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Chair

The Honourable Robert Nault

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.)): Colleagues, let's bring this meeting to order and get down to business.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are studying Canada's engagement in Asia. Before us, representing the United Church of Canada, is Patricia Talbot. As well, by video conference from Honolulu, we have Christine Ahn, representing Women Cross DMZ.

Can you hear me?

Ms. Christine Ahn (Founder and International Coordinator, Women Cross DMZ): I can, thank you.

The Chair: Great.

Representing the Canada Tibet Committee is Carole Samdup.

Ms. Carole Samdup (Program Coordinator, Canada Tibet Committee): Yes, I hear you very well. Thank you.

The Chair: Perfect.

I don't know why I never know this in advance, but who is starting?

I suppose I get to pick, so I'll choose Ms. Talbot.

Patricia, the floor is yours.

Ms. Patricia Talbot (Team Leader, Global Partnerships Program, General Council Office, The United Church of Canada): Thank you very much, Chairman Nault, Vice-Chair Laverdière, and members of the committee, for the opportunity to meet with you today. It is a pleasure and a privilege.

I represent The United Church of Canada and I bring you the greetings of the 42nd moderator of the United Church of Canada, the Right Rev. Jordan Cantwell, and of our general secretary, Ms. Nora Sanders.

As you may know, the United Church is a uniquely Canadian institution, a union of several national churches. It was founded by an act of Parliament in 1925.

Our identity is Canadian, yet we understand ourselves to be part of a global family. That is lived out as we support and accompany global partner churches and organizations with whom we share a vision of a just and peaceful world. Through two of our predecessor churches, the United Church has a history of more than a century of mission engagement and relationships in northeast Asia—in China, Japan, Korea, and more recently in the Philippines. Today, however, I am going to focus my remarks on Canada's relationship, interest, and opportunities with Korea.

The United Church's history with the people of Korea began in a formal way in 1898, when the so-called Canadian Mission was established in Wonsan, on the northeastern coast of what is now the DPRK. Canadian missionaries related to the United Church have lived, served, died, and are buried in what is now North Korea as well as South Korea.

The United Church's Canadian Mission was known for a blended commitment to Christian mission and the social well-being of people, particularly the underprivileged. United Church Canadian Mission emphasized health, in the form of clinics and hospitals; education, especially for girls and impoverished women; and leadership development and capacity building.

Canadian United Church missionaries served in Korea during the Japanese occupation, the Korean war, and the immediate aftermath. After division, United Church presence was limited to the south. Those affiliated with the United Church supported Korean efforts for independence, for democratization, and for human rights.

Today, I would say that the yearning of partners of the United Church in the south and in the north is to promote reconciliation, peace, and reunification in the Korean peninsula. This yearning is shared by many Canadians who are linked to Korea by ties of family and friendship and through shared endeavour in areas of commerce, education, arts and culture, and more. The United Church of Canada, with its 2,800 congregations in Canada, stands with Korean partners and Canadians who seek a just, sustainable peace on the Korean peninsula. We are committed, as the United Church, to do what we can in the mutual journey toward that future.

As your committee prepares to travel to the region, I want to name what may be obvious. I hope that a visit to South Korea may in fact focus on the Korean peninsula and the situation there.

Canadians have an historic commitment to the well-being of the Korean people and a legacy of trust. This moment, a highly complex and even dangerous one, is an opportunity for Canada to engage on the global stage as a bridge-builder committed to the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Having been mostly silent until recently on the Korean peninsula/North Korea file, both bilaterally and multilaterally since about 2010, Canada will need to work to re-establish its credibility on North Korean issues. I think that doing so would be an important building block for reasserting Canada's political and security commitment to the Asia-Pacific region.

What can Canada do? I would like to name four areas for the committee to consider and explore. Before I do so, bear in mind that partners in Korea tell us that peace and human security on the Korean peninsula and the end of nuclear weapons there can only be achieved through genuine engagement without preconditions, the end of military exercises and missile tests, and constructive dialogue towards a peace treaty and negotiated peace.

In your review of Canada's engagement with Asia, I would suggest that you might consider exploring four areas related to Korea.

● (1535)

First of all, consider how Canada might provide support for South Korean president Moon Jae-in and his commitment to inter-Korean dialogue and reconciliation and peace on the peninsula. With the upcoming mix of summits—you know that one happens next week—I think President Moon deserves support from Canada. His approach is obviously very different from President Trump's. The January summit that took place here in Canada, co-hosted by Canada and the U.S., gave significant support to the approach of the Trump administration. It's fitting that Canada give support to the approach of its South Korean ally.

I suggest that this committee might explore how Canada could assist President Moon's efforts to formally end the state of war in the peninsula and begin the process toward a comprehensive peace treaty to replace the 1953 armistice agreement. That agreement would be essential for normalizing relationships between the north and south.

How can Canada help in preparing the table for global talks? The talks really do need to be global. How can those present at the table include all who need to be there, including women from north and south, the U.S., China, and Russia?

As area number two, instead of applying maximum pressure, think about how Canada can maximize dialogue and engagement with North Korea. I suggest two ways you might want to consider this. First of all, consider how Canada can ease up on the sanctions being faced by humanitarian agencies working in North Korea. Our collective experience is that sanctions and the isolation of North Korea have actually encouraged the North Korean nuclear program and have severely harmed ordinary North Koreans. The United Church is on record with this stance and has recently sent a letter, co-signed by Canadian Voice of Women for Peace, to the UN Security Council committee on sanctions. I've given a copy of that to the clerk of the committee.

Another way of maximizing engagement is to encourage and enable people-to-people dialogue, contact, and interaction. This is what churches, civil society, and humanitarian agencies have had lots of experience doing. Whether it's through North Korean farmers coming to the Prairies, through the Mennonites, or through North Korean students studying at Canadian universities, or someone such as Hayley Wickenheiser going to North Korea to do a hockey clinic, we know that people-to-people encounter is essential for authentic dialogue towards peace. I would also suggest that it takes courage, commitment, and a determination to hang in for the long haul to build relationships of trust.

Area three is to give Canada's ambassador in Seoul full authority to represent Canada in Pyongyang. This worked well previously. We established diplomatic relations in North Korea in 2001 to support then-president and Nobel peace prize winner Kim Dae-jung. We had several very able diplomats representing Canada in both South Korea and North Korea. That ended in 2010, a decision that many felt did Canada's interests no good and actually contributed to the decline of Canada's role in the region. This is a time of dialogue, and I firmly believe that Canada can assist in the communication, interpretation, and honest brokering that's needed at this time.

Area four is the last one. Ensure that women's voices and their participation are part of the peace process. Part of Canada's particular contribution to the process can be to facilitate the involvement of women's networks and broader civil society in the process towards peace. That means women from both North and South Korea being present during the process. As we know, the engagement of women is crucial for the peace process to move forward. This government has adopted a feminist foreign policy and a feminist international assistance policy, and in November 2017 it passed its second national action plan on women, peace and security. Make sure this is lived out concretely in the Korean situation. As Minister Freeland has said, “The path to peace needs empowered women. Where women are included in peace processes, peace is more enduring...”.

We appreciate very much your willingness to meet with civil society representatives in Canada. We encourage you to do so in Korea as well.

I have given the staff of the committee contacts for you in South Korea with engaged Christian church leaders, women's networks, and other respected civil society leaders. They stand ready and willing to meet with and talk with you.

● (1540)

I conclude, Mr. Chairman and committee members, with the prayer that you may experience wisdom and discernment in the important leadership that you give the people of Canada and your constituents, and for the grace, patience, and persistence in this important task of not only reviewing Canada's engagement in Asia but also, I hope, in pursuing the path to a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Talbot.

Now, I will go to Ms. Ahn, please.

Ms. Christine Ahn: Thank you so much for this incredible opportunity to provide some historical and geopolitical context ahead of your trip to South Korea. It has been a tremendous honour for me and Women Cross DMZ to work closely with Canada's leading feminist women's organizations, such as the Nobel Women's Initiative; the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace; and the Women, Peace and Security Network; as well as with Minister Freeland, Parliamentary Secretary DeCourcey, and Global Affairs Canada. You have all been model neighbours.

By way of introduction, I am the founder and international coordinator of Women Cross DMZ. We are a global movement of women mobilizing for peace on the Korean peninsula. In 2015, on the 70th anniversary of Korea's division by Cold War powers, Women Cross DMZ led 30 women peacemakers from 15 countries, including two Nobel peace laureates; America's feminist icon, Gloria Steinem; and numerous other peace activists across the Korean demilitarized zone from North to South Korea.

We held women's peace symposiums in Pyongyang and Seoul, where we discussed with hundreds of Korean women the impact of the unresolved conflict on their lives. We walked with 10,000 Korean women on both sides of the DMZ, in the streets of Pyongyang, in Kaesong, and in Paju, calling for an end to the Korean War with a peace treaty, for the reunification of families, and for women's leadership in the peace-building process.

Three years ago, we would never have imagined that our calls for a peace treaty were within our grasp, yet here we are at this historic moment, and what happens in the coming months will determine whether peace or war prevails on the Korean peninsula.

Canada, which sent the third greatest number of soldiers to fight in the Korean War and has one of the largest Korean diaspora communities and whose robust civil society has a long history and track record sending humanitarian aid and engaging with North Koreans, can play a vital role to support peace on the Korean peninsula and stability throughout Northeast Asia.

