they had a fairly uniform and I would say aggressive single statement about needing support, needing arms, in particular the need for infusions of weapons and an immediate need for weapons right away before the Trump administration took office.

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<v SPEAKER_3>That it was sort of between Halifax in the third week of November and New Year's Eve, an awful lot of material had to move, and I think that was the uniform message.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And everyone responding to that uniform message of where are we on getting stuff to Ukraine before the change of administration in the United States.

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<v SPEAKER_3>This year, I have to say, Colin, I thought the Ukrainian delegation was upbeat.

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<v SPEAKER_3>It's not quite the right word there in a very tough fight, but it was a less unified message in a sense because it gets the sense that they think they have the situation not under control.

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<v SPEAKER_3>That's not, I don't want to give the impression this was an optimistic statement, but that as long as money continues to flow, they can manufacture weaponry, they can manufacture the arms that are needed, they're turning out military forces in enough numbers to hold the line.

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<v SPEAKER_3>I thought that was a slightly different message than we'd seen in the year before, and from the Europeans, an idea that we now have to take this mission on ourselves, we have to take the mission on of supporting the Ukrainians ourselves because we can't count on people across the Atlantic to carry this through.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Worries about what was going to be negotiated over the heads of the Ukrainians, and by the way, over the heads of the European Union, but I think a strong result that they were more than a match for that challenge.

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<v SPEAKER_3>I think since then we've seen pressure over Christmas on President Zelensky to agree to some kind of framework agreement put together by the Americans and the Russians and the Europeans and the Ukrainians saying, hold on a second, we're going to have to work on that.

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<v SPEAKER_3>I think at least in that sense, my sense of the Halifax discussion around Ukraine, again, nobody's celebrating, but a grittier, somewhat more hopeful discussion than the year before.

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<v SPEAKER_3>I spent quite a bit of time with the Taiwanese group and with people involved in the Taiwan discussion in off-the-record sessions which we can't really go into here.

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<v SPEAKER_3>But there, of course, the question is, at some point, Trump will turn his mind to a discussion with President Xi that will look at trade issues from the American perspective.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Will the Chinese want some kind of move on the geostrategic situation across the straits?

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<v SPEAKER_3>And then coming out of the conference, the new Prime Minister of Japan made some quite aggressive comments about cross-

strait relations with the Chinese, have since retaliated with these military exercises that enveloped Taiwan.

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<v SPEAKER_3>It continues to be a difficult situation.

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<v SPEAKER_3>That said, I think the idea that the Americans are prepared to use military force at great distance from the United States is a bit of an optimistic note and taken as such by the Taiwanese.

00:17:49.680 --> 00:18:04.800

<v SPEAKER_3>The idea that they are now capable of moving towards producing their own weaponry in the mode of Ukraine in order to resist whatever the Chinese might want to do across that strait continues to be a source of optimism.

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<v SPEAKER_3>The difficulty there is really political.

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<v SPEAKER_3>The government in Taiwan, the ruling party is now into their third term.

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<v SPEAKER_3>There's the prospect of change of government at some point in the next election cycle.

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<v SPEAKER_3>They're dealing with an opposition-controlled and what they call their legislature.

00:18:23.920 --> 00:18:30.000

<v SPEAKER_3>The question of cross-strait relations has become a sharper partisan dispute inside Taiwan.

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<v SPEAKER_3>In addition to the strategic and potential military issues related to the status of Taiwan, there's an internal political debate inside Taiwan that makes this situation quite a bit more complicated and therefore, the perception of the Americans may want to deal over the heads of the Taiwanese with President Xi or Chairman Xi.

00:18:48.700 --> 00:18:58.160

<v SPEAKER_3>It has a domestic political impact in Taiwan that's different from the domestic political impact in Ukraine of Trump trying to deal with Putin directly.

00:18:59.600 --> 00:19:01.500

<v SPEAKER_1>You mentioned Trump.

00:19:01.720 --> 00:19:10.260

<v SPEAKER_1>He once again, to me, cast a major shadow on the proceedings at Halifax just as he does on everything we do.

00:19:10.260 --> 00:19:13.060

<v SPEAKER_1>Can't turn on the news today without Trump being at the front end.

00:19:16.360 --> 00:19:26.000

<v SPEAKER_1>Your assessment, and I guess partly from what we got out of Halifax, that for the last 80 years, the United States has led the Democratic nations.

00:19:26.000 --> 00:19:37.720

<v SPEAKER_1>But I don't think you can assume that anymore, especially after action in Iran and now Venezuela, which is very much in the news today.

00:19:38.800 --> 00:19:40.280

<v SPEAKER_1>What's your sense on all of that?

00:19:42.160 --> 00:19:45.100

<v SPEAKER_1>Again, from Halifax, there are a lot of Americans there.

00:19:46.520 --> 00:19:52.260

<v SPEAKER_1>Again, the United States is still a vibrant democracy, although not as vibrant as it was.

00:19:52.260 --> 00:19:54.460

<v SPEAKER_1>There is divisions.

00:19:54.460 --> 00:20:00.620

<v SPEAKER_1>Going forward, what were your takeaways from talking with the Americans at Halifax?

00:20:00.620 --> 00:20:12.600

<v SPEAKER_3>Well, the fact that the American Executive Branch, I didn't send anyone to Halifax for the first time since the forum was created, including none of their military officers, which was quite an unfortunate miss.

00:20:12.600 --> 00:20:15.340

<v SPEAKER_1>At the very much request of the Trump administration.

00:20:15.340 --> 00:20:17.060

<v SPEAKER_3>Yeah.

00:20:17.060 --> 00:20:52.920

<v SPEAKER_3>I think it's fair to say the Trump administration withdrew both the civilian and the military officials who usually come to the conference, and that was unfortunate for the military side because they didn't get a chance to have, obviously, not just the formal discussions at the conference, but as you know, the hallway discussions and the discussions over dinner, the Americans are almost always in listening mode at Halifax because they're able to hear from people they don't ordinarily meet in the course of their diplomatic or security work, and therefore they can get a much broader perspective than they ordinarily would sort of firsthand from people on the ground.

00:20:52.920 --> 00:20:57.060

<v SPEAKER_3>And I think the one that missed that was the US government.

00:20:57.060 --> 00:21:06.320

<v SPEAKER_3>They lost an opportunity to gather some information or intelligence or perspective of what was going on around the world, so that's unfortunate.

