Remarks for the Panel, "The Weakening of the West?"
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I want to begin by thanking and congratulating Joao Espada and the Institute for Political Studies of the Catholic University on this 25th anniversary of the International Meeting in Political Studies and the 20th anniversary of the Institute. Now more than ever, we need institutions that are dedicated to defending liberal values and traditions, to illuminating their origins and lessons, and to understanding the challenges they face.

The question posed for this panel is urgent in its timeliness. There is increasingly a sense that the West is weakening—that individually and collectively, the liberal democracies of Europe and the English-speaking states of North America and Australasia are weakening, and that power and wealth are shifting south and east, of course to China, but also to other rising Asian powers, to the Gulf states, to other emerging market economies of the global south, and to Russia.

It was inevitable that the West, with just 15 percent of the world's population and a steadily shrinking share at that, would decline in its share of power and wealth. This has been a long-term trend. The story of the last several decades, and especially the post-Cold War era, has been one of slowing economic growth in the rich countries—again, a structural inevitability as economies mature and population growth declines—and accelerating economic growth in the East Asian tiger states, then China, and more recently other developing countries like India and large parts of Latin America and Africa. The whole world benefits when economic growth disperses widely, and as the economist Steven Radelet documents in his book, *The Great Surge*, the last several decades have seen rates of poverty reduction, wealth creation, and improvements in human well-being that are without precedent in human history.[1]

It was also inevitable that the size of the Chinese economy was going to equal and then surpass that of the United States. Just do the math: How long could a country with one-quarter the population of China maintain an economy more than four times as large as China's? The answer has proved to be: Until about now. The U.S. and Europe will remain, probably for decades to come, richer in per capita terms than China, but we now need to accommodate to a reality of China having the world's largest national economy. The United States retains by far the most powerful military in the world, but that balance, too, is shifting, particularly in Asia. The U.S. can no longer confidently force China to back down in a future confrontation, as it did in 1996, when it sent two carrier battle groups to either end of the Strait of Taiwan during a period of tension between the Beijing authorities and what they regard as an illegitimate government in Taipei. In fact, China is developing—and may already have—anti-ship missiles that could sink a U.S. aircraft carrier.

One could point to many other ways in which the balance of military power is shifting. One of these is the diffusion of weapons of mass destruction, to the point where a minor but fanatical and totalitarian power, North Korea, has accumulated something like 25 nuclear weapons and is now engaged in a frenzied quest to develop the capacity to put these on an intercontinental ballistic missile. If North Korea is not stopped, it will probably have within a decade the ability to obliterate Washington, D.C. with a nuclear-tipped ICBM. We should all ponder seriously what this would mean for the global balance of power. Iran's frenzied pursuit of a nuclear weapon was stopped by the recent deal with the United States, but if it holds, that is a temporary halt that will expire after 15 years. Terrorist groups have sought

to acquire nuclear, chemical, and other means to kill en masse. And then there is the new class of weapons that can kill and disrupt on a massive scale silently, even anonymously, through cyberspace. This is unconventional and asymmetric warfare in which Russia, most of all, but also China and a number of other non-Western states are making rapid strides, and we have already seen the impact in the Russian hacking and trolling of the 2016 U.S. elections—what I think has rightly been called a cyber version of 9/11, and certainly a harbinger of much, much more to come.

It is now documented that Russia not only intervened to shape, distort, and inflame the social media space during the campaign, it also hacked into the voter registration systems of a number of U.S. states and counties, probing and gathering intelligence that it could use to digitally rig future elections in the United States. In the U.S.—and I suspect other Western democracies—our voting systems are antiquated and vulnerable to sophisticated cyber-subversion. They urgently need to be modernized and hardened to prevent and detect digital fraud. This will require research, training, technological innovation, funding, and basic common sense: No vote of consequence should ever be conducted in a democracy that cannot be audited and verified through a recount of paper ballots.

Most of all, countering this looming cyber threat to the operational infrastructure of our democracies necessitates a broader change of mindset that must be mobilized if the West is not to weaken fatally. We must shed the blithe self-confidence that our pre-eminence, indeed our security, is unassailable—that Western democracies will remain globally dominant because we have been for so long, because we lead in knowledge, institutions, and innovation, or because we have moral right on our side. There is nothing inevitable about the economic, scientific, or even military pre-eminence of the West—and in any case, it is increasingly clear that in military terms, if the West is to hang together in NATO and deter the rising Russian challenge, all of its members must renew and take seriously their commitments.