As you may know already from your trips and study before your upcoming trips to South Korea, Japan, and the Philippines, Northeast Asia is the world's fastest-growing economic region, with a population of over 1.5 billion. It is also undergoing intense militarization, with massive arsenals of nuclear weapons and sophisticated weaponry that gravely threaten the peace and security of everyone in the region.

Underlying this militarization is, foremost, the unresolved Korean War, which was halted on July 27, 1953, when military leaders from the U.S., North Korea, and China signed the armistice agreement and promised to replace the ceasefire with a permanent peace treaty. This never occurred, and as Patty noted, an entrenched state of war has prevailed.

Formally ending the Korean War would lead to greater security on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia by reducing tensions in the region and countering this escalating militarization. Twenty nations, including Canada, participated in the Korean War. Canada must be a leader in helping to end it.

As Patty noted also, next week, South Korean president, Moon Jae-in will be meeting with North Korean chairman, Kim Jong-un. They will discuss how to end the historic conflict between the two Koreas, which will then be followed by the Trump-Kim summit. No standing U.S. president has ever met with a North Korean leader, and we may never get this opportunity again if both sides can't come to an agreement. Many fear what President Trump himself has said will happen if they can't come to an agreement—military conflict to achieve the denuclearization of North Korea.

It is important to note that we are not here today in this window of diplomatic opportunity because of the Trump administration's maximum pressure campaign, which has only caused great suffering to the North Korean people, but rather because of President Moon and his masterful diplomacy and commitment to a final resolution of the Korean War.

It was just 11 months ago that Moon Jae-in became president after an extraordinary people's movement rose up to bring down the neo-conservative president, Park. His election was a victory of people power, where over 16 million South Koreans—that is one out of three—took to the streets for five months and held candlelight vigils. He ran to end corruption and improve inter-Korean relations and he won in a landslide victory. Today, he still enjoys a 74% approval rating. In his first major foreign policy speech last year in Berlin, President Moon offered North Korea a peace treaty to end the Korean war if they agreed to denuclearize.

● (1545)

As tensions escalated between Washington and Pyongyang, Moon condemned North Korea's nuclear missile tests, but he also sent a clear message to Washington that “no one should be allowed to decide on a military action on the Korean Peninsula without South Korean agreement.” That's because in the opening days of a conventional military conflict, 300,000 people would be killed, and were nuclear weapons to be used—and we know North Korea possesses an arsenal of at least 20—25 million people would be impacted.

Fearing pre-emptive U.S. strikes on North Korea and the likely counter-retaliation against 30,000 U.S. troops on 87 bases in South Korea, President Moon quickly seized the window afforded by the Olympics and called for a truce. Kim Jong-un reached back and sent hundreds of athletes and performers to the Olympics, including his sister, Kim Yo-jong, who was the first member of the Kim dynasty to set foot on South Korean soil since the war.

The world witnessed the transformative power of engagement at the Olympics when the two Koreas marched together in the opening ceremony carrying a one-Korea flag. Yet as the entire stadium rose and cheered for Korean unity, Vice-President Pence and Japanese Prime Minister Abe remained seated. It was a sober reminder of Japan's colonial occupation of Korea from 1910 to 1945, which led to Korea's tragic division by Cold War powers. Many Americans don't even know this, so I am reiterating this fact. In 1945, two young State Department officials basically tore a page from the *National Geographic* and drew a line across the 38th parallel, giving Seoul to the United States and Pyongyang to the Soviets. That is how Korea was divided and how millions of Korean families still remain separated. That is the tragic history. No Korean was consulted.

Given how much is at stake, it is crucial that the prospect of peace or nuclear war doesn't rest solely on the outcome of a Trump-Kim summit, but the collective engagement by state and non-state actors working together to see through a lasting peace.

Canada, which helped the U.S. and Cuba normalize relations, has established itself as an honest broker to help bridge understanding between historic enemies with its commitment to be a global player in promoting peace and stability around the world. Particularly through its feminist foreign policy, Canada can play a vital role now by helping to ensure the full and equal participation of women from the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia in a peace-building process.

As official track 1 processes are under way, there is an urgent need to create space for the inclusion of civil society in the Korean peace process, particularly women representing peace movements. Yet northeast Asia, which has significant differences in language, culture, and ideology, lacks regional mechanisms for addressing peace and security, much less frameworks that involve civil society or women activists. Canada can help support regional mechanisms that can convene multiple voices and interests, most significantly the active participation of women's groups given our positive impact towards reaching peace settlements.

There is now robust evidence on the constructive role women's peace movements play to help realize peace agreements, which have been codified now into international and national policies, such as U. N. Security Council resolution 1325 and, as Patty noted, Canada's women, peace and security policy. Canada can play a significant role supporting a women-led regional peace process by strengthening transnational civil society networks and creating a safe space for women from South Korea, North Korea, U.S., China, Japan, Russia, and other stakeholder nations to establish trust, discuss alternatives and engage with official processes.

● (1550)

Peace processes are about more than just stopping an armed conflict and establishing power sharing arrangements; they establish the foundation for a post-war society. In this moment of rapid change and uncertainty, anything is possible.

Just yesterday at the summit with Shinzo Abe in Florida, President Trump said, “We hope to see the day when the whole Korean peninsula can live together in safety, prosperity and peace.” He added, “This is the destiny of the Korean people...”. What an unbelievable statement, which we would not have imagined just a few months ago. This is, however, a fleeting moment, and if women are not involved in the official peace process and in shaping the way security is defined, they will have far more difficulty adding in transformative initiatives later on.

Let me close by saying that this moment calls for forward-looking states such as Canada to extend its feminist foreign policy to support critical windows of opportunity like this one facing the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia, to ensure that women's rights, gender equality, and genuine human security are at the heart of a Korea peace agreement.

Women Cross DMZ and the Nobel Women's Initiative are partnering with women's peace organizations in South Korea to convene an international women's peace gathering in South Korea from May 23 through 27. Patty Talbot will be on that delegation. It will include a women's peace symposium at the National Assembly and a peace walk in Paju, along the southern border of the DMZ.

We have invited a delegation of North Korean women to come. We have just learned that they will be participating in a May 24 meeting hosted by the UN in Beijing, so we are hopeful that they may indeed join us.

Last week I was in South Korea. In Seoul I met with Ambassador Eric Walsh., He told me that you may be in South Korea at this time, and he has agreed to host a reception for our delegation on May 25 at the Canadian embassy in Seoul.

It would be a great honour for you to meet these courageous women in Korea and other countries around the world, risking their lives to build world peace. I will gratefully submit the names and contact information for key South Korean women leaders whom you should meet on your trip to South Korea.

Thank you so much for this opportunity.

● (1555)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we are going to go right to Ms. Samdup for her presentation. Try to keep it fairly succinct. Otherwise, there will be no time for questions.

We'll go right to Carole.

Ms. Carole Samdup: Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee, for inviting me to speak today about Canada's engagement in Asia.

My comments will be very specific, in that I'm looking at only one specific part of Asia, and that is Tibet.

As many of you will know, Tibet is located in the western part of China. To the south it borders India, Nepal, and Bhutan. Much of Tibet is a high plateau, averaging approximately 14,000 feet, known as the Roof of the World.

In the early 1950s, Chinese forces launched a military encroachment on Tibet. That eventually led to the takeover of the government and the exile of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Since 1959, the Central Tibetan Administration in India has governed the Tibetan diaspora and steadfastly promoted non-violence and dialogue as its key strategies for reconciliation with China.

Unfortunately, under Chinese rule Tibetans face an onslaught of human rights violations—violations of their economic, social, and cultural rights as well as their civil and political rights. These violations have been well documented by organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. I'm not going to restate them for you here today. Instead, what I'd like to do is highlight four areas—like Ms. Talbot before me, I have four areas to highlight—that I believe are areas in which Canada can and should engage with China over the issue of Tibet.

The first of these is to encourage the resumption of the Sino-Tibetan dialogue. Envoys of the Dalai Lama met with representatives of the Government of China on 10 occasions between 2002 and 2010 in an effort to resolve conflict through dialogue. Since 2010, however, that dialogue has been stalled and has not resumed.

The Central Tibetan Administration advocates what it refers to as the “middle way” approach as a pathway to peace. The middle way seeks genuine autonomy for Tibet within the Chinese state and in accordance with China's existing framework for regional autonomy.

I believe that Canada is well-placed to encourage resumption of the Sino-Tibetan dialogue based on the middle path approach, which is not at odds with any Canadian policy and in fact reflects many aspects of the Canadian experience. Canada's familiarity with the challenges of both indigenous and provincial autonomy arrangements serves as a practical example of how to move this project forward.

When the elected leader of the Tibetan Administration, Dr. Lobsang Sangay, spoke before the Subcommittee on International Human Rights last year, he emphasized that Tibetans are ready to meet their Chinese counterparts any time, anywhere. I encourage the members here today to consider whether and how Canada might facilitate that process.

The second issue I would like to raise is climate change. Tibet is sometimes referred to as the Earth's third pole or as the world's water tower. These descriptors are more than just campaign slogans. They refer to the strategic importance Tibet plays within the global effort to confront climate change. The references are derived from Tibet's unique topography as the world's highest plateau, encompassing the source of Asia's six largest rivers flowing into the world's ten most densely populated countries. Tibet is home to the world's third-largest store of ice and largest source of accessible freshwater on the planet, attributes that represent a common cause between the Tibetan and the Canadian people.