00:21:06.320 --> 00:21:11.740

<v SPEAKER_3>The other unfortunate side of that was because the executive branch didn't show up by the civilians or the uniformed folks.

00:21:11.740 --> 00:21:20.520

<v SPEAKER_3>It sort of put pressure on the Republicans and the congressional delegation to speak for the executive branch, and that limits their ability to speak from their unique perspectives.

00:21:20.520 --> 00:21:47.240

<v SPEAKER_3>You saw all of the senators from the Republican side of the congressional delegation trying to say something on behalf of the Trump administration, but of course, with no give and take because they're not the officials of the primary concern, so they're trying to repeat something they saw in a press release or saw something they saw in a press statement and try to explain that to people locally, but there was none of the give and take that's normal when you have an executive branch official show up who may be able to provide some additional color.

00:21:47.240 --> 00:22:16.720

<v SPEAKER_3>So the fact that the United States really cut itself off from all of the potential for the use of a place like Halifax to mobilize support is really unfortunate, particularly unfortunate for their operations in Iran since there's always Iranian democracy activists at Halifax and particularly for Venezuela where there's a wide range of Venezuelan democracy activists at the Halifax Forum and they just had no contact at all.

00:22:16.720 --> 00:22:22.780

<v SPEAKER_3>That said, I think the Republicans on the congressional delegation acquitted themselves well.

00:22:22.820 --> 00:22:29.320

<v SPEAKER_3>There were some testy moments obviously, but that's the normal part of diplomacy.

00:22:29.320 --> 00:22:37.340

<v SPEAKER_3>There were some big losses coming on the Democratic side with Jehene retiring who's been at all the forums except one.

00:22:37.340 --> 00:22:52.700

<v SPEAKER_3>The constant support for the forum from her side, both in her capacity as a former governor and as a senator, she has lots of contact across the Canada-US border and from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, lots of contact with the other countries that are around the forum.

00:22:52.700 --> 00:22:58.740

<v SPEAKER_3>So it's not just that this was obviously an on-goal for the Americans.

00:22:58.740 --> 00:23:04.700

<v SPEAKER_3>The fact that nobody came from the United States, from the executive branch, was a huge loss for the executive branch.

00:23:04.700 --> 00:23:11.040

<v SPEAKER_3>I think they really felt or they should feel as they haven't, it's because they're not paying attention to how much they felt not being there.

00:23:11.040 --> 00:23:26.540

<v SPEAKER_3>But also the possibility that there's a big generational change coming here, and that we don't really know what the new generation of American leadership on either side of the partisan divide is going to make of democratic activists, democratic regimes around the world.

00:23:26.540 --> 00:23:30.420

<v SPEAKER_3>I think it's that sense of unease that is the problem.

00:23:31.820 --> 00:23:43.880

<v SPEAKER_1>What also struck me was that the congressional delegation, the Republican and Democrat, really didn't seem to have informed or be part of the discussions that are ongoing in the administration.

00:23:43.880 --> 00:24:10.820

<v SPEAKER_1>Because there were several times they seemed kind of cut out because the news cycle was moving so quickly on certain issues that they said one thing, but even as we have sometimes seen with even those in the administration, the president moves in a different direction, which I think, I'm not sure the impression that leaves on the rest of the rest of us, but it certainly makes you wonder how the American government is working.

00:24:10.820 --> 00:24:13.120

<v SPEAKER_3>Well, you saw this most certainly on the Saturday of the conference.

00:24:13.120 --> 00:24:17.500

<v SPEAKER_3>I realize it's now a couple of weeks ago, so we forgot what the news cycle was.

00:24:17.500 --> 00:24:28.160

<v SPEAKER_3>But on the Saturday morning, the Americans put out what they thought was a framework for an agreement between Russia and Ukraine to settle the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

00:24:28.880 --> 00:24:38.240

<v SPEAKER_3>The Americans had to respond in real time to what looked like it was a set of conditions that leaned heavily towards the Russian side.

00:24:38.240 --> 00:24:50.980

<v SPEAKER_3>As part of whatever the briefing cycle is, some of the senators came back into the session having spoken to Marco Rubio, the Secretary of State and National Security Adviser, with what they thought was the administration's position.

00:24:50.980 --> 00:24:54.200

<v SPEAKER_3>This is really the Russian wish list.

00:24:54.600 --> 00:25:04.500

<v SPEAKER_3>And then Secretary Rubio, National Security Rubio completely cut their legs out from underneath them partway through the day by saying, no, that's not what I told them in the briefing, and you shouldn't pay any attention to any of them.

00:25:04.540 --> 00:25:10.740

<v SPEAKER_3>This is what I mean by the fact that there's no executive branch officials there to speak for the US executive branch.

00:25:10.740 --> 00:25:19.380

<v SPEAKER_3>Really blew the opportunity for them to make some advances on the Ukraine file that they might have in the hallway discussions.

00:25:19.380 --> 00:25:28.840

<v SPEAKER_3>The administration cut their noses off here in the middle of the conversation and really I think set themselves back a step, and that's very unfortunate.

00:25:28.840 --> 00:25:32.260

<v SPEAKER_4>Hi, I'm Dave Perry, the President and CEO of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

00:25:32.260 --> 00:25:36.880

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00:25:36.880 --> 00:25:45.720

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00:25:45.720 --> 00:25:51.880

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00:25:51.880 --> 00:25:52.800

<v SPEAKER_1>I think that's right.

00:25:52.800 --> 00:26:03.580

<v SPEAKER_1>And certainly, you know, you talked about the Europeans and my impression was that they're still, they're still, some of them still at sea.

00:26:03.580 --> 00:26:04.980

<v SPEAKER_1>They know where they need to go.

00:26:04.980 --> 00:26:09.480

<v SPEAKER_1>And certainly the people we talked to were there, want to see their governments move.

00:26:09.480 --> 00:26:15.900

<v SPEAKER_1>But you don't have the impression that they've been able to sort of get that necessary will thus far.

00:26:15.900 --> 00:26:23.680

<v SPEAKER_3>No, the optimistic side of that, though, Colin, if I could say, I mean, it's not optimistic, the possibility that might grow over the course of the next couple of years.

00:26:23.680 --> 00:26:25.920

<v SPEAKER_3>There's a new administration in Germany.