Global Power

I want now to lay out a framework for thinking about whether and how the West is weakening, through three dimensions: Power, institutions, and values. Power is always relational, so we must consider: power vis-à-vis whom? If the military, economic, technological, and/or political (which is to say in part diplomatic) power of the West is weakening, who is rising in its place? Is the West really weakening if the powers that rise to compete with it economically and technologically are other liberal democracies in, say, East Asia and Latin America? I hardly think so. Such competition presents more of an opportunity than a challenge: The opportunity to incorporate newly maturing liberal democracies into a broader conception of what the West is: A collection of successful, advanced market economies that share liberal democratic institutions and values. The West becomes stronger when that coalition enlarges in number and across geographic and cultural space. Thus, Japan has long been a member of the G7. It is an established liberal democracy, and we must consider it part of "The West." In this fundamental sense of shared values and institutions, Korea and Taiwan are also part of the West, and arguably so are the more economically developed and entrenched democracies of Latin America. Of the 35 countries of the OECD, there are only two non-democratic states: Turkey, which has oscillated back and forth between democracy and authoritarianism since it joined at the inception of the OECD in 1961, and Hungary, which has in recent years crossed the line from illiberal democracy into competitive authoritarianism, with an increasingly pugnacious belligerence toward liberal principles.

We ask whether the West is weakening because (I hope) we care much more about preserving what the West has stood for—the tradition of liberty under law (to quote the title of this conference)—than we do about sustaining the economic and political hegemony of this geographic and cultural zone. Indeed, the West is and will be stronger to the extent that it is able to continue to attract, integrate and empower people from diverse nations and religions who commit to the liberal creed. Nothing has been more vital to the strength and success of the United States over time than this ability to attract immigrants, cultivate and unleash their talents and ambitions, and meld them into "E pluribus, unum." So we are talking about a particular form of competition here, between the Western democracies and other powers, current or potential rival powers that do not believe in liberty or the rule of law. The question then, is this: Is the democratic West weakening relative to authoritarian regimes that are hostile to our values: countries like China, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and now, sadly, we must add to the list, Turkey?

Here the answer is more complex, but the trends are worrisome. Since we will have some considerable discussion of Europe and NATO—and (I hope) the threat posed by an expansionist, kleptocratic and unstable Russian regime, let me just say a further word here about China. Right now, China is the most dynamic power in the world. It is China that is pushing new geopolitical projects and institutions without (as in the case of Russia) relying (at least so far) on military force, namely the Asian Infrastructure Bank and the daring "One Belt and One Road". The latter, a vast network of new transportation and energy infrastructure projects, would link China with Central, South, and West Asia, all the way to Europe, potentially engaging dozens of countries with a combined GDP of $21 trillion. According to a recent essay by a Chinese official, "it aims to create the world's largest platform for economic cooperation, including policy coordination, trade and financing collaboration, and social and cultural cooperation."[2] There is nothing like this global vision or investment coming from the United States, or any collection of Western democracies. And this is not to mention the spectacular expansion of Chinese aid and investment worldwide, including throughout Africa and Latin America, which by many accounts makes China now the largest bilateral source of foreign assistance in the world, as well as the increasingly energetic and sophisticated projection of Chinese cultural and political soft power through grants to universities and think tanks and funding of Confucius institutes.[3] This power projection can be—as neo-colonialism is—heavy-handed and arrogant, provoking resentment in the host society when it wakes up to the hidden and self-serving agendas behind the aid. But for now and possibly many years to come, the greatest initiative, vision, and institutional innovation in the world is coming from China, not the United States. And this constitutes a more serious long-term challenge to the global leadership of the liberal democratic West than does Russian aggression and subversion. Russia lacks an organic foundation for economic growth and technological dynamism beyond its criminal petro-state, whereas China has a dynamic private sector, even if it is heavily state-linked. In other words, beyond the fact that China has a much bigger population and economy than Russia's, it is soon going to be richer than Russia even in per capita terms, and its geopolitical rise is much more sustainable.[4]

Institutions and Values

The global power of China, and regionally, for the moment, Russia, is rising not only because of their own actions and strategies but because of the institutional weakness and normative decay of the liberal West. Institutionally, we need to assess the strength of liberal institutions at the levels of both the international system and the nation-states.

