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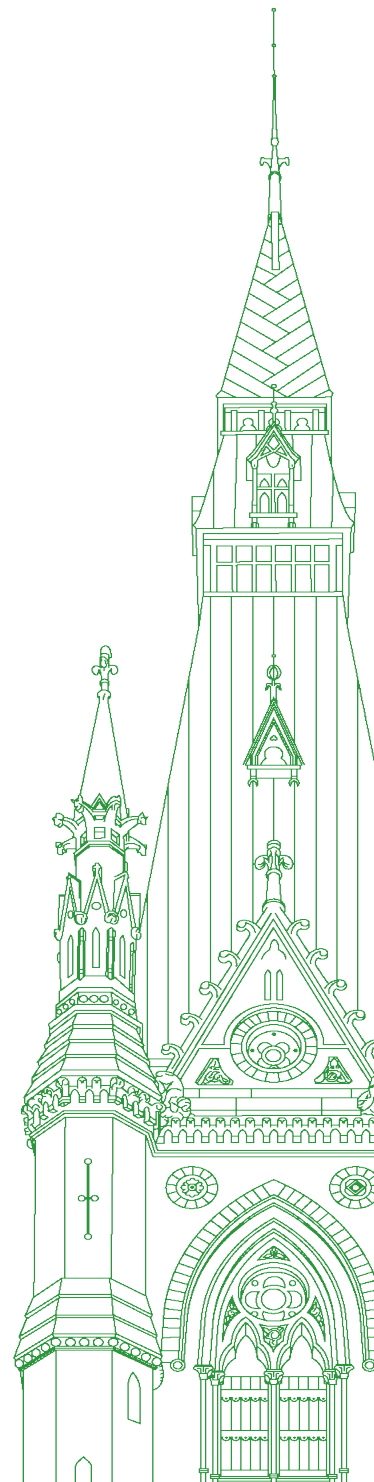
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Tuesday, October 25, 2022

Chair: Mr. Ken Hardie



Special Committee on the Canada–People’s Republic of China Relationship

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• (1835)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

Good evening, and welcome to meeting number five of the House of Commons Special Committee on the Canada–People’s Republic of China Relationship.

Pursuant to the order of reference of May 16, 2022, the committee is meeting on its study of the Canada–People’s Republic of China relations. Today’s meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely by using the Zoom application.

I would also note that everybody appearing by Zoom, especially our witnesses, have had their sound checks done, so everybody should be able to hear everybody properly.

If you are one of our witnesses, make sure that your microphone is spaced between your nose and your upper lip. That way the interpreters will be able to hear you.

I have a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. If you’re participating by video conference, you click on the microphone icon to activate your mike, and please mute yourself when you’re not speaking.

For interpretation for those on Zoom, you have the choice at the bottom of your screen of either floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece with the selected channel.

I remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair. The chair of another committee that I sit on also reminds people that they cannot take pictures of your screens while the session is under way.

For members in the room, we have the speaking order—at least most of it. I will look to Mr. Chong to fill me in as to who his lineup is going to be, because we don’t have it yet. We’ll manage the speaking order as best we can, particularly because we will be into committee business in the third hour.

Now I’d like to welcome our witnesses for the first hour.

Clive Hamilton is a professor of public ethics at Charles Sturt University, Canberra campus; and Jeremy Youde is dean of the col-

lege of arts, humanities and social sciences, University of Minnesota Duluth. We have yet to connect with our third person in the first panel, and that’s Jonathan Manthorpe, former foreign correspondent, China watcher and author of *Claws of the Panda*.

With that, we’ll have our witnesses provide us with up to five minutes of an opening statement.

Mr. Hamilton, we still start with you. Your five minutes starts now.

Mr. Clive Hamilton (Professor of Public Ethics, Charles Sturt University, Canberra Campus, As an Individual): Thank you, Chair.

It’s a pleasure to appear before the committee this evening. I’d like to make some—

The Chair: Hold on. That audio is not good at all.

I think we’re going to have you sign off and then sign back in again, Mr. Hamilton. We’ll try to get you more properly attached here.

With that, Mr. Youde, we’ll go to you for five minutes.