00:26:25.920 --> 00:26:27.780

<v SPEAKER_3>They're in a very difficult political situation.

00:26:27.780 --> 00:26:35.240

<v SPEAKER_3>It's unclear what the, what the Christian Democrat, how long a Christian Democrat government is going to be around giving them the polling numbers.

00:26:35.240 --> 00:26:43.360

<v SPEAKER_3>But it's clear that the Christian Democrat government has new energy compared to the previous government in Germany.

00:26:43.360 --> 00:26:53.040

<v SPEAKER_3>They're willing to take a much more forceful position for Germany's foreign policy with an idea, with an eye to the continental side here.

00:26:53.040 --> 00:27:03.500

<v SPEAKER_3>The British really are on their back feet because of the fiscal problem, political crisis in the UK with a similarly new government, but really just doesn't have quite the same crisp nature of leadership.

00:27:03.500 --> 00:27:12.860

<v SPEAKER_3>And the French very advanced into a political cycle around Macron's personal leadership and his own problems, putting together a government that can deal with the French legislature.

00:27:14.160 --> 00:27:23.100

<v SPEAKER_3>If the Germans were able to continue on with this, I think there is a possibility of another pull of European development there.

00:27:23.100 --> 00:27:28.020

<v SPEAKER_3>I think Merz clearly has an eye of what he can do personally as leader in Germany.

00:27:28.120 --> 00:27:32.000

<v SPEAKER_3>I've got the sense from the Germans there that they very much want him to succeed.

00:27:32.000 --> 00:27:44.300

<v SPEAKER_3>And although there's views on the future of the Christian Democrats as a government there, that they're also pulling in the same direction, which is a unity of Europeans in a European government that's sort of nice to see.

00:27:44.300 --> 00:27:50.620

<v SPEAKER_3>The Italians with Maloney, she seems to be set for a longer term in Italy as well.

00:27:50.620 --> 00:27:59.420

<v SPEAKER_3>So there is another potential pull of development in Germany and Italy that could pull the EU along here.

00:28:00.360 --> 00:28:07.520

<v SPEAKER_3>The challenge they all have is to figure out how quickly they can make progress without American leadership on the continent.

00:28:08.740 --> 00:28:17.240

<v SPEAKER_1>True, although the word that came to me is the consequence of reading Darrell and John Ibbitson's new book, Breaking Point, was exactly that.

00:28:17.260 --> 00:28:20.980

<v SPEAKER_1>Europe is perhaps closer to a breaking point than we are.

00:28:20.980 --> 00:28:32.960

<v SPEAKER_1>But I want to move to you, back to you, Darrell, and I want you to just sort of describe to listeners what Breaking Point, The Next Big Shifts Putting Canada at Risk is all about.

00:28:32.960 --> 00:28:39.840

<v SPEAKER_2>Well, it basically started with the premise that came out of Lament for a Nation, by George Grant.

00:28:39.840 --> 00:28:42.160

<v SPEAKER_2>Which is what, 1950s?

00:28:42.160 --> 00:28:44.960

<v SPEAKER_2>No, it was actually put out in 1965.

00:28:46.900 --> 00:28:51.420

<v SPEAKER_2>So last year was the 60th anniversary for Lament for a Nation.

00:28:51.420 --> 00:28:58.500

<v SPEAKER_2>Now, I should say that if anybody goes and reads the book, you'll find it is a creature of its time.

00:28:58.500 --> 00:29:03.480

<v SPEAKER_2>It's fairly eccentric in terms of its analysis in many respects.

00:29:03.480 --> 00:29:17.760

<v SPEAKER_2>But he raised one really interesting question that informed how I went into the book with John Ibbitson, which was, do Canadians constitute a unique species on the North American continent?

00:29:17.760 --> 00:29:19.380

<v SPEAKER_2>Because that's really what Grant was saying.

00:29:19.380 --> 00:29:24.240

<v SPEAKER_2>Do we still constitute a unique species on the North American continent?

00:29:24.240 --> 00:29:26.280

<v SPEAKER_2>So that's really what the book is about.

00:29:26.480 --> 00:29:43.980

<v SPEAKER_2>If we want to be that, if we want to be our own country on the North American continent, and not just a geographic definition, but a true culture of difference, if we want to be something different from the United States, what do we have to do in order to do that?

00:29:43.980 --> 00:29:52.280

<v SPEAKER_2>And essentially, what John and I talk about in the book is that it's not so much about the Americans as it is about us.

00:29:52.280 --> 00:30:05.440

<v SPEAKER_2>As John came up with a great metaphor, beautiful mixed one, and if you're going to mix a metaphor, you should do it beautifully, which is that the cans have been kicked down the road for so long that the chickens have finally come home to roost.

00:30:05.440 --> 00:30:07.400

<v SPEAKER_2>And that's really what's happened in our country.

00:30:07.400 --> 00:30:11.060

<v SPEAKER_2>So we address all of these cans and these chickens.

00:30:11.240 --> 00:30:13.220

<v SPEAKER_1>And these are the big risks that you're talking about.

00:30:13.220 --> 00:30:13.740

<v SPEAKER_2>Sure.

00:30:13.920 --> 00:30:19.840

<v SPEAKER_2>And the two biggest risks that we actually see are ones that we call horizontal risks and vertical risks.

00:30:19.840 --> 00:30:34.320

<v SPEAKER_2>So the horizontal risks are the ones that we normally ascribe as national unity questions in Canada, the ones that we refer to as potentially fracturing the federation.

00:30:34.320 --> 00:30:42.880

<v SPEAKER_2>So we've spent an entire, almost two centuries dealing with one particular element of this, which is Quebec separatism.

00:30:42.880 --> 00:30:46.100

<v SPEAKER_2>And the whole Laurentian consensus is basically about that.

00:30:46.100 --> 00:30:50.000

<v SPEAKER_2>How do you reconcile Quebec with, French-speaking Quebec, with the rest of the country?

00:30:50.000 --> 00:31:05.960

<v SPEAKER_2>But what we've seen is a very aggressive positioning in Alberta, and to a certain extent in Saskatchewan, that really is even maybe a more potentially a destructive aspect in terms of our national unity.

00:31:05.960 --> 00:31:11.480

<v SPEAKER_2>So we found a way to move heaven and earth to deal with whatever the situation is in Quebec.