I am not going to say much here about international institutions, save that the set of liberal internationalist institutions constructed by Truman and Acheson and the victorious

democratic alliance after World War II are now badly fraying and in need of reform. The U.S. and European dominance of these institutions cannot be indefinitely preserved without hollowing them out and leaving the way for the emergence of ultimately more powerful rival institutions. That is part of the message of the creation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. That is why the Trans-Pacific Partnership was so visionary and so much needed. It was not only a way of moving economic integration forward—and with more serious labor and environmental standards than probably any new multilateral trade agreement outside the European Common Market—but a strategy for constructing a broader arena of economic and political association in Asia in which the United States would be central and in which China would not dominate. The U.S. decision to withdraw from the TPP is the most grievous self-inflicted wound to America's position of global leadership since the creation of the liberal world order after World War II. It is a massive gift to authoritarian China, an underestimated blow to democratic aspirations in Southeast Asia, and a stunning symbol and accelerator of China's rise and America's descent on the Asian—and therefore inevitably, global—stage.

As a democracy scholar, what has worried me for many years now is the weakness and volatility of democratic institutions at the level of the nation-states, and specifically, the roughly 120 that could be termed at least electoral democracies. The world has been in a democratic recession for more than a decade now. In each of the last eleven years, as documented by Freedom House, more countries have declined than have gained in their levels of political rights, civil liberties, or both. Usually, the ratio has been two to one, in the wrong direction, reversing a fifteen-year post-Cold War trend in which in almost every year after 1990, more countries gained than declined in freedom, often by a factor of two to one or more in the right direction. In addition, more democracies have been breaking down, and typically not by the older established method of sudden death, by military or executive coup, but rather by a slow, steady process of degradation and strangulation at the hands of skilled elected autocrats such as Vladimir Putin, Hugo Chavez, Recip Tayyip Erdogan, and Viktor Orban (even though much of Europe and the rest of the world has yet to wake up to or summon the political courage to recognize the full scale of what Orban and his Fidesz party have done to diminish liberal freedoms and degrade checks and balances and the playing field for electoral competition).

While a clear majority of the world's states are still electoral democracies, if one applies any kind of rigorous standard (of truly free and fair elections) to this minimum condition of democracy, then it is hard to find much more than half (about 54%) of states over one million people qualifying as electoral democracies. Moreover, many of these states are quite ambiguous in their political character, and if we look more closely, many of these—such as Nigeria, Kenya, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Guatemala—might be better categorized as competitive authoritarian regimes.[5] And worse still, the trend is moving in the wrong direction, with several more European countries, particularly Poland but also of late the Czech Republic and others, pursuing illiberal agendas that threaten judicial independence, press freedom, civil society, and therefore liberal democracy, if not democracy itself. In short, within Europe, Orban could be a harbinger of much worse to come if the EU does not summon the will and the means to call out and meaningfully sanction the retreat from liberal and democratic norms. Outside the West, big democracies like Turkey and Bangladesh have already descended into authoritarianism, and others are clearly at risk. The rule of law is under siege in the Philippines, where a murderous, populist strongman with nothing but contempt for the rule of law, President Rodrigo Duterte, has gleefully presided over the extrajudicial murder of more than 7,000 claimed drug pushers and users (many of them innocent of any crime), and is well along in a campaign to bring the Supreme Court, the

Congress, and other countervailing institutions to heel. Indonesia dodged a bullet in its 2014 presidential election, when the relatively liberal, pluralist, and decent Jakarta Governor, Joko Widodo ("Jokowi"), defeated retired general Prabowo Subianto for the presidency. But Jokowi's margin was far from a landslide, and Prabowo—the thuggish son-in-law of the former dictator, Suharto, who was responsible for significant human rights abuses as the dictatorship was disintegrating—is now siding with Islamist extremists who are on the rise as the turbulent country begins to look toward the next presidential contest in 2019.