Rising temperatures on the Tibetan plateau also have downstream impacts right across Asia, affecting the pattern of monsoon rains on which much of the region depends. In December 2017, Canada and China announced the cooperation agreement around climate change and environmental protection. The agreement offers yet another opportunity for Canada to engage Chinese counterparts around the Tibetan issue and in doing so to promote policies that will address the important climate challenges in Tibet today.

● (1600)

The third issue I would like to raise is trade. It's an interesting observation that even as China has experienced significant levels of growth, Tibetans remain poor amidst that growth. In fact, the UNDP reports that Tibet is the poorest region of the country.

Because Tibetans experience poverty along with political marginalization, a potential free trade agreement between Canada and China raises numerous red flags. The Canada Tibet Committee is not for or against the FTA, and we don't view this discussion as a choice between advancing human rights or trade. Instead, we are concerned that increased trade and investment from Canada could entrench existing inequalities in Tibet or generate other negative impacts on human rights. We have therefore called upon the Government of Canada to carry out a human rights impact assessment, to be completed early in the process or preferably before formal negotiations are announced.

My fourth issue is reciprocal diplomatic access. You will have read the statement made by Minister Dion in 2016 in response to an Order Paper question. In his statement, the minister described multiple bureaucratic obstacles put in the way of Canadian diplomats seeking to visit Tibet, even when the purpose of their visit was to monitor Canadian-funded projects. When Canadian diplomats were finally able to gain access, their movement was restricted and their activities closely monitored.

Meanwhile, eight official delegations from Tibet were welcomed in Canada between 2009 and 2016, with absolutely no restrictions placed on their travel within the country or on whom they could meet while they were here.

In the United States, the proposed reciprocal access to Tibet act is currently pending in the U.S. Congress. My hope is that Canada will also take action to encourage compliance with this most basic diplomatic principle. The result—more and better access to Tibet—will be a significant step forward in our efforts to monitor the situation inside the country.

In closing, the Central Tibetan Administration has declared 2018 to be a “year of gratitude” towards countries that have supported the Tibetan people over the past many years. The Canada Tibet Committee will be hosting an event in the Canadian Parliament to thank Canada, and I invite each of you to attend and to meet with members of Canada's Tibetan community in person.

Until then, thank you again for this opportunity to speak to you today.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Samdup, and to the other two witnesses.

Now we're going straight to questions and will start with Mr. Genuis, please.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I really appreciated all the witnesses' testimony.

I'm going to start with Ms. Samdup, but hopefully I'll have time for questions for the other witnesses.

Ms. Samdup, thank you so much for the work you do. It's work I know and appreciate well, obviously.

I want you to speak a little bit about the issue of religious-based persecution in China. I'm assuming it affects the Tibetan community significantly. My sense is that there has been a bit of a change in the mechanism of that persecution. At one time it was about basically saying you couldn't practise your faith, and now it's about trying to co-opt that faith and have everything under the control of the Communist Party, even going so far as this officially atheist regime's saying that they will determine the reincarnation of the next Dalai Lama.

Can you share a bit with the committee about the kind of persecution along those lines that the Tibetan community faces in China?

Ms. Carole Samdup: Will we answer each question as it comes?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You can go ahead and answer, and I'll follow up.

Ms. Carole Samdup: Okay, thank you.

As you know, the Tibetan culture is identified in large measure by the practice of its religion, and as you also know, the Government of China gets very nervous when any organized group functions and grows, and behaves independently. You put these two things together, and you have a lot of challenges.

In recent years, what we've seen is increased efforts by the Government of China to actually control the activities of the monastic institutions, the religious institutions. For example, they have now placed committees within each monastic institution to manage daily affairs, to monitor who can join and who cannot join, to keep numbers at a certain level, to look at what is being taught, and whether politically correct principles are being enforced in the regular teachings and practices of the monks and nuns in these institutions.

With respect to the Dalai Lama's succession, China has said that it will be the one to choose who the next Dalai Lama is. This is obviously something that is of serious concern to the Tibetan people. They have a traditional method of choosing reincarnations of high lamas, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said himself that he may not be reincarnated, or that he may completely revolutionize how Dalai Lamas are selected. Certainly within the next years, however, the issue of the Dalai Lama, which is so closely identified with the Tibetan cause, will be something for the Tibetan people themselves to determine, and of course we will be looking for support from other countries to ensure that this is allowed to happen as it should.

● (1605)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

For a while, there was optimism about China, with the idea that China would sort of inevitably change. Now, I think there's a lot more pessimism about China seeming to be moving backwards in terms of human rights and the solidification of authoritarian control under one person.

When I had the opportunity to meet with His Holiness, one of the things that struck me about him was his clear optimism and persistence in spite of decades of struggle. In terms of the objectives you're pursuing, I'd be curious whether you think there is a case for optimism about China, and how Canada could help push on these specific issues, including toward a deeper political change in the mentality of the regime towards faith communities, minorities, aggression towards its neighbours, and so forth.

Ms. Carole Samdup: I think there's always hope. We have to function on hope; otherwise, what would the option be?

Certainly, what we've seen is a lot of resistance, not only inside Tibet but inside China more broadly. There's a lot of resistance and a lot of activism, with people seeking their rights.

Just last week, we saw a movement of LGBT activists who stood up and fought a prohibition on promoting their cause on social media in China, and they succeeded. They achieved their goal, so it is possible and there is always hope.

We see the same in Tibet, where people are struggling to maintain their culture and to practice their language. They're speaking up. They're doing what they can. The important thing would be to ensure that other countries around the world give their support where they can, and that the whole issue of Tibet not be relegated to the past or treated as an issue where other objectives supersede the importance of the principles represented by the Tibetan cause.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

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

We'll go to Mr. Wrzesnewskyj, please.

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

I'd like to put my question to Ms. Ahn.

As a backdrop, I want to reference the North Korean famine of 1994 to 1998, in which two to three million people died—some 10% to 15% of the population. Having that in the back of our minds, is the North Korean infrastructure particularly prone to mass famine when indiscriminate sanctions are put into place—the kinds of sanctions we're seeing under this maximum pressure campaign?

● (1610)

Ms. Christine Ahn: Thanks for referencing that famine period when two million people, as you say, perished in North Korea. There is a recent study by UNICEF saying that the current sanctions could lead to up to 60,000 North Korean children starving as the result of this maximum pressure campaign.

As regards North Korea's infrastructure or its susceptibility to famines, I would say that because of the division of the Korean peninsula, North Korea has historically been an industrial base, and South Korea has actually been the breadbasket. Obviously, Korea itself is a largely mountainous country; some 80% of the peninsula, I believe, is largely mountainous. They already have limited arable land for food production and have two growing seasons, and were faced by a global economy in which, when they were going through the famine, because of their economic situation, they were unable to access—

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you. I got at the essence of what I was looking for.

Could we make sure that the UNICEF report is tabled? I'd like to see it. It's a January report. Has there been an update? They said that 60,000 children potentially could be starving to death. Has that begun? There's a point of no return when people who malnourished all of a sudden start dying; turning it back then becomes very difficult.

Succinctly, are we close to that point? We are getting into the summer season, but come the winter, should there be no resolution, what could the consequences be, if you are aware? If not, then we'll move to the next question.

Ms. Christine Ahn: In a meeting I had with some representatives of the UN who had travelled with the under-secretary to the DPRK, they noted that they had met with the UN humanitarian aid agencies operating in the DPRK, who paint a picture of pretty dire situation.

I agree with you that we are facing the harvest and the summer season, but at the same time, I think this is a perennial problem. That's why, as Patty Talbot noted, there needs to be a formal resolution of the situation so that the sanctions don't continue to impede North Korea's economy. This is a moment when there is potential possibility for the north to join the international community. I believe we must pursue a political resolution.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you.

What I'm getting at is that the type of sanctions that are applied clearly haven't led to denuclearization; the program seems to have accelerated. It thus hasn't been impacted; rather the impact seems to be upon the people, and the most vulnerable of them. We know that 60,000 children are at risk. We also know that there are significant problems of getting pharmaceuticals among the most vulnerable—those who are sick and children. That seems to be the unfortunate outcome of this maximum pressure sanctions regime, which seems to be an indiscriminate regime.

I thus have a question. When the South Korean foreign minister asked to send food aid—and that, of course, was opposed very stringently by the Trump administration and others—did his call have widespread public support among South Koreans for their brothers and sisters in North Korea?

● (1615)

Ms. Christine Ahn: It did, absolutely. Eight out of ten South Koreans support inter-Korean reconciliation. Part of Moon Jae-in's popularity has very much to do with his mandate from the Korean people.

We recently have been engaging with the Korean Sharing Movement, the largest humanitarian citizen-led organization in South Korea, which during the "sunshine policy" years sent massive humanitarian aid.

They want to go beyond humanitarian aid. They want to help with the economic development of that country. They want to do green development, environmental programs, but they are very hamstrung by these UN Security Council sanctions. Hopefully Canada can play a role to challenge this maximum pressure campaign, which, as you noted, has not led to the denuclearization but to further advancement of North Korea's nuclear missile program.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Ahn.