00:31:11.480 --> 00:31:18.420

<v SPEAKER_2>And basically the way that we regard what's going on in Western Canada, and we don't actually say that there is no Western Canada.

00:31:18.420 --> 00:31:26.700

<v SPEAKER_2>There's the West, you know, their individual provinces with their own cultures, their own policy environments, their own politics that we have to look at individually.

00:31:26.760 --> 00:31:30.360

<v SPEAKER_2>They just happen to be West in terms of their geographic location.

00:31:31.480 --> 00:31:49.680

<v SPEAKER_2>But we found ways of dealing with the situation in the province of Quebec, but we've done virtually nothing to deal with something that's been a longstanding and increasingly important aspect of Canadian unity, which is the province of Alberta and, as I said before, also the province of Saskatchewan.

00:31:49.680 --> 00:32:03.700

<v SPEAKER_2>And if you take a look at what's been happening to the Canadian population, and John and I wrote a book about this back in 2013 called The Big Shift, and it was really about the big shift of the Canadian population to increasingly Western Canada.

00:32:03.700 --> 00:32:13.420

<v SPEAKER_2>It actually is no longer an afterthought in Canadian politics, or should no longer be an afterthought in terms of not just politics, but Canadian public administration, their nation state.

00:32:13.420 --> 00:32:23.200

<v SPEAKER_2>They have just become more of the country because of their population rate, but also their economic weight in the Federation.

00:32:23.200 --> 00:32:28.360

<v SPEAKER_2>So the best we can come up for with Western Canada is we sign a Memorandum of Understanding.

00:32:29.000 --> 00:32:38.180

<v SPEAKER_2>And it's like, okay, well, you know, it's an interesting first step, but we're going to have to do a lot more to make Western Canada feel like it's part of this Federation for the longer term.

00:32:38.180 --> 00:32:41.660

<v SPEAKER_2>And so we have a number of suggestions on how to deal with that.

00:32:41.660 --> 00:32:47.260

<v SPEAKER_2>But also this is coming at a time when we could see Quebec separatism become an issue again.

00:32:48.360 --> 00:32:57.580

<v SPEAKER_2>We have a situation in the province of Quebec, although they'll have a new leader to the Liberal Party as a result of what's happened to the previous leader of the Liberal Party in the province of Quebec.

00:32:57.580 --> 00:33:07.200

<v SPEAKER_2>But currently, the PQ, the Parti Québécois, is leading the polling in Quebec by a considerable amount, in double digits.

00:33:07.200 --> 00:33:12.640

<v SPEAKER_2>And it looks like it's prepared to form a majority government once the election is held in October of next year.

00:33:12.640 --> 00:33:19.700

<v SPEAKER_2>And this is a government that is committed to having another referendum on Canadian independence within its first term.

00:33:19.700 --> 00:33:27.000

<v SPEAKER_2>So we could be facing back-to-back referenda on Canadian sovereignty over the space of the next couple of years.

00:33:27.000 --> 00:33:28.120

<v SPEAKER_2>That's very concerning.

00:33:28.120 --> 00:33:30.860

<v SPEAKER_2>So we've got to deal with those horizontal cleavages.

00:33:30.860 --> 00:33:35.760

<v SPEAKER_2>And then the vertical cleavages that exist in the country really relate to generations.

00:33:35.760 --> 00:33:42.100

<v SPEAKER_2>So we've had an elbows-up generation in this country that's done extremely well as a result of the Canadian promise.

00:33:42.100 --> 00:33:43.240

<v SPEAKER_2>It's really paid off for them.

00:33:43.660 --> 00:33:46.300

<v SPEAKER_2>But their kids, not so much.

00:33:46.300 --> 00:33:52.240

<v SPEAKER_2>And they're really feeling that this country isn't working as well for them as it should.

00:33:52.240 --> 00:34:02.720

<v SPEAKER_2>And it's interesting, you know, I've been reading, I don't know, we're going to get to what we've been reading, but Richard Gwyn's two-volume series on John A.

00:34:02.720 --> 00:34:03.700

<v SPEAKER_2>Macdonald.

00:34:03.700 --> 00:34:14.260

<v SPEAKER_2>And it's amazing to the degree to which it so parallels what was happening in terms of Canadian unity back then into the early 20th century as to what's going on now.

00:34:14.260 --> 00:34:20.240

<v SPEAKER_2>And at that time, it was also younger Canadians that were feeling like the country wasn't paying off for them.

00:34:20.240 --> 00:34:23.240

<v SPEAKER_2>So what they were doing is what they were leaving for the United States.

00:34:23.240 --> 00:34:35.760

<v SPEAKER_2>And we're seeing a similar situation here in Canada where we have large percentages of Canadians' younger population, particularly our talented population, feeling like it can't make a go of it in this country, and maybe they should be looking at some other place.

00:34:35.760 --> 00:34:52.880

<v SPEAKER_2>In fact, you know, we asked the question on a survey, not this Christmas, but the previous Christmas in which we said, you know, if the United States offered you full US citizenship and all of your

assets would be valued in American dollars, would you vote to join the United States?

00:34:52.880 --> 00:34:59.420

<v SPEAKER_2>And for people under the age of 35 in Canada, about 45% said that they would consider voting to join the United States.

00:34:59.420 --> 00:35:04.840

<v SPEAKER_2>So we've got these two major cleavages that exist out there in Canada that we're going to have to reconcile.

00:35:04.840 --> 00:35:10.520

<v SPEAKER_2>And then we write a chapter about this at the end, about some ideas about how we could possibly deal with that.

00:35:10.520 --> 00:35:11.900

<v SPEAKER_1>I'm going to come back to the ideas part.

00:35:11.900 --> 00:35:21.020

<v SPEAKER_1>But Ian, I want you to come in this because we've certainly, during my professional career, the focus really was, and when we talked to nationality, it was on Quebec.

00:35:21.020 --> 00:35:34.840

<v SPEAKER_1>But now we've got possibilities, Darrell mentions the MOU between Alberta and the Carney government, but we've also got the potential of a couple of referendums in Alberta around the whole question of staying in the Federation.

00:35:36.740 --> 00:35:41.820

<v SPEAKER_1>Your take, having spent much of your life now in Alberta.

00:35:43.660 --> 00:35:47.380

<v SPEAKER_3>Yeah, well, tomorrow I'll be out at the Calgary Airport.