The growing pressure on Christian and other non-Muslim minorities in Indonesia—which last month claimed its most prominent victim when Ahok, the Christian Governor of Jakarta, was sentenced to two years in prison on outrageously specious charges of blasphemy—embodies one of the greatest threats to the historic Western project of liberty under law: Religious and ethnic intolerance. Throughout the ages, ruthless and ambitious seekers after power have always found it useful to mobilize around identity ties. Unfortunately, when politics mobilizes around identity, it becomes a slippery slope from working networks of solidarity and kinship to feeding and indeed inventing narratives of prejudice based on imagined or exaggerated injury and threat. It was thought by many of the great social theorists of the last two centuries that with modernization, identity ties of ethnicity, nation, and religion would give way to more functional lines of cleavage based on social class, ideological program, and functional interests, but we have seen that identity has an emotive resilience and enduring appeal that can never be permanently laid to rest. Moreover, in a context of political or social competition, frustration, or anger—naturally recurring phenomena in any society—identity always provides a potentially potent frame of interpretation and mobilization. So now are in the midst of a pervasive set of eruptions of identity politics, from Poland and Hungary to Indonesia and Burma (with its growing Buddhist extremist movement against its Muslim minority), from Russia and China (which are each, in their own ways, mobilizing nationalism against the liberal West to delegitimize liberal values and distract from their own governance failures) to Europe and the United States (where right-wing populist parties and candidates have mobilized political followings and even won elections on the basis of nativist, anti-immigrant identity politics and exclusivist versions of nationalism). Whether we look broadly around the world or turn the lens searchingly, as we must, inward, we find that illiberal populism now constitutes one of the greatest threats to the Western liberal tradition. And it is as much a threat from within as from without, challenging some of the core normative foundations that have enabled the rise and resilience of Western democracy: religious and social pluralism; tolerance for social and political differences, and thus a renunciation of coercion and violence in politics; openness to innovation and immigration; moderation, reason, a respect for evidence, and a willingness to listen, debate, and compromise. Since we are convened here by Joao Espada, I will just briefly note what I know Joao and many other great political thinkers could and probably will say with much greater depth and eloquence: These are the enemies of what Karl Popper called the "open society", and they are growing in number inside the democracies of the West, both virtually in cyberspace, and visibly, and even murderously, in the physical world.

As a result, the democracies of the West now confront a complex set of internal challenges which hostile authoritarian powers like Russia and China can aggravate and exploit, but which the latter certainly did not create. It will take much more time, historical distance, and social science research to properly diagnose the origins of our current stress (if not crisis), but this much is clear. The institutions of the established Western liberal democracies are under serious challenge from within. Many of them are stressed by growing political polarization, the rise of serious illiberal populist movements of the right (and increasingly of