We'll now go to Madame Laverdière, *s'il vous plaît*.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Thank you all for your presentations. Thank you for mentioning human security, an expression that we are unfortunately hearing less and less often here.

Ms. Talbot, I know that your church has asked to meet with this committee next Tuesday to talk about the prospects for peace in the Middle East, particularly in Israel and Palestine. I really hope that the committee will be able to grant your request. That said, you mentioned that, not only did the sanctions not prevent the development of the nuclear program, but that they had almost encouraged that development.

[*English*]

If you could expand on that, I would appreciate it.

Ms. Patricia Talbot: I'll respond in English, if I may.

Just to reiterate what has been said and what Christine has I think mentioned as well, the experience of the last 70 years or so has shown that when there are perceived or actual threats of hostility against North Korea, the reaction there has actually been to increase national security measures to increase repression against its own citizens.

The inverse is also true, that when the rhetoric has been toned down, when it was dialled back during the "sunshine policy", when there have been opportunities for connection, then the actions around national security and the repression of citizens have been decreased.

Yes, I think you're right. The strategy of sanctions and isolation has not reached the desired goal; it hasn't helped with denuclearization. It has further isolated North Korea. Certainly we know that it has harmed the most vulnerable, and I don't think it's getting us anywhere closer to the goal of a more peaceful peninsula.

Certainly all stick and no carrot is not helping. In January, the maximum pressure was all stick; there was absolutely nothing there for the North Korean leadership to grasp on to. As Christine was saying, there is strong support in South Korea for inter-Korean dialogue, for engagement, for cooperation, for development of mutual and respectful engagement. Yet as we know in most of our own relationships, whether they be family, community, or otherwise, if it's all stick and no dialogue, no negotiation, it's very hard to bring people to the table.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you very much.

Ms. Talbot and Ms. Ahn, you spoke very highly of President Moon's efforts, including the peace plan he has proposed.

Ms. Ahn, could you further elaborate on his plan and what he is proposing?

● (1620)

[*English*]

Ms. Christine Ahn: Well, It's being ironed out right now, and today there was some news. Obviously, there are a number of complicated issues. Right now, South Korea is very much wanting to play both a central role in improving relations directly with North Korea, but at the same time, recognizing....

Moon Jae-in was the chief of staff for Roh Moo-hyun, who was the last president, in 2007, to have led the "sunshine policy" years of inter-Korean reconciliation and engagement. He knows very well that inter-Korean peace will only go so far as long as the conflict with the U.S. prevails.

I therefore believe that we will probably see a combination of policies that include the approach of cultural and civil society exchanges, as we have recently seen with artists and performers going from South Korea to North Korea; we will see a policy of family reunions, such as took place during the "sunshine policy" years; and we'll hopefully see some kind of joint economic zone, similar to what we saw with the Kaesong industrial complex.

However, 2018 is not 2007—or 2000, when the last historic north-south agreement was made between Kim Dae-jung and Kim Jong-il. We are facing a situation in which the U.S. has led a maximum pressure campaign. We are facing renewed Security Council sanctions that have made it so difficult even for humanitarian aid operations to operate in the DPRK.

That's why Patty Talbot and I are urging Canada—and you, when you go to meet with South Korean officials and civil society—to help give some relief to that inter-Korean peace process by offering the support they need at this moment from the international community and from historic allies such as Canada.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Laverdière.

We'll go to Ms. Vandenbeld, please.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Ms. Ahn, I was very interested in the conference you mentioned. I hope the clerk might be able to work out something along the lines of the invitation you have generously offered. Thank you very much.

I was also very impressed when I met with some of the women a few months ago from the Cross the DMZ program, when they were here in Ottawa. Thank you for participating today.

I want to delve a little further into women, peace, and security. I noticed, Ms. Talbot and Ms. Ahn, that you both mentioned this as a key thing that Canada can contribute. Of course, building on our action plan and Security Council resolution 1325, we now have very hard evidence that peace agreements last longer and are more sustainable when women are involved.

Ms. Ahn, you were quite correct when you talked about its being women, but Korean women themselves, who need to be part of this process.

Let me delve a little further into what you said, Ms. Ahn, about the regional mechanisms of frameworks: that this is an area in which Canada could particularly help in terms of the peace process and of supporting the women. What exactly does that look like? Could you elaborate a bit on this?

Ms. Christine Ahn: It's a path that still needs to be shaped, but we know that there have been a few stages of North and South Korean women engagement. In the 1990s they were actually first brought together by no other than a Japanese member of parliament. They actually had a series of dialogues in Tokyo, in Pyongyang, and in Seoul. That was from 1991 to 1994.

Then, when inter-Korean relations worsened, that obviously severely restricted their engagement, but during the "sunshine policy" years I think we saw at the height up to 500,000 North and South Koreans crossing the DMZ and meeting one another. After that period of intense engagement, we saw a return to a kind of hardline role for the past 10 years.

Being in South Korea last week, meeting with the pioneers of the South Korean women's peace movement, who really risked their lives—they were called communists and all these things—to engage with women in North Korea.... They're basically dusting off the shelves. They had to freeze all of this engagement during the last decade. You will feel it, when you are there: it's an extraordinarily buzzing and exciting time, I believe, for South Korea.

I believe South Korea is probably the most exciting democracy in the world. For that to be shared with the people in North Korea, to see the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, go to South Korea, to see the transformations in South Korea.... This is a moment.

The point I made at the close of my opening remarks was that there is a peace process right now. Hopefully it will proceed, but right now is the moment for us to be engaging. If you see images of the North and South Korean leaders' meeting, it is all men. Even though South Korea has a female foreign minister, Kang Kyung-wha, it is all men.

Where are the women? It's a fabulous process. We applaud the track 1, but where are the women's peace groups to ensure that there will be a lasting peace?

My call is for Canada, which has an amazing feminist foreign policy and has put hard Canadian dollars behind it, to support a multi-year round table of women from Northeast Asia to come together to dialogue about what should be in a peace agreement that would advance women's security.

We are not able to do it, but now, because of the opening and the fact that two North Korean women will attend a UN meeting in China that is happening concurrently with our meeting in South Korea and we have heard from the Ministry of Unification from South Korea that we have a fifty-fifty chance that North Korean women will join us for an international symposium, we are in a moment.

I hope you can be there in South Korea as we all convene, to feel and witness this transformation that is taking place.

● (1625)

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you very much. I hope so, too.

Ms. Talbot, do you want to add to that?

Ms. Patricia Talbot: Just to add to what Christine said, I think that Canada is the perfect place to host a round table of women. We don't know whether it will even happen. North and South Koreans could not meet in Korea. When I have met with North Koreans, it has never been on Korean soil, of course. It has been in China, Canada, and Europe.

We hope, with this new kind of thawing and opening, that South Koreans will be able to go to the north and vice versa. But I think Canada is the perfect place to provide a forum and space for women to meet women from that region. We're trusted. I think we have a legacy from our North Korea relationships. There are not many other places that have the same kind of reputation, and I think we can use that constructively and very positively.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Building on that, Ms. Talbot, one thing you talked about was Canada's role and the way we engage. I know that under Canada's controlled engagement policy right now, there are limited spheres in which Canada can engage. You spoke about giving our ambassador more ability to do dialogues.

Ms. Patricia Talbot: That's right.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

Ms. Patricia Talbot: Yes, certainly I can.

The Chair: You'll have to keep this quite short now.

Ms. Patricia Talbot: As I said, when Canada established diplomatic relations in 2001, we had representation, but it was only through the ambassador based in Seoul. We had two very able diplomats, in particular, Marius Grinius and Ted Lipman. They were ambassadors there. I think Ted Lipman especially made more trips back and forth to the north and south than any other diplomat. He was well trusted, he was liked, he kept channels open. I think the current ambassador could certainly do the same.

We have never broken diplomatic relations with North Korea, and it's essential, I think, that those channels be open.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Colleagues, that will wrap it up. I want to thank all three of our witnesses. As usual, it's too short for the subject that we are endeavouring to take on, but I think it was very helpful for the committee as we work our way through the kinds of conversations we need to have in putting together recommendations in a report of this kind. On behalf of the committee, thank you very much.

Colleagues, we're going to suspend for a couple of minutes, and then we'll come back to our next three witnesses.

● _____ (Pause) _____

●

● (1630)

The Chair: Colleagues, we'll bring this meeting back to order. Before us are three individuals: James Manicom, Jeremy Paltiel, and David Welch.

Colleagues, we're going to start in the reverse order of what we did with the previous witnesses.

David, you're going to start with opening comments, and then we'll get to Mr. Paltiel and Mr. Manicom.

I'm going to turn the floor over to you right away, Mr. Welch. The floor is yours.

Mr. David Welch (CIGI Chair of Global Security, Balsillie School of International Affairs, As an Individual): Thank you, and thank you for the opportunity to appear.

I would like to address Canada's engagement in the Asia-Pacific region, specifically in security issues.

Canada has a long history of engagement on security issues in this region, beginning with our participation in World War II, the Korean War, and our participation during the Vietnam War on the International Commission of Control and Supervision, the ICCS. We were a founding [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] in 1990; we were a co-organizer of the South China Sea dialogues in 1990; and we were a founding member of the Council for Security Co-operation in the Asia-Pacific, or CSCAP, in 1992.