Dr. Jeremy Youde (Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, University of Minnesota Duluth, As an Individual): Thank you so much for the invitation. I hope my sound is coming through okay for everyone.

I come to you today to speak as the Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences at the University of Minnesota Duluth. I’m also a political scientist who is particularly interested in questions of global health governance and international responses to infectious disease outbreaks.

When we’re thinking about global health governance, we’re thinking about the system for responding to cross-border health issues that arise, and that is an issue in which Canada has long been a leader. The People’s Republic of China has a very important potential role to play, but it’s a role that has been called into question in recent years.

In many ways, we are in a paradoxical moment when it comes to global health governance. On the one hand, particularly over these past few years, we have seen more than ever the importance of having a co-operative arrangement that brings together countries across the globe in order to address issues and concerns that necessarily cross borders. No country is going to be able to deal with an issue like COVID-19 on its own.

However, at the same time, we are also seeing a moment in which there is more resistance than ever to engage in these sorts of processes. Many of these sorts of challenges have come up in the context of the relationship between the global health governance system and the Government of the People's Republic of China.

In many ways, the People's Republic of China is a vital element of any effective system of global health governance, for a number of different reasons.

One is that it is obviously an incredibly significant geopolitical player. Any sort of international system that isn't including China is going to have major gaps in it.

Second, the sheer number of people and the movement of those people mean that there are particular challenges that come up when we're talking about the control of infectious diseases and their spread, be they new diseases or diseases that we've previously seen.

Third, the degree of human-animal interactions that can exist within Chinese society, particularly as we see more people moving into areas where there has not been sustained human residence, causes great challenges. We know that zoonotic diseases—diseases that spread from animals to humans—are one of the most important causes of new disease outbreaks.

Finally, China also has a history of what we could call “health diplomacy”: engaging in health activities as a way of trying to build bilateral and multilateral relations with other countries.

The system we've seen over these past few years has really called into question the ability of the system to function in a cohesive manner. As I mentioned before, COVID-19 is perhaps emblematic of that. When we're looking at global health governance, we have a system that's largely based on notions of trust and shared norms of how things are going to operate, and this is where we have run into problems, particularly in these last few years when it comes to COVID-19.

We can talk in more detail about this in the questions, but the resistance comes from a number of different areas, including fears about surveillance that could come into play, the relationship between Taiwan and other elements of global governance, and just the general wariness that we've seen within the Government of the People's Republic of China to engage with global governance systems in general, not just in health.

The system was largely built in the aftermath of World War II, and it is not necessarily the most reflective of the sorts of challenges and needs of the contemporary international system's demands. In many ways, this is a moment of reform and opportunity for global health governance, but as I mentioned before, if there is not the inclusion of the People's Republic of China in this sort of process, we're going to have significant gaps, and those gaps are going to put us in danger.

Canada is a country that has long been a leader in global health governance and this sort of multilateral diplomacy and is in a very important and unique position to be able to help foster this new sort of system that can include the People's Republic of China, the United States and all the countries around the world.

• (1840)

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

Now, for safety's sake, I would like Mr. Hamilton to try speaking to us.

I can see the kind of unit you're using. Can you hold that microphone fairly close to your mouth so the interpreters can hear what you're saying. Do you want to try?

Mr. Clive Hamilton: Yes [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

The Chair: No, it's even worse. Well, we'll have to stretch the line a little tighter, I guess.

I'm going to go to Jonathan Manthorpe, who is somebody I'm looking forward to hearing from, in fact. I used to listen to him on the radio in Vancouver a lot when he was on with John McComb and talking about Asia and especially China. His story hasn't really changed very much, because he's had a tremendous depth of experience in following that nation.

Mr. Manthorpe, welcome to our committee. You have five minutes to make an opening statement.

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe (Former Foreign Correspondent and Author of *Claws of the Panda*, As an Individual): Good evening, ladies and gentlemen,.

Thank you for inviting me to give my thoughts and answers to your questions on what is, I think, one of the most important foreign policy issues for Canada at this moment.

As you may know, my book, *Claws of the Panda: Beijing's Campaign of Influence and Intimidation in Canada*, was published within a few days of the start of the Huawei affair.