the left), instability and decline of political parties and the existing party system, and rising if not chronic patterns of cynicism, protest, or disengagement on the part of citizens. As a general proposition, we should not fear political change. It is the capacity of democracies to change and evolve peacefully that enables them to endure and remain stable for the long run, and this applies not only to policies and ruling parties but to the party system and even the electoral and governing institutions. I am personally convinced that a big part of the problem in the U.S. and the U.K. is the dreadfully outmoded and inflexible system of the first-past-the-post voting, which makes it formidably difficult for new and innovative parties to rise and displace the two dominant existing ones. When one marries that to the pseudo-democratic innovation of party primaries—in which the politically faithful and more ideologically motivated party identifiers turn out disproportionately to nominate party leaders and candidates—it is no wonder that we have the deepening death spiral of political polarization that we see in Britain and the United States. And it is no accident that it was in France, with its two-ballot system that is more friendly to new political alternatives, where a creative centrist alternative was able to emerge and quickly rise to dominance. If liberal democracy is to renew its health and vigor in the UK and the U.S., electoral reform is urgently needed to permit the rise of independent and creative centrist candidates (and possibly a progressive centrist party, like the Liberal Democrats in the UK) that can bridge the current ideological divides and offer innovative but pragmatic solutions to the great policy questions we are confronting. The obvious choice set for electoral reform here is either: 1) the two-round system, as used in France; 2) moderate forms of proportional representation as used in Scandinavia; 3) the mixed-member system as used in Germany; or 4) the Alternative Vote (also known as Ranked Choice Voting) as used to elect the lower house of Australia. Of these options, I favor Ranked Choice Voting for the U.S. and U.K., because it is most compatible with their deeply engrained traditions of the single-member district and their preference for majoritarian or two-party dominant systems, yet it still encourages both innovation and moderation. It has worked reasonably well to induce moderation in Australia. As a condition for joining the Conservative government in coalition following the 2010 general election in the UK, the Liberal Democrats extracted a promise to hold a national referendum on adopting the Alternative Vote in the UK. But the referendum, held in May 2011, was rushed and poorly prepared intellectually and politically. After what one observer described as a "bad-tempered and ill-informed public debate," the referendum was defeated decisively, by a two-thirds "no" vote, in a low-turnout (of 42 percent) special election.[6] An opportunity for Britain to break past the stale polarization of Left and Right was lost, possibly for a generation. Last November, the State of Maine voted 52 percent in favor of a similar voter initiative that adopted Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) for all its elections for state legislature, governor, and US House and Senate, but the Maine Supreme Court recently invalidated it on technical grounds.[7] There is growing interest in RCV in other U.S. states, each of which has the legal authority either by state legislative action and/or by voter initiative to adopt it for its own state and U.S. congressional elections. But the Maine decision is a serious if temporary setback to reform efforts. In the meantime, efforts to depolarize politics in the U.S. are focusing as well on two reforms. The first would move toward open and non-partisan primaries, as the state of California did when it adopted the "top-two" system of "blanket primaries" (in which all candidates contest in a first round, and the two go on to the general election, regardless of their party affiliation). The second reform would eliminate partisan gerrymandering of state legislative and congressional districts, as California did again in 2010 by voter initiative. The state of Ohio will vote this November on a creative citizen initiative that would require that US congressional district boundaries be drawn in such as way to ensure as much as possible proportionality between votes and seats.[8] Non-

partisan and balanced redistricting is desirable not only as a matter of basic democratic fairness but also because it tends to result in more competitive districts, and when districts are more competitive, their representatives tend to be more moderate because they must appeal to (or bear in mind the sensitivities of) the median voter, lest the district swing in the next election against a hardline, ideological voting record.

Institutional reforms can only do so much. Political polarization in the United States has deep social and cultural drivers, including in particular the rise of social media, which is becoming not only an invigorating but more recently an increasingly toxic force in democratic politics, eroding civility, tolerance, pluralism, and reason and deepening encapsulation in what are called "echo chambers" of like-minded and reinforcing partisans. In addition, in the U.S. and UK both, polarization is driven as well by the increasing cultural and social distance between urban and rural or ex-urban spaces. The great urban settings are generally cosmopolitan, pluralistic, tolerant and liberal. As one moves further out to more suburban and then rural settings, communities and political views become more traditional, more religious, more wary of newcomers, and more conservative. No one has yet figured out how to bridge this divide, and in the U.S., the two Americas barely speak to or know one another.

Values

I lack the space here to adequately explore perhaps the most alarming reason for concern about the Western tradition of liberty under law: The growing signs of normative erosion from within Western societies. As Roberto Foa and Yascha Mounk have shown in two recent *Journal of Democracy* articles,[9] there is broad and growing disaffection with liberal democratic values and institutions in a number of Western liberal democracies, with many societies, especially the United States, exhibiting a pattern of declining support for democracy with each step down the generational ladder, most strikingly among youth (citizens under 29). This suggests that surging support for illiberal populist parties and candidates is not some temporary anomaly but has deepening normative roots, reflecting broad cynicism with the political establishment, long-standing and well known patterns of declining confidence in government, weak knowledge of democratic institutions and practices, and growing openness to implicit or even explicit authoritarian alternatives. For example, in no major Western liberal democracy surveyed by the World Values Survey in 2010-11 (its most recent round) did less than a fifth of the public support the option of "having a strong leader who doesn't have to bother with parliament and elections." And in the United States, the proportion supporting the idea of having the Army rule the country increased from one-sixteenth of the public to one-sixth over a twenty-year period—again with young people strikingly most supportive of both options. Although Foa and Mounk have been criticized by many other social scientists for their interpretations of the data and for over-generalizing their findings, the fact is that many different surveys—and now elections—show declining faith in liberal democratic institutions and values in a number of Western democracies, and rising willingness to support or indulge soft or even hard authoritarian options. And in a number of countries, this is most alarmingly evident among the young. An article we will publish soon in the Journal of Democracy by Paul Howe, shows these sentiments are strongly correlated with a general decline in ethical norms (endorsing bribery, tax cheating, claiming false government benefits, and so on).