In recent years, however, Canada has disengaged significantly from security files in the region, beginning primarily in the early 2000s. We stepped back from virtually all of the tables at which we were present earlier in a very fruitful way. For example, Canada has now lapsed from membership in CSCAP twice. At the moment, we are the only country who is not a member in good standing.

The causes of this disengagement are complex, but in my view, essentially two main factors predominate.

The first is a single-minded focus that Canadian governments have had recently on economic opportunity, beginning with the Team Canada mission to China under Prime Minister Chrétien in November 2001 and epitomized by Prime Minister Harper's trade mission to China and Japan in 2013. Additionally, resource constraints have been significant and particularly significant for the participation of the Canadian Armed Forces in routine patrols of the western Pacific.

An important part of Prime Minister Trudeau's election platform was re-engagement, captured by the phrase “Canada is back”. This phrase was greeted with great enthusiasm in the region. There is widespread disappointment, however, at the moment with Canada's performance to date. So far, Canada still has no articulated Asia-Pacific strategy. There was an effort in 2014 in the Department of Foreign Affairs—the predecessor to Global Affairs Canada—to craft an Asia-Pacific strategy, but this effort was nixed by the Prime Minister's Office in 2014.

Canada has made repeated overtures to join the East Asia Summit and the ADMM-Plus, without bringing anything to the table. While Canada's appointment of an ambassador to ASEAN in 2017 was widely welcomed in the region—as is, by the way, the recent deployment of HMCS *Chicoutimi* to help enforce North Korean economic sanctions—there still remains great skepticism in the region about Canada's seriousness in re-engaging on security issues and Canada's ability to play the long game.

This is a loss for Canada, and it is a loss for the region. The Asia-Pacific is unique culturally in important ways. One key cultural characteristic of diplomacy in the region is that one cannot fully engage at one table without engaging at all tables. Canada does not have the luxury of playing carte blanche politics, seeking only economic opportunities without addressing other issues of concern to the region. The Asia-Pacific is not a transaction place; it is a place where serious diplomacy, serious politics, requires sustained relational engagement. Canada squanders economic and other opportunities by not engaging more robustly on security issues.

Canada stands to lose by not engaging, and the region stands to lose by Canada's not re-engaging, because Canada has demonstrated its value to the region time and time again, as a helpful contributor to dialogue and helpful contributor to confidence building. Most recently, for example, Canadian CSCAP participation was key to preventing a second air defence identification zone crisis, this time over the south Pacific.

What is needed? Canada needs first an Asia-Pacific strategy; secondly, a long-term commitment of personnel and resources; thirdly, to leverage its considerable expertise and experience, particularly at the track 2 level.

Thank you very much.

● (1635)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Welch.

We'll go straight to Mr. Paltiel, please.

Dr. Jeremy Paltiel (Professor, Department of Political Science, Carleton University, As an Individual): Thank you very much.

First of all, I thank the foreign affairs and international development committee for giving me this opportunity to address you. I've been studying China and Asian affairs for 48 years now, and 44 years ago I was one of the earliest beneficiaries of our bilateral relations when I was among the second group of students to go to China under the Canada-China scholars' exchange program.

Three prime ministerial trips to Asia over the last six months illustrate the confused state of our diplomacy towards that part of the world. At a time when the U.S. administration threatens the multilateral global trading order, the world's largest economy and the world's largest exporter and second-largest economy are currently engaged in a trade war. Canada's Asian diplomacy is strongly missing in action. We have no coherent strategy and no coherent plan. This is not a new problem and is not a problem of the current government only. The previous government was equally guilty.

Asia represents the largest share of the global economy, at about 35%, with China leading. North America today represents about 27% of the global economy, with Europe third at about 22%. Not only does Asia represent the largest slice of the global economy, but this slice is rising faster than the rest of the global economy. In simple terms, just holding on to our share of the North American trade through NAFTA will condemn us to an ever-shrinking share of the global economy. Furthermore, given the protectionism of the current U.S. administration, it will leave us without allies to help preserve the global multilateral trading order.

The global affairs minister's programmatic speech to the House of Commons last June 6 virtually ignored Asia as a focus of our diplomacy and gave it virtually no role in maintaining our traditional middle power diplomacy. Canada's participation in the TPP was originally defensive, intended to protect the advantages of NAFTA against the aggressive U.S. move to deepen integration with the Asia-Pacific. It is to the credit of this government and the previous one that they persisted even as the United States withdrew. However, our performance in Da Nang, with our last-minute hesitancy at the altar, undermined the trust of principal Asia-Pacific partners, particularly Japan and Australia. We may have fatally prejudiced further invitations to the East Asia Summit. I am pleased that Canada signed on to the CPTPP in January. However, this is only one step.

China's place in our economic and political engagement is controversial but at the same time indispensable. China is the world's second-largest economy and its largest exporter. Since the beginning of this century, it alone has been responsible for over 30% of global growth. The figure for last year was 34% of global growth. It is also our second-largest trading partner, but one where our performance has been continuously slipping.

Our deficit with China is larger than our exports. For every dollar we export, we import more than three. There is no question that China is a difficult market, and the political complexion and ambitions of the Chinese regime make it even more so. However, free trade negotiations, which have been on the agenda ever since we completed a complementarity study at the beginning of this decade, are probably our best hope to resolve the difficult issues that divide us. The process may be more important than the outcome. The negotiation process is the only context in which we can get a hearing on our interests. In order to do so, we must be clear about what those economic interests are, and forthright about presenting them.

If we are looking for greater reciprocity—and that's a word we often hear with regard to China—in terms of market openness, non-tariff barriers, and a whole range of issues in the government procurement and services sectors, that is where we should raise them, in the course of free trade negotiations. Moreover, we should not sign an agreement without a robust dispute settlement process.

I would further argue that the best time to engage in these negotiations is right now. Such an opportunity may not come again. As the world's largest exporter, China has a vested interest in open trade. Its continued prosperity depends on it.

● (1640)

Already, in January 2017 China's president, Xi Jinping, laid claim to becoming the mainstay of the multilateral trading order in his speech to Davos. Last week, in his speech to the Boao Forum, a kind of Asian Davos, he further reiterated this claim to openness and further reiterated his desire to open markets.

Many remain skeptical, and for good reason: China has engaged in a variety of mercantilist policies in its domestic market to advantage domestic firms. Nonetheless, with a trade war looming with the U.S., right now is the time that China needs to prove its commitment to an open multilateral trading order, and what better way to do so than with its first free trade agreement with a G7 country, Canada?

Negotiations will be tough, and we should not sign just any agreement China might offer, but we have a lot to gain and the Chinese have a major stake in proving their bona fides to the world at a time when the U.S. trade representative's office argues that it was a mistake to allow China into the WTO in the first place.

There are many other issues that divide us besides trade and investment. We have large differences over human rights and the rule of law as well as over many other aspects of governance. We cannot resolve all these through trade negotiations; we should consider parallel mechanisms whereby we can hope to bridge our differences. I have proposed a joint commission of retired justices and academics, which would consider areas of controversy and advise on best practices. Since China is a country that proclaims it is governed by law, its government should be open to an honest and dispassionate dialogue on questions of principle.

We need to get our house in order. Clearly, oil and gas exports could go a long way to reversing our deficit, but we need to get those energy supplies to tidewater, and the federal government has the constitutional authority to do so. Furthermore, we should explicitly tie our oil and gas exports to reducing Chinese dependence on burning coal. This would have a positive effect on the carbon balance.

We should also jointly explore devoting a percentage of the profits of fossil fuel exports towards developing green energy technologies. It is possible to be environmentally responsible and an energy exporter in the context of an energy transition, and the Chinese, who are world leaders in the technology of energy transition, are best placed to be our partner in this endeavour.

Nonetheless, we should have no illusions about the nature of the Chinese government. On a whole range of issues, its values are not our own. However, there can be no doubt about China's sincere and abiding commitment to global stability and multilateral institutions centred on the UN system. Even its retaliatory measures against the U.S. tariffs have been carried out strictly within the rules of the WTO, and Chinese leaders reaffirm their allegiance to open, multilateral trade.

We can build on this platform, and we should distinguish Chinese diplomacy from Russian moves that are heedless of global norms and disruptive of global order. China is a global competitor in every sense of the term; however, the Chinese are sophisticated global players who are willing to engage proactively to manage competition and pre-empt confrontation. Moreover, China is very sensitive about its global image. Given our own positive global image, we can leverage that to our advantage.

At the same time, we cannot engage China alone. We have a strategic partnership with the Republic of Korea and share abiding contacts with our Commonwealth cousins, Australia and New Zealand. All three of these countries have free trade agreements with China and, like us, alliance relations with the U.S. We should share information and coordinate closely with them in our engagement with China.

Furthermore, Canada, Australia, and South Korea are countries of comparable size and global reach. South Korean officials have emphasized their desire to deepen our relationship as part of the strategic dialogue. We should consider deepening our bilateral ties and finding new ways of multilateral engagement, possibly through engagement with MIKTA, the middle countries alliance, part of the G20.

Japan and India are also partners of choice. While we should avoid entanglement in the complex historical disputes of China and Japan, we have much to share and much to learn. Japan is one of our major trading partners and now a fellow signatory to the CPTPP, an ally of the U.S., and a G7 partner. India is a Commonwealth partner with a growing economy and is the homeland of a dynamic community of immigrants to Canada.