I had conflicting reactions to the detention in Vancouver on December 2, 2018, on a United States Department of Justice request, of Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of Huawei Technologies, and all that happened in the following months. On the one hand, I felt some satisfaction that those events substantiated much of what I had written in the book. On the other hand, I was alarmed that those events substantiated much of what I had written in the book.

Indeed I thought then, and I still do, that the Huawei affair set out a much worse situation than the catalogue of intrusions into Canadian affairs by the Chinese Communist Party and the insouciant response of Canadian decision-makers that I had described.

The response from Beijing to the detention of Ms. Meng Wanzhou was far more brutal than even I anticipated. The kidnapping and torture of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor sent a clear message in itself that the CCP cares more about the security of one party aristocrat than it does about the entire spectrum of relations with Canada.

More than that, the denial of legitimate consular access to the two Michaels and their secret trials said that Beijing is prepared to ignore treaties it has signed in order to defend the honour of any high-profile official.

The CCP regime followed up its hostage-taking with economic sanctions on Canadian meat and grain products, and whether by coincidence or not, several senior Canadian figures with histories of close ties with Beijing began to advocate her release. At the same time, Beijing continued its ever-increasing campaign to cow the 1.5 million Canadians of ethnic Chinese heritage.

Several carefully documented reports have been published on how agents of Beijing, either from the Ministry of State Security or the CCP's main political warfare organization, the United Front Work Department, are intimidating and threatening Canadians whom the party considers a threat.

The United Front has also taken effective control of almost all Chinese language media in Canada, as it has in all other countries in the 50-million-strong ethnic Chinese diaspora. The United Front has worked to place Beijing supporters in the leadership of the multitude of Canadian Chinese social groups and organizations. It has been notable how many of those groups have published support for the crushing of the promised autonomy of Hong Kong, the abuses against the Uighurs and Kazakhs in Xinjiang and other Beijing projects, such as the plan to take over Taiwan.

A year ago the Huawei affair came to an end when Ms. Meng Wanzhou admitted to the U.S. charges against her—that she had made fraudulent claims to international banks—and the extradition request was dropped. She was released, and so were the two Michaels.

However, to my mind the lessons of this affair are stark. My central conclusion is that we cannot have normal trade, diplomatic or political relations with a regime whose first instinct, when there are problems, is to take hostages. What this affair exposed and underlined is that we share no civic, political, diplomatic, security or international values with the People's Republic of China. On most matters involved in a relationship between two nations, we have no basis for conversation with the Chinese Communist Party.

Imagine for a moment that the U.S. request had been for the detention of a business executive from one of the neighbouring Asian democracies, such as Japan, South Korea or Taiwan. There would have been frictions, to be sure, but there would not have been a total crisis and collapse in the relationship, because we share a host of values with those countries and that would have cushioned the momentary clash.

I have no doubt that we must reconstruct a working relationship with Beijing. The PRC is now the second-largest economy in the world, though it is facing headwinds at the moment. Under leader Xi Jinping, it seems bent on an imperialist course towards becoming a global superpower, if not “the” superpower.

• (1845)

However, my judgment is that we should keep that to a minimalist transactional relationship. The current regime in Beijing has shown us clearly that it is not a friend of Canada and never intends to be. We should not waste our time trying to reform the CCP, as we have done in the past with several expensive and futile projects, such as teaching the rule of law and jointly chairing a travelling human rights road show. These were doomed to fail, because Beijing has no intention of accepting their conclusions. Instead—

The Chair: Mr. Manthorpe, I will have to call it for time there. If you have further information, of course, you can work it into your answers as we go to the panel.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: Let me just finish off by saying that I think our most important program at the moment should be to defend Canadians of Chinese, Uighur and Tibetan heritage from the attacks on them by the United Front and the Ministry of State Security in Canada.

I will leave it at that and I'll happily answer questions later.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Well, Mr. Hamilton, let's give it a try for five minutes or less, sir.

Mr. Clive Hamilton: Let me ask the chair if you can you hear me reasonably well now.

The Chair: No, we can't at all. It's still very poor.

I'm thinking that this is what we should do, sir: If questions are directed to you, perhaps you might be able to respond in writing. That's the best we can do under the circumstances.

Go ahead, Mr. Cormier.