00:35:47.380 --> 00:35:56.840

<v SPEAKER_3>When I go to the security line, there will almost certainly be a Sikh kid from the northeast corner of Calgary running the security line.

00:35:56.840 --> 00:35:59.380

<v SPEAKER_3>I mean, chances are more likely than not.

00:36:00.800 --> 00:36:13.660

<v SPEAKER_3>It will be excellent English, and we'll say hello, bonjour to me as he takes my, or she takes my Nexus card to make sure that I'm entitled to line up at the Nexus line at the airport.

00:36:13.660 --> 00:36:31.340

<v SPEAKER_3>And that's the result of, I mean, that's the endpoint, if

you want, of what Darrell was talking about was a sort of three-generational effort to deal with how do we deal with the horizontal issue of keeping Quebec and Confederation initiatives been going on since, you know, my entire, since just before I was born, actually.

00:36:32.860 --> 00:36:44.520

<v SPEAKER_3>Will it take that long to be able to build oil pipelines freely in order to get Canadian oil to international markets if we can no longer get them to continental markets?

00:36:44.520 --> 00:36:45.240

<v SPEAKER_3>Unclear to me.

00:36:45.240 --> 00:36:47.800

<v SPEAKER_3>That's obviously a heavier lift.

00:36:48.100 --> 00:36:59.780

<v SPEAKER_3>It's harder to build a pipeline than it is to get security guards at federal institutions to say hello, bonjour, even if they certainly don't speak any French.

00:37:01.320 --> 00:37:09.760

<v SPEAKER_3>I think the problem I have here is that on the campus, I'm dealing with both Western Canadians who live in Calgary, or they came from Saskatchewan to the UFC.

00:37:09.760 --> 00:37:28.400

<v SPEAKER_3>Of course, they're all under the age of 25, so they feel both of the pressures that Darrell has identified in his book, acutely dealing with people here who have no sense that anything kind of east of the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border makes much of a difference to the future of their lives here.

00:37:28.400 --> 00:37:33.260

<v SPEAKER_3>It's probably hostile to building out an economic future for them here.

00:37:33.260 --> 00:37:39.140

<v SPEAKER_3>And then all the cost pressures and generational pressures felt in kind of a mix.

00:37:39.140 --> 00:37:55.580

<v SPEAKER_3>Students don't think about those as two separate sets of issues, obviously, until they finish the four years of the political science degree, where we try to help them ascribe the challenges of their lives to different political trends and political problems.

00:37:55.580 --> 00:37:58.740

<v SPEAKER_3>But there's no doubt that this is felt every day here.

00:37:58.740 --> 00:38:09.580

<v SPEAKER_3>2026, we're just in the early days of 2026, but I expect, I don't know whether we'll see a referendum in Quebec, but we will almost certainly see a referendum on the future of Alberta in Confederation.

00:38:11.300 --> 00:38:13.900

<v SPEAKER_3>The continental pressure of Mr.

00:38:13.900 --> 00:38:17.340

<v SPEAKER_3>Trump is going to run almost certainly a counter to what Mr.

00:38:17.340 --> 00:38:25.260

<v SPEAKER_3>Clinton's involvement was in the 1995 referendum, and therefore we're in for a very difficult and very bumpy ride.

00:38:25.260 --> 00:38:25.580

<v SPEAKER_1>All right.

00:38:25.580 --> 00:38:28.380

<v SPEAKER_1>My final question to you both is we're in the midst now.

00:38:28.380 --> 00:38:33.940

<v SPEAKER_1>The Carney government's promised both a foreign policy review and it's developing a national security strategy.

00:38:33.940 --> 00:38:41.080

<v SPEAKER_1>What should be our objective and what about the priorities for action to make us both safe and prosperous?

00:38:41.080 --> 00:38:51.920

<v SPEAKER_1>I'll let you lead on this, Darrell, because your book is very much about what should be, I think, a national strategy that would encompass both foreign policy and national security.

00:38:51.920 --> 00:38:58.720

<v SPEAKER_2>You know, it is interesting observing the Carney government since he's become our prime minister.

00:38:59.260 --> 00:39:07.920

<v SPEAKER_2>If there's anything, it seems to me, you can talk about delivery, about the capability of them actually to be able to deliver against any of these things.

00:39:08.000 --> 00:39:15.020

<v SPEAKER_2>But his instincts seem to be very foreign policy and defence-oriented.

00:39:15.020 --> 00:39:18.740

<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, he's obviously very comfortable in that world.

00:39:18.740 --> 00:39:20.500

<v SPEAKER_2>He loves to spend a lot of time in Europe.

00:39:20.500 --> 00:39:22.620

<v SPEAKER_2>In fact, he's off there again.

00:39:22.620 --> 00:39:29.320

<v SPEAKER_2>So this idea of being part of the international counterweight, to a certain extent, to the decline of the United States, is something that he's...

00:39:29.320 --> 00:39:30.160

<v SPEAKER_1>Colin is willing.

00:39:30.160 --> 00:39:32.660

<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, he's very comfortable with that.

00:39:32.660 --> 00:39:49.340

<v SPEAKER_2>His problem, I would say, if, you know, people can have their opinions about this, this is just my observation, is that he's much less comfortable dealing with the two problems that I just identified, the horizontal and the vertical cleavages.

00:39:49.340 --> 00:39:55.440

<v SPEAKER_2>Those are the ones that he seems to not really be, in fact, as interested in dealing with.

00:39:55.440 --> 00:39:59.580

<v SPEAKER_1>Seems to be pretty fundamental though, because that's really the future of the country.

00:39:59.580 --> 00:40:01.500

<v SPEAKER_2>Right, so we need new trading relationships.

00:40:01.500 --> 00:40:02.280

<v SPEAKER_2>That's great.

00:40:02.280 --> 00:40:03.440

<v SPEAKER_2>You've got to put the effort in there.

00:40:03.440 --> 00:40:06.620

<v SPEAKER_2>We've got to spend more money on defence, and we can talk about the Arctic.

00:40:06.620 --> 00:40:15.300

<v SPEAKER_2>I always find it interesting that we spend so much time talking about the Arctic, when the threat is coming actually at our southern border, not our northern border, to the same extent.

00:40:15.300 --> 00:40:18.520

<v SPEAKER_2>But I mean, it's obviously more complicated than that.