● (1645)

We have bungled our relationship with India in an embarrassing manner. Just to give one example, when our Prime Minister was visiting India, at that very moment Japan, India, the U.S., and Australia announced their quadrilateral response to China's belt and road initiative. Canada was neither involved nor consulted.

We need to engage India not just to secure votes from diaspora communities but to enhance our trade and global diplomacy. We should treat Indian diplomacy with respect and find ways to coordinate policies at a working group level and not just carp endlessly about the will-'o-the-wisp economic opportunities at times of ministerial or head-of-government visits.

We need a comprehensive approach to our Asian diplomacy that engages the countries I just mentioned, but also of course ASEAN, the premier Asian multilateral organization, and we should work with all these countries to both strengthen the multilateral trading order and to ensure that a growing China abides by global norms.

I do not suggest that successive Canadian governments have not recognized opportunities in Asia and have not expended resources on trans-Pacific engagement. They have. I also applaud the additional resources in the recent federal budget. Our efforts, however, have been piecemeal, discontinuous, uncoordinated, and incoherent. It is time to change that.

Australia produced a white paper, *Australia in the Asian Century.* We need a similar strategic document to guide our public officials on a non-partisan basis and coordinate public policy to make our diplomacy effective and to secure advantages in the interest of all Canadians.

Thank you for hearing me out. I look forward to your questions.

● (1650)

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

Now we'll go to Mr. Manicom, please.

Before you start, colleagues, these gentlemen have very extensive CVs. I haven't taken the opportunity to read them—it would take another 10 minutes—but I strongly recommend that you have a look at them.

The floor is yours, Mr. Manicom.

Dr. James Manicom (As an Individual): Thanks, Chair, and thanks for having me, everyone. This is obviously an issue of great importance.

I'm going to limit my remarks to a high-level overview of the region's security landscape, and if I leave anything out, we can take it up in the Q and A, because it's a very big region. This is to provide the context that we are going to engage in.

In my view, the security situation in the Asia-Pacific really turns on three things: China, the United States, and everybody else. I'll take each in turn.

With respect to China, I'm often asked by friends and colleagues what China wants. It might be foolhardy to try to answer that here, but I'm going to try anyway.

China has really been composed of two separate entities at its highest level. There are 1.4 billion people who live there and get up every day and go about their business, and there are 90 million members of the Chinese Communist Party. The first group, the 1.4 billion people, really want what everyone else wants, which is the opportunity to improve their lot in life. Different types of people have different degrees of advantages. An urban-dwelling person of Han Chinese descent has considerably more advantages than a rural-dwelling person of non-Han Chinese descent. However, ultimately these people all want the same thing.

The Chinese Communist Party wakes up every day and thinks about how it can stay in power. That is its only objective all day, every day, and that will not change.

The social contract in China basically asks citizens to accept the state's intrusion into certain areas of their life in exchange for the freedom to pursue economic prosperity. There's an obvious and perhaps irreconcilable tension there. As China has opened up to the world, the forces that perhaps increase individual liberty have entered the country, and these have pushed up against the state in some very conspicuous ways. When this happens, the state pushes back quite hard.

The result is that China is now approaching a surveillance state, both online, where censorship is the norm, and in the real world, where there are cameras on almost every street corner in some cities. People who express their opinions freely online are often reprimanded quite harshly, and in some cases are actually put on prime-time television the next day, issuing a *mea culpa* and reinforcing the state narrative.

The Chinese social contract has actually proven to have considerable staying power, but there is an argument that it's under threat. To a lot of observers, the Chinese economy needs to undergo a rebalancing. It is currently expanding on investment-led growth, and it needs a shift from investment to consumption. To make that happen, it has to let its currency appreciate, and that will necessarily bring turmoil to the average working Chinese citizen. It's going to lead to an erosion in the populace's confidence in the Chinese social contract. I think that's the origin of why you've seen Xi Jinping going to such great lengths to secure his leadership of the country for the foreseeable future, by removing term limits to his presidency.

All this is simply to say one thing about China's foreign policy and its foreign relations: China's foreign policy is a direct extension of the Chinese Communist Party's desire to stay in power. All of its foreign policy decisions have to conform with that objective. In that respect, and on a foreign policy basis, China's foreign policy needs to conform with the myths that Chinese people have been fed from the time they were born. These myths include that Taiwan was once a part of China, that the South China Sea was once a part of China, and that Tibet or the Xinjiang province were once parts of China. These are all untrue, but Chinese people insist this is the case, and so China's foreign policy has to act as if it is the case.

Turning to the United States, I'd suggest that we're actually seeing less change in U.S. foreign policy in the region than we have in other areas of the world. President Trump's foreign policy in some respects reflects a long-standing tension in U.S. foreign policy between internationalist and isolationist tendencies: the internationalist side pursuing global leadership, and at the same time the isolationist side not liking it when those consequences are too great to bear. Certainly on the latter side, the isolationists' retrenchment pieces have become more popular in the United States ever since the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have drawn on.

However, there is no mistake: the United States is an Asia-Pacific power, and its military strength underwrites much of the security in the region. U.S. forces are based in South Korea, Japan, and Guam, and there's a navy base in Hawaii. All this contributes to all manner of east-Asian security contingencies, from disaster relief operations to what happens to the nukes when North Korea collapses, should that happen. That is what they think about all the time.

The United States' presence in the region is actually pretty tolerated, or accepted at least. Most of the debates in the region turn on how close China should be with the United States, not whether the United States should be in China and what its role is. In fact, it's only in recent memory that China has actually begun to overtly reject this U.S. presence, and mostly around the islands of the South China Sea, because China obviously sees these islands as its own, versus the United States, which prefers to sail through them freely.

● (1655)

The Chinese rejection of U.S. presence used to be limited to rather forthright interceptions of U.S. military assets, but that has morphed more recently into reclamation activities in the South China Sea that are basically trying to make little rocks in the South China Sea function as small military bases. There are runways. There are missile batteries in some cases, apparently. There's also electronic warfare equipment. The entire objective there is to make the South China Sea a very dangerous place for the U.S. Navy to sail.

The Trump administration, in this respect, has actually maintained one of the more celebrated aspects of the Obama administration's foreign policy in Asia, which is the freedom of navigation program. This is a program in which the U.S. Navy and the State Department collaborate to *démarche* what the United States perceives to be excessive maritime claims, and the navy goes and carries out an operation to express the U.S. interpretation of what is inappropriate conduct in that area. China, in this case, claims that a number of rocks in the South China Sea are in fact islands, and if they're islands it's entitled to more maritime space. That argument was soundly rejected by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016.

Accordingly, the United States Navy sails within 12 nautical miles of these features to basically tell China, “No, China, this island is actually a rock and we can go up to 50 feet or 500 metres from the rock.” These missions have not only continued under Trump but actually increased in tempo.

Nevertheless, the Trump administration campaigned on a foreign policy of retrenchment. You see that in the attitude towards what we used to call the TPP, the trans-Pacific Partnership. That was probably based on a broader skepticism of trade deals generally, but it did call into question the United States' commitment to Asia.

Trade and security go hand in hand everywhere in the world, and in Asia in particular. More of one means more of the other, and this is true for the U.S. and China as well, with both articulating competing visions of regional trade architecture in the region. Time will tell how serious the Trump administration is on re-engagement with the TPP, but the region is watching with interest, and so should we.

This brings me to the third piece, which is everyone else. “Everyone else” includes Australia and Japan, which are U.S. allies as a matter of course and a matter of values in some respects; South Korea and India, which pursue the alliance with the United States for other reasons, a little more self-interested in most cases; then the countries of Southeast Asia, of which there are a number. In Southeast Asia each country plays the United States versus China along a spectrum of engagement: Cambodia on one end, and maybe Singapore on the far end of a sort of pro-China versus anti-China spectrum.

Singapore does a good job of managing its relationship. It is engaged in both of the trading conversations in the region: the TPP —the U.S.-centred, or now, I suppose, the New Zealand-centred initiative—versus the regional comprehensive economic partnership, which was seen to be China-led but really incorporates the countries of Southeast Asia, Japan, and South Korea. Likewise, it has a very good defence relationship with the United States, and it manages to stay out of the region's maritime disputes as best as it can.

Australia, likewise, has always tried to manage an economic relationship with China and a security relationship with the United States. That relationship has soured recently because Chinese navy ships have turned up in waters that are a little close to Australia, and Australia is also concerned about the impact of Chinese influence on its domestic politics.

At the strategic level, countries in the region are aware that China's vision of what the region ought to look like is different from the way it looks now. It's also increasingly clear, in my view, that East Asian countries share the perspective that the United States is an important player in the region, a perspective that China increasingly rejects.

We're seeing this manifested in two ways. First, you're seeing closer U.S. defence ties with non-traditional security partners such as Vietnam, for example. A U.S. aircraft carrier just visited there. That was unforeseen 10 years ago. I never thought I'd see that in my career, but here we are. Likewise, we're also seeing bilateral and trilateral security arrangements among U.S. allies, without the U.S. actually participating. Some of that falls apart on underlying bilateral tensions between the two countries: I'm thinking of Japan and South Korea, which have always been working on an intelligence-sharing agreement but can't get it done because of the history between those countries. Professor Paltiel referred to the quadrilateral security dialogue among Japan, India, Australia, and the United States.