• (1850)

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I'm not sure if the witness, Mr. Hamilton, tried to disconnect and reconnect again. I didn't see him do that. Sometimes it solves the problem. I'm not an expert, but I didn't see him log off and reconnect again. Maybe he can try that.

Mr. Clive Hamilton: Sure. I will do that.

The Chair: I think we might try to get Mr. Hamilton back here in our second hour because we'll have a space there. Hopefully we'll be able to get the benefit of his experience. In Australia, of course, they've had their moments with China for sure.

With that, then, perhaps we can just go to our first round of questioning.

We'll start with Mr. Kmiec for six minutes or less.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

My first question will be for Mr. Manthorpe.

I'm glad he was able to finish. I have read *Claws of the Panda*.

I wonder, Chair, if he could continue speaking about the United Front department's activities in intimidating Canadians of Chinese heritage, and activists as well.

He had written back in July 2020, in the National Post, “As someone who has studied the influence of China in Canada, it is clear to me that this country needs to put in place defences against the covert, coercive and corrupt influence of the CPC, which has been systematically eroding resistance to it from within”.

Chair, my question would be, where do we start? How can we protect Canadians of Chinese heritage who are being targeted by these coercive campaigns?

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: Thank you very much.

Our security services and our police services know very well what is going on. There needs to be some political encouragement for them to deal with what they know.

As we already know, CSIS has gone around to Canadian universities and colleges and warned them about the Confucius Institutes that many had installed in their universities, which were paid for by Beijing. CSIS warned them that these were nothing much more than espionage outposts in their universities, with two main functions. One was to oversee Chinese students in the universities and the other was to scout the universities for useful technologies—principally military technologies.

Thankfully, most Canadian universities and colleges have ended their agreements with the Confucius Institutes, which are run, by the way, by the United Front, the political warfare organization.

An overarching thing we need to do is have a strong piece of legislation regulating political activity in Canada by foreign countries and allowing for severe punishments or retribution for it. I think we do have some sort of legislation at the moment, but clearly it is not tough enough.

It also needs to be applied. Several other countries, Australia being one of them.... I hope we can hear from Clive later on about their experience with their application of this legislation regulating and curtailing activities of foreign political organizations.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Manthorpe, I'm sorry to interrupt you.

As a follow-up, today we voted on a concurrence report condemning the genocide of Uighurs. I've never seen cabinet ministers flee so quickly from the chamber in order to avoid having a say on this question. There are many Uighur activists in Canada, Canadians who, through good faith, are human rights defenders.

We have a government here that is unwilling to take a very clear position, because I guess they're worried.

What should be done about public office holders in Canada, and former public office holders especially, who, in the experience in Australia, have been either coerced or convinced over time of the position that Beijing takes on things like shutting down democracy activists outside of the PRC, preventing them from speaking up or coercing them through other means? What should we do about former public office holders in Canada who may be toeing the line of Beijing?

• (1855)

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: Well, I think that all we can do is shame them. There are, as you say, many previous public office

holders who have found, in retirement, comfortable positions and arrangements with Beijing.

I think that forums such as this and others need to make it plain to everyone that the People's Republic of China is not a friend of Canada and that people who court relationships with Beijing for one reason or another are in fact working against the interests of Canada.

I've talked with other people in other countries about this, and it is very difficult, in defending a democracy, to immediately set to one side the central aspects of democracy regarding freedom of speech and freedom of association. You can't do that very easily, which is why I think that perhaps the main thrust has to be legislation dealing with foreign—

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Manthorpe, I will interrupt you because the chair is telling me I'm running out of time.

Would legislation that applies to former public office holders that would increase transparency in their financial relationships with state-owned companies in the PRC be a good idea?

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: Well, I think that there ought to be some regulations over former office holders for a period of years anyway, and not only with the PRC. I think that makes sense from any number of perspectives.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

We will go to Ms. Yip for six minutes or less.

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Thank you to the witnesses for coming out this evening or joining us virtually.

My first questions are to Mr. Manthorpe.

What is your takeaway on the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party's meeting that happened recently?

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: I think the immediate takeaway is probably fairly commonly held, and it is that Xi Jinping now has a very firm grip on the Communist Party and on the regime in Beijing. He has surrounded himself with his supporters and cronies.