I want to conclude with this point: We are very far from fully understanding what is happening, the full scope of what is happening, and the full range of factors that are driving. I think the intensity, competitiveness, fragmentation, and cynicism of social media and our general media age is a part of it. Rising economic inequality and insecurity are no doubt a

part of it. Then too is the general sense of vulnerability and social threat, which can be, for people not accustomed to social pluralism, aggravated by immigration or perceptions of foreigners coming in to take their jobs and benefits and undermine their culture.

But two things are clear to me. We must find ways to update and reform our political institutions to make reduce political polarization and facilitate political and policy innovation. And we must renew the task, which has fallen by the wayside out of apathy and distraction, of educating young people deeply and relentlessly in the history and values of liberal democracy. We are all obsessed now with fundamentals and technology in education. We need to teach math and basic reading and writing skills from an early change. Now it is said (and I am sympathetic) we should start teaching kids to code from an early age. This will be a crucial skill for the rest of their lives, at least to understand if not practice and advance. But there is no more important skill to the future of our democracy than liberal, tolerant and engaged citizenship. If we do not teach and cultivate that, steadily throughout the school curriculum from start to finish, and in new ands creative ways beyond the schools, we are at risk of losing everything that matters in the Western tradition of liberty under law.

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[1] Steven Radelet, *The Great Surge: The Ascent of the Developing World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015), and Radelet, "The Rise of the World's Poorest Countries," *Journal of Democracy* 26 (October 2015): 5-19, http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/article/rise-world%E2%80%99s-poorest-countries.

[2] Tian Jenchen, "One Belt and one Road: Connecting the World," http://www.mckinsey.com/industries/capital-projects-and-infrastructure/our-insights/one-belt-and-one-road-connecting-china-and-the-world.

[3] Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, and Christopher Walker, eds., *Authoritarianism Goes Global* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016); Anne-Marie Brady, "China's Foreign Propaganda Machine," in *Authoritarianism Goes Global*, chapter 7; Walker, Plattner, and Diamond, "Authoritarianism Goes Global," *The American Interest,* March 28, 2016;

[4] According to the IMF, China's current per capita in come in purchasing power parity dollars is $15,399 and Russia's is $26,490, but even if China is over-reporting its economic growth, it is probably at least 4 percent annually right now in per capita terms, while Russia's economy has been stagnant or declining. China's population is nearly ten times that of Russia and is growing at 0.5% annually; Russia's is growing hardly at all (0.2%).

[5] My own count of the world's electoral democracies has already removed from the list some states, such as Nigeria, that fall below the mid-point on the 7-point scale of civil liberties, but I have generally been conservative (probably too much so) in recoding the annual Freedom House list of "democracies." See the chapters 3 and 4 in my book, *In Search of Democracy* (London: Routledge, 2016).

[6] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_Alternative_Vote_referendum,_2011.

[7] The constitutional language in Maine, which requires elections by plurality for state office, is ambiguous and could have gone either way. The Maine House of Representatives then voted in favor of amending the Maine Constitution to make it compatible with the will of the voters to implement Ranked Choice Voting, but the margin of victory (78-68) did not meet the required two-thirds threshold, and in any case the measure was likely to be defeated in the Republican-controlled Maine State Senate. The voter initiative now lies in limbo, with possible partial implementation for U.S. congressional elections and possible future court challenges. http://www.pressherald.com/2017/06/23/constitutional-amendment-to-fix-ranked-choice-voting-falters-in-house/

[8] In 2016, Ohio cast 52% of its total congressional votes for Republicans and 48% for Democrats, but Republicans hold 12 of the state's 16 congressional seats.

[9] http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/sites/default/files/Foa%26Mounk-27-3.pdf, http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/article/signs-deconsolidation.