00:40:18.520 --> 00:40:29.140

<v SPEAKER_2>But there seems to be an ease with being able to deal with these things, whereas this other cleavage is this generational vertical cleavage.

00:40:29.140 --> 00:40:32.340

<v SPEAKER_2>We really haven't seen a ton out of the government on how to deal with that.

00:40:32.780 --> 00:40:36.820

<v SPEAKER_2>And that's something that's very personal to Canadians, particularly younger Canadians.

00:40:36.820 --> 00:40:42.040

<v SPEAKER_2>And those horizontal cleavages, when we talk about what's going on in the province of Quebec, what Mr.

00:40:42.040 --> 00:40:44.560

<v SPEAKER_2>Carney's view is of that, we haven't really heard.

00:40:44.560 --> 00:40:54.760

<v SPEAKER_2>What's going on in the province of Alberta, other than maybe some good photo ops with the premier of Alberta, Daniel Smith, and the signing of this MOU, that's basically been it.

00:40:54.760 --> 00:40:59.580

<v SPEAKER_2>And then we get back on a plane and we go off to Italy, or we go off to whatever.

00:40:59.580 --> 00:41:05.140

<v SPEAKER_2>So I think the things that are going to rise up and bite him, are going to be the ones that Ian was identifying before.

00:41:05.140 --> 00:41:11.280

<v SPEAKER_2>I do think that this year is going to be a fairly rocky road when it comes to national unity.

00:41:11.280 --> 00:41:13.660

<v SPEAKER_2>And it's not an issue that we've seen Mr.

00:41:13.660 --> 00:41:30.480

<v SPEAKER_2>Kearney be really that comfortable with, expressing a point of view on, or even the same way that Jean Chrétien tried to do it, and certainly other national political leaders have tried to do it at other times, where he's really rallied Canadians to our national cause.

00:41:30.820 --> 00:41:39.740

<v SPEAKER_2>You don't really get a sense of that type of romantic appeal from him, that inspirational type of an appeal.

00:41:39.740 --> 00:41:41.740

<v SPEAKER_2>So I think it's going to be interesting.

00:41:41.740 --> 00:41:50.300

<v SPEAKER_2>The issue for me on Alberta, whether it ends up being like a Brexit type of a situation, which nobody thought was possible.

00:41:50.300 --> 00:41:54.280

<v SPEAKER_2>And I keep reminding people nobody thought it was possible until it was.

00:41:54.280 --> 00:41:58.220

<v SPEAKER_2>What I'm also worried about is the amount of time and bandwidth this is going to take up.

00:41:58.920 --> 00:42:04.220

<v SPEAKER_2>We're going to take up a lot of time talking about this and dealing with this as we're trying to deal with all of these other issues.

00:42:04.220 --> 00:42:08.440

<v SPEAKER_2>And then we're going to slide into dealing with the issue in the province of Quebec potentially.

00:42:08.580 --> 00:42:11.400

<v SPEAKER_2>And these two things could ping pong off of each other.

00:42:11.400 --> 00:42:17.100

<v SPEAKER_2>So I'm actually quite concerned about how this year is going to evolve, but not from the areas that Mr.

00:42:17.100 --> 00:42:19.600

<v SPEAKER_2>Kearney has been taking huge action on.

00:42:19.600 --> 00:42:23.620

<v SPEAKER_2>It's actually these internal issues that I think are going to be the ones that are going to be really troubling.

00:42:25.020 --> 00:42:25.520

<v SPEAKER_1>Interesting.

00:42:25.520 --> 00:42:39.300

<v SPEAKER_1>Ian, this podcast is about foreign policy and defence and national security, but it's all premised on sort of solid footing of national security and national prosperity.

00:42:39.300 --> 00:42:41.000
<v SPEAKER_1>Are we missing the plot?

00:42:44.020 --> 00:42:53.900
<v SPEAKER_3>Well, your original question, if I can maybe frame it that way, was about national security strategy, defence strategy, defence industrial strategy, and so forth.

00:42:53.900 --> 00:43:17.580
<v SPEAKER_3>These have been, insofar as we've been through them, and we haven't had a national security strategy in 25 years, at least stated as such in Canada, is that these are very Ottawa centric inside the Ottawa machinery of government, communications exercises to move some people around PCO, or to change some reporting relationships between PCO and some of the line departments.

00:43:17.580 --> 00:43:18.100
<v SPEAKER_3>And that's fine.

00:43:18.100 --> 00:43:19.300
<v SPEAKER_3>There's a time and a place for that.

00:43:19.520 --> 00:43:26.480
<v SPEAKER_3>And we've all worked in government to understand that the internal operations of government matter to people who are inside government.

00:43:26.480 --> 00:43:36.460
<v SPEAKER_3>The challenge this time is the country's prosperity is challenged by what could be a generational break in easy access to the US market.

00:43:36.460 --> 00:43:40.400
<v SPEAKER_3>I mean, like epically easy, like so easy that we've never even thought about it.

00:43:40.400 --> 00:43:43.480
<v SPEAKER_3>We haven't thought about it since the NAFTA agreement was signed, really.

00:43:43.480 --> 00:43:49.480
<v SPEAKER_3>I mean, there are some issues around dairy and around some auto parts and around some software blumber issues.

00:43:49.480 --> 00:43:53.680
<v SPEAKER_3>But really, we don't really think about getting access to the US market.

00:43:53.680 --> 00:43:55.900

<v SPEAKER_3>In fact, that's been the challenge of trying to diversify.

00:43:55.900 --> 00:43:59.380

<v SPEAKER_3>So it's so easy to sell to New York state or Idaho.

00:43:59.660 --> 00:44:01.740

<v SPEAKER_3>Why would we sell to Indonesia?

00:44:02.220 --> 00:44:04.080

<v SPEAKER_3>Why would we sell to Liechtenstein?

00:44:05.900 --> 00:44:16.780

<v SPEAKER_3>I think the starting point is that that aspect of national prosperity and the sovereignty of the flow of service is now at risk in a way that we have not seen before.

00:44:17.300 --> 00:44:23.660

<v SPEAKER_3>And that trying to prepare Canada to be resilient to that risk is a generational exercise.

00:44:23.660 --> 00:44:25.400

<v SPEAKER_3>It's not the remainder of Mr.

00:44:25.400 --> 00:44:29.960

<v SPEAKER_3>Carney's term, however long that is, assuming he gets eight years or 10 years or something like that.