One important thing to notice is that he has buried this meritocracy that has grown up in the last 20 or 30 years, and has made the regime now simply a cadre of people who are his supporters.

I think it's quite a dangerous time—I really do. It's going to take a while before we see the full implications. For example, I think he is not going to be too concerned about the economic well-being of China; he's going to be more concerned about maintaining his authoritarian control.

As we speak, there are about 400 million Chinese people under lockdown. That's a third of the population. His authoritarian state is the most technologically sophisticated thing the world has ever seen. It is a very troubling and dangerous time, and I think he is a person to be looked at with much caution.

Ms. Jean Yip: What are your thoughts on Hu Jintao being led away? Was it a message?

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: I don't know. My links with China watchers have come up with all kinds of conspiracy theories, and I have no idea. I'm not sure in the end that it's that important. It could have been a signal that times have changed, but it equally could have been that Hu Jintao was having a senior's moment and was just helped off. I have no idea. I don't think in the big scheme of things it's that important, quite honestly.

Ms. Jean Yip: How should Canada interpret the events of that particular meeting?

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: I think we have to recognize, as I said at the very beginning of my notes at the start, that we are entering a very critical period in world history wherein the position of China in the world is going to be of huge importance to our foreign policy. What I didn't have room or time to say is that we really need to focus our attention on building strong relationships with like-minded countries in Asia.

We need to set aside our now 30-, 40- or 50-year-old efforts to try to be friends with the Chinese Communist Party and recognize that our future in Asia is with fellow democracies or countries that are becoming democracies.

• (1900)

Ms. Jean Yip: In your opening statement, you indicated that there should not be any trade with China, yet you also recognized the fact that China is our second-largest trading partner.

Could you elaborate on your answer of minimalist transactions?

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: No, we have to trade with China. I'm sorry if what I said was not clear. We do, but I think that we shouldn't get too ambitious about it and we shouldn't let the thing go too far.

If you look at the nature of trade now, what we are selling China is what we were selling China in 1960. We're selling a bit more of it now, but all those fanciful thoughts in 1970s and afterwards that we might have Canadian businesses in China simply has not come to pass. I was travelling in China and talking to Canadians a great deal in the 1990s, and they all had very similar experiences. If they set up, their technology was stolen immediately, and they went out of business because a rival company would set up down the road doing what they did much more cheaply.

I think there are hardly any Canadian businesses operating in China now under Xi Jinping, who is down on private enterprise anyway. There are not going to be Canadian companies operating in China.

Ms. Jean Yip: Thank you for your answer.

I'm moving on to Mr. Youde.

You wrote an article this year about COVID in China, and I'd like to quickly quote from it:

...the divergent experiences do lead to questions about why certain governments are more willing to increase restrictions in order to lower the number of COVID-19 cases. While there may be a tendency to ascribe the differences to cultural explanations...broader domestic and international political explanations need to be explored.

Could you provide more background as to what domestic and international political explanations need to be explored?

The Chair: We'll need a fairly brief answer, Ms. Yip.

Time has expired, but we should hear what you have to say, Mr. Youde.

Dr. Jeremy Youde: Sure. Thank you. I'll be brief.

I think there is a need to look at the domestic politics and the fact that we just had this big national party congress. That plays into it. We've seen historically, if we look at the response that China had to SARS, for instance, and on the geopolitical front, that we also have to look at the relationships that existed between, say, China and the United States and the way that these relationships became politicized. That had an influence on the sorts of relationships and the willingness to engage with international standards and international recommendations about the movements of goods and people during the pandemic.

The Chair: Thank you for that, sir.

We'll now go to Monsieur Bergeron for six minutes or less.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Manthorpe, you have heard through the media about the report by the international human rights organization Safeguard Defenders. According to this organization, three police stations established in the Greater Toronto Area are serving the interests of the People's Republic of China.

How do you react to these reports that are circulating? How do you think Canada should respond to the establishment of these police stations, if this turns out to be the case?

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Manthorpe, have you had trouble with the translation?

• (1905)

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: Yes, I have, I'm afraid. I didn't get the translation. I thought I had turned it on, but obviously I hadn't.