In any event, there's a tacit consensus in the region that for the majority of governments in that region to pursue a flexible foreign policy, a strong U.S. presence is required. In the absence of that U.S. presence, there's no doubt that China makes the rules.

By way of conclusion, I offer three quick take-aways. First, remember that Chinese foreign policy is an extension of its domestic policy. Consequently, there can be little doubt in China's resolve to assert itself in disputes that it defines as being part of its territorial integrity—I'm thinking of the things I mentioned earlier. Secondly, the American presence as a military force, as a maker of rules, is indispensable to security in the region. This is why a change of heart in the TPP could be important. Finally, paradoxically, the demand for U.S. security presence in the region is stronger now at a time when the strength of it has never been less sure. This is the security environment in which Canada is seeking to engage.

● (1700)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Manicom. Thank you to the other two witnesses.

We're going to go right to Mr. Aboultaif, please. Ziad.

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

We have three high-calibre witnesses today. I think the topic is very rich, and I wish we had more time.

I will go to Mr. Manicom and, if there is enough time, to the other two witnesses with a question about the disputes in Southeast Asia and the South Asia sea, the expansion of China's islands—the artificial islands within the region—and the nine-dashed line and what that means to China, the international community, and the United Nations. That whole dispute is leaving a lot of unanswered questions about how far China will go in the region.

Specifically, when we think of that region, we think of Japan as the strongest country among all the countries involved in that basin out there, so here's the question. First of all, how would you describe the relationship between China and Japan? How far would China go in its expansion? What do you see in the future for the region and for the conflict?

Mr. Manicom, you've just mentioned that the presence of the United States there is quite crucial to maintaining such a balance of power between China and the rest of the countries out there.

Any participation from the three of you in the short time we have would be greatly appreciated.

Dr. James Manicom: I'm just looking at the clock to see how long I have to answer this. There's a lot there.

The China-Japan relationship turns on a lot of things. They have a territorial dispute between the two of them. Japan, as a user of the South China Sea, is very worried about what the Chinese policy in the South China Sea is, but that relationship turns on a lot more, right? As a consequence of whatever the trade conflict is right now, you actually see China and Japan talking more closely about trade. Japan understands that a China-U.S. trade dispute is not good for them. It's a relationship that has a lot of baggage to it and a lot of security concerns, but both of those countries are capable of being very pragmatic in their bilateral relationship.

As for the South China Sea and where China will go, I think China's end game is a world where it can sail the South China Sea without the United States sailing through there freely—and that takes time. To date, no country of strength has pushed back against China's reclamation activities to make that harder for them to do.

I think part of the reason is that ultimately the South China Sea just isn't that important, frankly, to any country of strength. It's very important to the Southeast Asian countries. It's very important to Japan and the United States as a sea lane, but reclamation activities do not pose an existential threat to the United States—or at least American policy-makers do not accept that they do. I'm sure there are many who would argue that having a missile battery in the South China Sea within range of an aircraft carrier is a big threat, and it is, but the U.S. political elite does not seem to accept that it is an issue in the totality of the U.S.-China relationship. Also, accepting that progress in global climate change is part of that relationship, it hasn't seemed to date that it is an issue upon which they're going to let their relationship collapse, right?

I think China will continue to go as far as any country lets it, and even then, what do you do? If China is occupying an island that it claims as its own, trying to remove the Chinese forces would start a conflict.

● (1705)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Paltiel, on the same topic.

Dr. Jeremy Paltiel: First of all, I think the Chinese attitude right now is more or less that possession is nine-tenths of the law. Secondly, China has now proclaimed itself to be a maritime power. It is the world's largest exporter. It basically sees the South China Sea as its home waters as a maritime great power.

From the Chinese point of view, this is not an expansion: it is historical. We can take that seriously in the sense that, on the one hand, China is in some ways flouting UNCLOS on this. On the other hand, the nine-dashed line should be seen as a limit in terms of territorial disputes.

China certainly does have, and will have over the years, a further desire to be a maritime great power. Basically, the Chinese look at the world map and see that all the islands of the world in the oceans are now occupied by what were 19th century imperial powers: Britain, France, the United States in some cases, and a residual few for other colonial powers. China says that's simply not fair, that it is now a maritime power, and that the one place it can claim is this one.

In some sense, that's the explanation of the South China Sea and “why now”, but we should be aware of the fact that China does intend to be a maritime great power. It now has a base in Djibouti on the west coast of Africa. It is the first overseas Chinese base in history. I think that as the world's number one exporter, with the largest commercial fleet in the world, China is here to stay.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Welch.

Mr. David Welch: I would like to say that I agree with virtually everything my colleagues have said today, except about the South China Sea. I see the South China Sea very differently. Most people have not noticed that since the Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling came down in favour of the Philippines in 2016, China has abided by it to the letter. Even though it said it did not accept jurisdiction and did not recognize the outcome, China has been very careful not to do anything that's inconsistent with that ruling.

For example, since then, China has not once mentioned the nine-dashed line; that has disappeared. It has stopped talking about threats to its sovereignty in the South China Sea, and it complains about American freedom of navigation operations in the language of "threats to stability" and "threats to peace and security". China was in the unfortunate position of claiming all of the islands and features in the South China Sea but actually possessing relatively few of them, and in the Spratly Islands possessing low-quality islands. The Philippines, Vietnam, and Taiwan, ironically, actually possess the best natural islands in the South China Sea.

The island-building campaign that China embarked upon was designed to assert its claims, of course, but primarily to be able to enforce an air defence identification zone, which was on their to-do list. What we're seeing now is the completion of those artificial islands. They are not building new ones. They have stopped dredging. All of the equipment they're now putting on those artificial islands is part of a plan developed five to seven years ago, before the Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling came down.

China is actually keeping its nose very clean on the South China Sea at the moment. They are a signatory to UNCLOS and feel bound by its provisions, so they're in a uncomfortable position, where they cannot look weak to the domestic audience but at the same time they can't afford to alienate the international audience. They're walking that tightrope very effectively.

I'm actually very optimistic that the South China Sea is not an issue that will be with us for very long.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Welch.

Mr. Sidhu, please.

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thanks to all three of you for your testimony today.

Mr. Paltiel, if I heard you correctly, you're saying that we're not doing a hard enough job at trading with India. In the tour the Prime Minister took to India, extending his hand to strengthen ties with that country, signing a billion-dollar deal, and bringing in 5,800 jobs to our country, do you think we were not doing a good enough job in that area?

● (1710)

Dr. Jeremy Paltiel: My expertise is not.... I read the same newspapers that you do, but also, I'm a scholar and have worked on this previously. The issue of which communities we reach out to and whether we reach into some communities at the expense of the Indian state is not a matter of this government alone. It goes back to previous governments as well. We were already on notice from the Indian government that they like to be engaged as the Republic of India, as an important power, and not just as certain parts of the country, certain regions, and certain populations.

This has now hurt us in our relationship with India. Yes, we've signed some deals, but you know what...? I mean, I'm sorry, but I've been in this business a long time. Going back to the Team Canada visits way back when, we signed all kinds of pieces of paper, but our trade performance slipped in the region.

We should be looking toward managing both trade and politics together, building trust with governments, and working together with governments to make sure that our trade interests are well looked after. That's a difficult process. It's a continuous process. It doesn't happen over one visit that you can go and sign agreements in some places and come back. Often, if you ask what has happened five years later, after many of those deals have been signed, many of them remain deals on paper. It's a deep and abiding presence that's required in all of these kinds of things.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: It's been an ongoing effort to do trade and business with India. About six or seven years ago I went with the B. C. government to hand a $12-million cheque to TOIFA, the equivalent of the Grammy awards in L.A. They come to Toronto, and we wanted them to come to British Columbia. We did a study before we handed out that cheque; the public wasn't too happy, actually, with that. It was a $100-million turnaround: they came, and it was very successful.

It's not that we haven't tried, but every now and then I hear from Indian officials who say that Canada needs India more than India needs Canada. How do you do business with that? Being a businessman myself, I'll say that when you're sitting at a negotiating table, it has to be equal and has to be good. You commented that we should not sign any deal but a good deal, so I think you're contradictory in your comments when you say we aren't doing well enough but then also saying that the other party is not sitting at the table.

Dr. Jeremy Paltiel: I think we could do better. All I'm saying is that we could do better. We could do better precisely, as I tried to say, if we coordinated our action with other like-minded players, and not going it alone. I think the problem is that as an ally of the United States, and often relying on that, we were able to work under the shadow of the United States, but the United States is not always leading now. We need to find other partners with whom we can leverage our relationship, and we have to do it sooner rather than later.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: I fully understand. What's happening south of the border gives us the opportunity to explore a different part of the world. We've been shipping pulses, lentils, and potash to India, but last year they came out with a 50% tariff on lentils and pulses. You tell me how to go forward. We love to do business with other parts of the world, but we're only 36 million people, compared to their 1.2 billion people. They have the market.

By the same token, I'd like to hear your perspective on shipping crude oil to China. As the government, we approved the Kinder Morgan pipeline. We understand that we have to take our resources to tidewater. But would just crude oil alone balance the deficit with China?

● (1715)

The Chair: I think we're going to have to hold off on the answer to that because the time is up. You can build in your response as you give your answers to some of the other colleagues.

I'm going to Madam Laverdière.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to the three witnesses for their presentations.