00:44:29.960 --> 00:44:33.140

<v SPEAKER_3>It's an exercise that's going to extend well past that.

00:44:34.920 --> 00:44:45.900

<v SPEAKER_3>We have assumed since the 95 referendum that Canada will be united or that if there is a national unity problem and it breaks around the Quebec border, can't make that assumption anymore.

00:44:46.440 --> 00:44:54.200

<v SPEAKER_3>Hectoring people to be united or hectoring people to be part of Team Canada is the worst way to approach that.

00:44:54.200 --> 00:45:02.500

<v SPEAKER_3>There's got to be some proof point that that collective national security and national prosperity is going to be secured into the future.

00:45:02.500 --> 00:45:07.040

<v SPEAKER_3>Included as part of that is the lesson that you already taught me in government, Colin.

00:45:07.040 --> 00:45:18.940

<v SPEAKER_3>We have a huge long border with the United States, with the most prosperous, most dynamic country on the planet, with one of the major superpowers of the world, with one of the major superpowers of the world for the bulk of my life.

00:45:18.940 --> 00:45:22.580

<v SPEAKER_3>They're not going anywhere, and so in a sense we have to get along.

00:45:22.580 --> 00:45:29.680

<v SPEAKER_3>We may not like this side of the other thing that the president says, but this has been an issue for your entire career, my entire career in government.

00:45:29.680 --> 00:45:32.200

<v SPEAKER_3>There's always some president that says something that we don't like.

00:45:32.200 --> 00:45:34.280

<v SPEAKER_3>We nonetheless have to get along.

00:45:34.280 --> 00:45:38.280

<v SPEAKER_3>There is no world in which we don't get along with the United States in some sense.

00:45:38.280 --> 00:45:45.720

<v SPEAKER_3>And so these are challenges that if I could extend me what Darrell said about Mr.

00:45:45.720 --> 00:46:07.220

<v SPEAKER_3>Carney enjoying his European travel, by my account, he's met the president of France more often than he's met most of the premiers in Canada in the year since he became effectively the Prime Minister of Canada, I guess it's been 10 months, but really 12 months since he became effectively the liberal leader.

00:46:07.220 --> 00:46:09.900

<v SPEAKER_3>He's not very good at the domestic communication here.

00:46:10.300 --> 00:46:11.580

<v SPEAKER_3>He has a huge amount of goodwill.

00:46:11.700 --> 00:46:13.100

<v SPEAKER_3>I think Darrell's right about that.

00:46:13.100 --> 00:46:24.280

<v SPEAKER_3>People want him to succeed and really it's a low bar because people have depressed expectations of what the federal government can do, particularly vis-a-vis the United States, but we sort of depressed our expectations of what the federal government can

do, period.

00:46:24.280 --> 00:46:33.780

<v SPEAKER_3>But nonetheless, he's not out talking to Canadians, mobilizing across partisan barriers to try to prepare people for the challenges that are coming.

00:46:33.780 --> 00:46:40.860

<v SPEAKER_3>From time to time, he says something about, oh, we're going to have to pay a price here, but he is not a very good national unity politician.

00:46:40.860 --> 00:46:44.700

<v SPEAKER_3>At least he hasn't demonstrated that so far.

00:46:44.700 --> 00:46:52.880

<v SPEAKER_3>Good at traveling around Europe, good at sometimes at traveling in Asia, good at the international telephone conversations when they have to be made.

00:46:52.880 --> 00:47:00.160

<v SPEAKER_3>But his level of outreach to domestic leaders across partisan divide here in Canada has been weak.

00:47:00.160 --> 00:47:03.800

<v SPEAKER_3>His travel across Canada to engage with Canadians has been weak.

00:47:04.300 --> 00:47:10.400

<v SPEAKER_3>And this is a year in which I think that aspect of his leadership is going to be put under pressure in a way it was not in the first year.

00:47:11.860 --> 00:47:12.380

<v SPEAKER_1>All right.

00:47:12.380 --> 00:47:19.260

<v SPEAKER_1>Well, on that depressing note, let me ask you, and I'll start with you, Ian, what are you reading or streaming these days?

00:47:20.800 --> 00:47:29.000

<v SPEAKER_3>Well, I have been reading Why We Drive Towards the Philosophy of the Open Road, which is about five years old now by Matthew Crawford.

00:47:29.680 --> 00:47:35.340

<v SPEAKER_3>It's sort of a philosophical book about why people enjoy driving.

00:47:35.340 --> 00:47:48.420

<v SPEAKER_3>The reason why it's a timely book, I think the reason why he wrote it, is the challenge of automated cars, all the new driving technologies that may put us in boxes and use AI to drive us around.

00:47:48.420 --> 00:47:59.540

<v SPEAKER_3>He's worried about, I might finish the book yet, but my sense is that where the book is driving to, as it were, is that we're losing something human, not just in the driving experience, but in all of our experiences.

00:47:59.540 --> 00:48:15.120

<v SPEAKER_3>That if we've moved effectively away from newspapers and other tactile media to kind of online phone stuff, and we may have lost something about our humanity in that process, that the next piece is losing another stage of the physical excitement and enjoyment of driving.

00:48:15.120 --> 00:48:28.920

<v SPEAKER_3>Not of being moved around, but of actually being in charge of your own automotive future and the excitement that comes from that and so forth and what that pretends for the future of our of our experience of the world around us.

00:48:28.920 --> 00:48:32.340

<v SPEAKER_1>And you know what you speak, having just finished a road trip, as I recall.

00:48:32.340 --> 00:48:34.860

<v SPEAKER_3>Yes, I start and start another one tomorrow.

00:48:34.860 --> 00:48:36.300

<v SPEAKER_3>Start another one tomorrow.

00:48:36.300 --> 00:48:38.460

<v SPEAKER_3>I'm trying to get them in while I still can.

00:48:38.460 --> 00:48:41.200

<v SPEAKER_1>All right, Darrell, what are you reading or streaming?

00:48:41.200 --> 00:48:44.180

<v SPEAKER_2>Well, I gave you a spoilers alert.

00:48:44.180 --> 00:48:49.580

<v SPEAKER_2>I'm rereading Richard Gwyn's fabulous two-volume biography of John A.

00:48:49.580 --> 00:48:50.080

<v SPEAKER_2>Macdonald.