The Chair: I'll tell you what; we'll reset the time, because Mr. Bergeron asked a very, very good question, I think.

Mr. Bergeron, can you say a few words and see if Mr. Manthorpe is getting the translation?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I thought all the sound tests had been done initially, Mr. Chair.

In any case, is the interpretation working well?

[English]

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: No. I'm not getting it, I'm afraid.

The Chair: There's a little globe at the bottom. If you click on that, it gives you translation.

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: Okay. I've got it now.

Let's try it again, please. I'm sorry. It should be fine now.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair and Mr. Manthorpe, can you hear the English interpretation?

[English]

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: I can indeed.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: That's good.

Mr. Manthorpe, you've probably heard the rumours in the media about a report by the non-governmental human rights organization Safeguard Defenders that unofficial police stations have been set up by China in the Greater Toronto Area.

First, what is your reaction to these rumours? Second, if these rumours are true, how should Canada respond?

[English]

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: Thank you very much. Yes, that is a good question indeed.

I think these rumours are indeed true. There were efforts a few years ago, and I think I referred to it in my book, when the consulate in Vancouver asked formally to be able to have Chinese police stationed in Vancouver to help and protect Chinese tourists while they were visiting Canada. It was obviously rejected, but they appear not to have taken the hint.

I think it is quite unacceptable, obviously, to have these sort of secret police stations established in Canada. I doubt very much it's just in Toronto. I would suspect they're probably also in Vancouver. The notion that they're simply there so that Chinese people can renew their driving licences and so forth is nonsense. That sort of thing is properly done through the consulate, if need be.

I think our law and justice systems need to root out these clandestine police operations and evict them. I think it should be as simple as that. We can't have other police forces running around in Canada, and not just from China but from anywhere else.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Youde, in a Center for Strategic and International Studies podcast, you discuss the influence of the People's Republic of China within the WHO, the World Health Organization. You highlight the role that the Canadian government or middle powers could play in convincing the People's Republic of China to give Taiwan enhanced status in the WHO, and to do so through quiet diplomacy in global health.

As alluded to in the opening remarks, you have probably heard about the rather significant difficulties that have arisen between Canada and the People's Republic of China in recent months and years.

How do you think Canada can play a useful role in strengthening Taiwan's position in the WHO and the acceptance of that strengthening by the People's Republic of China?

[English]

Dr. Jeremy Youde: Thank you for that question. It's an incredibly important issue.

It will be a challenge at this moment. That's just the absolute truth. The geopolitics are not really in favour of the sort of co-operative relationships that are going to be necessary in order to address any sort of future pandemics.

The potential upside is with these so-called middle powers—your Canadas, your Australias, and to some extent you can even look at Germany—but we can also look at some of the rising middle powers, some of the newly industrialized and democratizing countries, particularly in Asia, that might be able to have some degree of influence and be able to help lower some of the temperatures that exist, particularly when we're looking at the relationship between the United States and China.

The United States does not have the influence over China right now that would allow for a co-operative relationship. While there are definitely some incredible tensions that exist between Canada and China right now, they are probably more likely to have some sort of opportunity, particularly if it could be coupled with some sort of opportunity for scientific exchange, bearing in mind the same sorts of concerns that Mr. Manthorpe brought up about how that information that could be gleaned through these exchanges might then be used. That sense of transparency, that sense of trust and that opportunity for engagement are going to be key and be something that the middle powers—the countries like Canada—have an opportunity to accomplish far better than, say, the United States would have.

• (1910)

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you very much, Mr. Youde.

Mr. Manthorpe, last August, the Prime Minister announced his intention to create a special team to combat Russian disinformation and propaganda.

Charles Burton, a former counsellor at the Canadian embassy in China, asks why limit ourselves to Russia. He says the Chinese propaganda campaign, which includes conspiracy theories promulgated by pro-Beijing Chinese-language media in Canada, threatens our democracy, and has already cost Chinese-Canadian MPs seats in the last election.

This strikes me as an extremely weighty statement. So I ask you, Mr. Manthorpe: why limit ourselves to Russia?

[English]

The Chair: We will ask for a short answer to a long question.