I was struck by a theme that we have often heard during this study, that is, the lack of a coherent strategy that considers all the various facets of the issues. I was also struck by Dr. Welch's comment that you have to be at a number of tables, not just one, to be heard in the region. You also mentioned CSCAP, from which Canada is completely absent. We are also the only absent country.

Can you tell us a little more about exactly what that organization does?

[*English*]

Mr. David Welch: As I said, Canada was a founding member of CSCAP. It's a track 2 dialogue, but with a lot of track 1.2 participants. In some cases, it's scholars who are member-country delegates. In others, it's the retired diplomats who are member-country delegates.

CSCAP provides an opportunity for the countries in the region to discuss a range of issues that leaders cannot discuss because these issues are too sensitive and too complicated. It's an exchange of information and ideas. Delegations usually go back to their home governments after meetings and working groups, and report the findings. In many cases, there's a significant effect on the policies of member-country governments.

As I said, Canada has lapsed twice. There was a three-year window when Canada was back in business in CSCAP, which just ended last year. I was the Canadian co-chair for the CSCAP Canada delegation.

To give you an example, my research team from the Centre for International Governance Innovation did the only study existing in the world on air defence identification zones: what they are; how they operate; what their implications are for aviation safety, security, legal matters, and territorial and maritime disputes. I briefed that to the CSCAP members, and they took it home. I subsequently got a message from a colleague in the foreign ministry in China thanking me for the very helpful Canadian contribution. It had been very useful in helping persuade people in Beijing not to implement another air defence identification zone in the South China Sea. In other words, that was a win for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in China, which understood that it was a bad idea, over the People's Liberation Army, which was enthusiastic about it.

So, that's the kind of thing that can happen through an organization such as CSCAP, and it's very inexpensive. For $100,000 a year, Canada could be a full participant in all CSCAP activities, but at the moment, there is no funding. In fact, we're in arrears. Frankly, it's embarrassing, and it's a missed opportunity for Canada, as well as for the organization.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Yes, because it works both ways. It helps create links and understanding both ways.

Mr. David Welch: Very much so.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Speaking of links and understanding, I think you're working with a group, trying to look at how we can improve our co-operation with Japan. Am I mistaken?

Mr. David Welch: Yes, that's right.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Could you tell us a little about what you're doing on that front?

Mr. David Welch: We were very lucky here in Canada to get a gift from the Government of Japan, $5 million U.S., to endow a professorship and a new Centre for the Study of Global Japan at the University of Toronto.

I'm no longer at the University of Toronto. I was for 20 years. I'm now at the University of Waterloo, but I very enthusiastically helped my alma mater to try to secure this gift. At the moment, I'm the acting chair on a pro bono basis while a search is being conducted for a long-term chair.

This is the first time that the Japanese government has invested this kind of money outside of the United States. The hope here is that we can make Canada a vital hub in the study of Japan, in looking at the range of problems that Japan is confronting now and in the future, problems that we will also be dealing with just a little later in the timetable. It has really shown that there's a significant opportunity for Canada and Japan to enhance their co-operation on a wide range of issues. I think that's something people have appreciated for a long time, but there always seems to be a gap between the level of participation, the level of co-operation, and the potential for co-operation between our two countries.

● (1720)

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Saini, please.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Good afternoon, gentlemen. It's a treat to have all three of you here.

I have five hours' worth of questions, but I think only five minutes of time.

All of you indirectly or directly have talked about maritime power, which brings my attention back to Admiral Alfred Mahan, who said that military power had to be balanced by economic power and that any country who wants to have national greatness must be associated with the sea.

I think we've gone through the military aspect over the last hour or so. Mr. Welch has mentioned the air defence identification zone.

Mr. Paltiel, you've written about the exclusive economic zones and how China has the ability and the sovereign right under UNCLOS to inspect all traffic.

One thing we didn't get into—and I don't think we have enough time—is the fact that there are a lot of resources in the South China Sea. It's just not a waterway where $5 trillion worth of traffic goes, because there are also barrels of oil at an estimated $11 billion, and an estimated 190 million cubic feet of natural gas. So there are minerals there also.

Looking at the military side of it, you mentioned that in terms of the encroachment on the islands and things like that. However, I want to get to the economic side, because I think that's the other part of Mahan's equation. Right now what you see is a regional comprehensive economic partnership that is currently being negotiated, and I don't think there is a lot of dialogue on that. When you look at that comprehensive agreement, you're talking about ASEAN+6, accounting for $49.5 trillion and 39% of the world's GDP.

You have the military bases in Southeast Asia, and now you're having the economic bases. How is that going to affect the dynamics in the region?

Mr. Welch, you mentioned that after the recent arbitration between the Philippines and China, the latter has not done anything. However, as you know, China's politics is also about patience. I'm wondering how this is all tying together. How do you think the RCEP will affect regional stability? Will it help on the military side to calm the tensions in the South China Sea, or is this another attempt to sort of further encroach into south China, but, on top of that, also help the one belt, one road initiative?

Dr. Jeremy Paltiel: Who are you asking first?

Mr. Raj Saini: All of you.

Dr. Jeremy Paltiel: Let me just say a few words.

First of all, I think that in the case of Southeast Asia, the economy came first; the military came much later. I think, in that sense, that's a good reason for optimism because, at the end of the day, China has to have good relations with its neighbours.

China's posture took off at the beginning of this century, largely because during the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98, China didn't devalue the renminbi and therefore undercut the ASEAN countries and their exports. Then it built on that, moving towards free trade with ASEAN and putting the wind behind free trade in the region when it established its ASEAN+3 relationship.

Because of that relationship and because ASEAN is so important to China, I think China will still be cautious in how far it pushes its neighbours in that region on the military and other side. Because it is its own backyard, it would like to have a positive image. It would also like to engage them in trade.

I am relatively confident. I also think they may well end up negotiating the code of conduct on the South China Seas, which they've said they were supposed to negotiate by the end of this year. It may well happen, because China needs its neighbours and because it's looking over its shoulder at the U.S.

The issue for us—and the interesting thing—is that now that we've signed the CPTPP, what relationship will the CPTPP have with the RCEP? What is the future of free trade in the Asia-Pacific, which has been talked about as far as APEC is concerned for over 20 years. There will be a new momentum there for completing free trade within the Asia-Pacific.

I am excited about that. I think we should use this as bridging, if we're negotiating free trade with China, toward a comprehensive regional free trade framework. That would put wind in the sails of global free trade.

● (1725)

The Chair: Mr. Manicom.

Dr. James Manicom: The regional comprehensive economic partnership will do good things for the ties among ASEAN+6. That can translate into one of two things. Either it will create an outcome in which there is such interdependency that conflict over the South China Sea is anathema and no one will think about it, or it could be a situation in which regional countries are so dependent on China that they wouldn't dare stand in the way if China decided to change things again. The situation now is that we're coming out of the end of a period, as David pointed out, when China stepped back. However, it's also stepped back at a time when it's created a status quo thanks to four years of land reclamation that has created an environment in the region. In the South China Sea, it is more advantageous to it than five years prior.

It depends on where you stand on the impact of trade on conflict. Either it makes you come with a foregone conclusion or it creates this trade dependency between Southeast Asian countries and China. I think it's probably the former. That's a lot of countries; it's 16 countries or more in a trade agreement. I'm optimistic that it would modify tensions at the same time.

The Chair: Mr. Welch.

Mr. David Welch: It's worth remembering that the RCEP was a Japanese idea, not a Chinese one. It's not necessarily a tool of Chinese hegemony. There's nothing necessarily inconsistent with RCEP and CPTPP or any other multilateral agreement, so it could be a good thing.

On the CPTPP by the way, I think that turned out to be a best-of-all-worlds story. President Trump stepping back meant that the other countries could go ahead and agree to take away all of the key provisions that provided asymmetrical benefits to the United States to the detriment of the other signatories, particularly on intellectual property and investor-state dispute settlement mechanisms. With luck, the United States will come back to the CPTPP on the revised terms. That would be the best of all possible worlds for Canada, and I think for the other members.

On the South China Sea and economic assets, there are hydrocarbon deposits in the South China Sea. Most of them are not exploitable because nobody will insure against the risks, in view of the maritime and territorial disputes. China is the only country that can socialize the insurance costs of exploration. China recently has been talking about joint development with Vietnam, another signal that perhaps it's willing to be much more moderate in its claims and its [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

Also those hydrocarbon assets are going to be increasingly stranded as we try to decarbonize the global economy. I don't think they're a very big deal. What is a very big deal is the fisheries. The South China Sea has an extremely rich fishery, and all of the countries in the region depend upon it. That's something that has to be managed multilaterally. That fishery is already over-exploited, and I think China is beginning to appreciate that to play nice with the neighbours in the South China Sea is the most effective way to make sure there is a sustainable fishery in that sea, which people depend on for their livelihood.

The Chair: Colleagues, on behalf of all of you I want to thank our three witnesses. I think this has been a very good session, and we quite enjoyed it.

On behalf of all of us, thank you for taking the time to be present.

Colleagues, we're going to take a one-minute break before we have have a couple of minutes' worth of business that we need to do; otherwise, our Subcommittee on International Human Rights will have no budgets. I need to get you to move, then approve, those small budgets.

We're going to take a break, clear the room, go into camera, and get that done. Then we'll be on our way.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]