00:48:50.580 --> 00:49:01.180

<v SPEAKER_2>And after writing Breaking Point, it is shocking to me the degree to which we've gone through these things before.

00:49:01.180 --> 00:49:28.600

<v SPEAKER_2>The things that we identify in Breaking Point are, we would call them fathers of Confederation because they all were at the time, how they dealt with very, very similar issues back in the mid to late 19th century, and how the parallels of what was happening back then very much show what we're, I would say parallel what we're dealing with right now.

00:49:28.600 --> 00:49:43.240

<v SPEAKER_2>Now the thing that is very different though, is the degree to which Canada really identified, getting back to that George Grant question, our relationship at the time, that was pre-commonwealth, but our relationship to the British Empire.

00:49:43.240 --> 00:49:50.980

<v SPEAKER_2>The restraint that the United States showed, because they were worried about the British, basically not the British Army, but the British Navy.

00:49:52.260 --> 00:49:54.980

<v SPEAKER_2>The degree to which that's now disappeared.

00:49:54.980 --> 00:50:02.900

<v SPEAKER_2>When you look at what the restraint is on the United States, there was actually a military restraint on them previously that no longer exists.

00:50:03.500 --> 00:50:11.960

<v SPEAKER_2>Their ability to do to us as Donald Trump is doing to us right now, was was restrained to a certain extent.

00:50:11.960 --> 00:50:14.380

<v SPEAKER_2>And it's really shocking how that comes out.

00:50:14.380 --> 00:50:32.660

<v SPEAKER_2>But everything through to building the Trans-Canada Railway, the dealing with the Indigenous community back then, the rebellion of 1885, the second rebellion by Louis Riel, some of these issues, the echoes in history to things that we're dealing with right now are definitely there.

00:50:32.660 --> 00:50:54.120

<v SPEAKER_2>And the most interesting part of it to me is how they were actually able to come up with solutions, how they were able to struggle with these issues, and in a time when the country was very new and its future was very uncertain, how they were able to rally the country together and people who had very different interests from

province to province.

00:50:54.120 --> 00:51:00.960

<v SPEAKER_2>And I don't, I may say this in Breaking Point, but I certainly say it when I present on Breaking Point, how John A.

00:51:00.960 --> 00:51:05.920

<v SPEAKER_2>Macdonald had this amazing capacity to get people to accept a glass half full.

00:51:07.540 --> 00:51:10.760

<v SPEAKER_2>And that was the way he was able to bring the country together.

00:51:10.760 --> 00:51:14.940

<v SPEAKER_2>My question about Mark Carney is whether or not he has the same talent.

00:51:14.940 --> 00:51:23.720

<v SPEAKER_2>Because that's what it took in order to bring this country together, and it's going to take similar types of talents from our national leaders going forward.

00:51:23.720 --> 00:51:30.720

<v SPEAKER_2>To get people to find a way to keep us together when the pull to the south is going to be as extreme as it is.

00:51:30.720 --> 00:51:41.860

<v SPEAKER_2>And I would think anybody who wants to read a great book, a two-volume book about it, should crack the covers of what Richard Gwyn wrote, because it's very, very relevant today.

00:51:41.860 --> 00:51:52.700

<v SPEAKER_1>Darrell, I heartily endorse, I spent an afternoon when I was writing the Historica Foundation with Richard when he just finished writing the books, and Charlotte Gray was defending Sir John A.

00:51:52.700 --> 00:51:56.120

<v SPEAKER_1>Macdonald as the greatest Canadian in the CBC competition.

00:51:56.120 --> 00:51:58.220

<v SPEAKER_1>And certainly Sir John A would have gotten my vote.

00:51:58.220 --> 00:52:01.400

<v SPEAKER_1>I still have one of the posters from that CBC competition.

00:52:01.400 --> 00:52:04.380

<v SPEAKER_1>I think it was Tommy Douglas who won for Medicare.

00:52:04.380 --> 00:52:18.840

<v SPEAKER_1>But I thought, as you do, that just as George Washington was vital to the American creation of the United States as we know it, Sir John A really did bring this disparate group together.

00:52:18.840 --> 00:52:30.460

<v SPEAKER_1>And as you point out, dealing with really tough issues at the time of what we would call unity, but also prosperity, with railway and the rebellion, the Ravel rebellion and things, it really was remarkable.

00:52:30.460 --> 00:52:35.140

<v SPEAKER_1>And I do think that Gwyn was one of his rights beautifully.

00:52:35.480 --> 00:52:40.660

<v SPEAKER_1>It is a book that should be back on the curriculum for Canadians.

00:52:40.820 --> 00:52:42.300

<v SPEAKER_2>I 100 percent agree.

00:52:42.460 --> 00:52:45.960

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think for our times, it is actually a book for our times.

00:52:45.960 --> 00:52:47.400

<v SPEAKER_1>Yeah, I think you're right.

00:52:47.400 --> 00:52:54.560

<v SPEAKER_1>Along with your wonderful new book, and I'm going to give another plug for it, Breaking Point, The New Big Shifts Putting Canada at Risk.

00:52:57.520 --> 00:52:59.680

<v SPEAKER_1>I have started it, I have not finished it.

00:52:59.680 --> 00:53:02.960

<v SPEAKER_1>But what I've seen and heard, this is a book that I think we do want to read.

00:53:02.960 --> 00:53:07.840

<v SPEAKER_1>So Breaking Point by Darrell and John Ibbitson.

00:53:07.840 --> 00:53:09.760

<v SPEAKER_1>Thank you for joining us today.

00:53:09.760 --> 00:53:12.740

<v SPEAKER_1>We were joined by Ian Brodie and Darrell Bricker.

00:53:12.740 --> 00:53:22.580

<v SPEAKER_1>And you can find the Canadian Global Affairs Institute on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, and the CGAI Network on iTunes, Spotify and Google Play.

00:53:22.580 --> 00:53:26.480

<v SPEAKER_1>The Global Exchange is brought to you by our team at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

00:53:26.480 --> 00:53:32.120

<v SPEAKER_1>As always, my thanks go to our producer, Jordyn Carroll and to Drew Phillips for providing our music.

00:53:32.120 --> 00:53:33.500

<v SPEAKER_1>I'm Colin Robertson.

00:53:33.500 --> 00:53:35.340

<v SPEAKER_1>Thanks for joining us today on The Global Exchange.