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: You are quite right: We shouldn't. Our situation is that almost all the Chinese-language media in Canada are now under the control of the Chinese Communist Party. We need to find a way of doing something about it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

Now we'll go to Ms. McPherson for six minutes or less.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank our witnesses today. This has been frightening, of course, but also very informative. Thank you for your testimony so far.

Mr. Manthorpe, we understand that we do need to have a trading relationship with China. I think what we saw with Xi Jinping and his consolidation of power, the purging of rivals from within the party, is that this is heading in the wrong direction, clearly. However, knowing that we do have to have that relationship, what should the diplomacy look like?

It was unfortunate, but we did not have a diplomat in China for the past nine months of the last year because Ambassador Barton left the position in what I would say are probably pretty stinky circumstances when he went to work with Rio Tinto.

What should our diplomacy look like? What should Canadian diplomacy with China look like right now?

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: I'm not a diplomat, although I have many friends who are diplomats. I think it needs to be pretty stern. I think it needs to recognize that rebuilding a working relationship with Beijing, even a minimalist working relationship with Beijing, is going to take a lot of time and a lot of trust building. In the present situation, every diplomat and every businessperson who is in China is under threat of being kidnapped if the relationship goes off the rails again. I think we need to be just very stern, very clear that our expectations are pretty minimalist at this point. We need a lot of reassurance from Beijing before there can be anything much in terms of a working relationship.

It's a tough, tough post for any diplomat at the moment. I don't envy the person. However, it's a moment where we have to keep our elbows out and be tough about it. It is not a relationship that's going to be rebuilt very easily, certainly not one that the Canadian people will follow and acknowledge. I think that perhaps this is a moment when diplomats and politicians need to listen more to the feelings of the Canadian people on the relationship with the Chinese Communist Party.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Do you think Canada has been tough to date? Do you think that is a reasonable expectation from our diplomatic teams?

• (1915)

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: I think there's been a lot of confusion in the last three or four years since Meng Wanzhou was detained. There's been a lot of confusion about how to respond. Governments, business and academia have suddenly found that what they thought was a solid relationship is not, and they've been struggling to find how to deal with it. I know diplomats and business people who have traditionally had solid relationships with Beijing

who have gone there to try to ease the situation and have come away totally perplexed at finding all the doors closed to them.

In the last few weeks, actually, I've begun to feel that the decision-makers in Ottawa and in business and in academia have begun to get a grip on the reality at the moment. I think probably events with the party congress, the worsening relationship between Beijing and the United States and the threats over Taiwan in parallel with what's happening between Russia and Ukraine have opened a lot of people's eyes to the difficulties of the situation we face at the moment.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I sit on the foreign affairs committee, and we are currently looking at some forced-labour legislation, some slave-labour legislation that I hope will be strong, that will be equal to what we are seeing coming out of other countries like Germany and the EU and other democracies.

What do you think the impacts of our having that legislation and enforcing that legislation, which we have been woefully poor at doing in the past, will be on our relationship with China?

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: They won't like it, but here we are. At the moment we are going through all sorts of internal discussions about slavery 200 years ago, and here we are going to our big box stores and buying stuff that is made by slave labour today.

I applaud the legislation. It should be enforced and enforced rigorously. There's absolutely no justification whatsoever, no conceivable justification, for Canadians to be offered stuff in Canadian stores that is made by slave labour. It must be enforced rigorously. If Beijing doesn't like it, then tough.

The Chair: You have time for a very short question and answer.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I have a question for Mr. Youde, but I'll save it for the next round. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go to Mr. Chong for five minutes or less.

Did I get that wrong? Oh, it's Mr. Seeback. Sure, we can go to Mr. Seeback.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: That's great. Thank you for that, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Manthorpe, in your comments you said the Meng Wanzhou affair shows that they care more about one high-level party aristocrat than about the entire relationship with Canada. Is this the new norm in relations with China? Was this a message to Canada and other countries? Was it potentially exacerbated by the SNC-Lavalin matter, in which it appeared that there was some attempt to interfere in a prosecution through a deferred prosecution agreement? Was that an exacerbating factor, or do you think this is just the new norm of how China is going to do business with Canada and other countries?

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: I think it's basically the new norm. I think it's probably more than likely that there was some hope that a political accommodation could be made. Whether it referred specifically to the Lavalin affair, I just don't know.

I think you can look back. There was an earlier incident in which a spy for the PRC was detained here on a warrant from the U.S. and decided not to go through the process, and instead decided that he'd rather be extradited to the U.S. and start a new life there.

We all know—and it's very clear from the history—that there is always a political element at the end of an extradition process here. I have no doubt that Ms. Meng and her lawyers had that in mind, but I would be loath to tie it particularly to the Lavalin affair. I don't know, but I think there were plenty of other reasons for them to think there could be a political accommodation at the end.

• (1920)

Mr. Kyle Seeback: When you talked about trade, you said that we can't have normal trade relations. How should Canada approach trade relations? I know that it has to be transactional, but is there any more depth or can you put a little more flesh on that?

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: Well, it's an interesting one. I won't take up your time, but very quickly, after the sanctions on the export of Canadian pork, I was asked to go on a radio station in Saskatchewan.

I did a bit of research. They were worried in Saskatchewan because, they said, China is the largest market for Canadian pork, which in weight is quite true, but in value, it's Japan. I think you can find many other instances in which the importance of our exports to China is actually overstated. For example, The Economist did a report last year that ranked all countries by the importance to them of their exports to China. Canada was 47th on that list.

By and large, our exports to China are not nearly as important as they tend to be portrayed, so I think we can keep it to a transactional minimalist business. If they want to buy our wheat, our grains or our meat, then fine, here's the contract—sign on the dotted line—but I don't think we need to get more involved than that.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Yes, and let's absolutely not have an FTA. I know that you wrote an article about this in 2017, I believe. I assume your position hasn't changed.

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: No. In fact, it's intensified.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: You mentioned that the United Front is intimidating Chinese Canadians. You've certainly talked about the influence it has over Chinese-language Canadian media. Do you have anything more you would add? What things should we put in place to try to confront or eliminate this?

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: I'll just say very quickly that I think you're going to hear from Alex Neve, the former head of Amnesty International, who I think is going to give evidence. He's a man who has been through all of these intrusions and has verified many of them. I would defer to him on that question. He's very much the expert on the breadth and depth of those intrusions.

The Chair: There's time for a very short question.

Are you finished? Thank you, Mr. Seeback.

We'll go to Mr. Fragiskatos for five minutes or less.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Professor Youde, if I could begin with you, I take your points on middle powers and what they could potentially do on this question of global health policy. I think the pandemic has made very real the need to engage internationally with like-minded allies and even towards countries where we don't share values, but certainly, health cuts across and points to the need for any co-operation.

With respect to China, President Xi, as this past weekend has made even more clear, is looking inward and not outward. What are the options on the table for middle powers that want to engage on this question of global health policy but look to China, where I don't think they see a partner? You can't talk to someone who won't talk back to you and have a meaningful conversation with you.

Are there creative ways around that? Are there ways that middle powers can get around that? I think you implied that there are possibilities, but I wonder if you could expand on that idea.

Dr. Jeremy Youde: Thanks for the question.

It is a difficult moment to try to engage in this sort of dialogue, for exactly the reason you pointed out: President Xi has shown an inclination toward looking inward.

One of the things that I think can be done is to make the overtures, to at least show that there is this good-faith effort to try to engage, if for no other reason than the possibility of being able to name and shame. That's one of the rare powers the WHO really has: to try to name and shame countries that aren't in compliance.

Extending that effort I think can be important, as well as working with some of the countries, particularly some of the countries that have even stronger relationships with China, and particularly the regional partners and the regional neighbours. They may be able to have a degree of influence that a Canada or an Australia or other countries may not be able to have. That could be another opportunity.

I think we also need to recognize that there could be some opportunities—and we have seen some opportunities on a scattershot level—for scientific diplomacy. Of course, that gets complicated, because when information that the Chinese government hasn't wanted to get out does get out, there has been retribution that has been exactly against those individuals and those organizations.

There's no panacea, unfortunately. There's no easy way to do it, but continued efforts are going to be crucial in making those sorts of inroads.

• (1925)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much.

I'll go to Mr. Manthorpe with the final question.

Sir, you've written at great length on the rise of right-wing nationalism, and populism. You said the following in a relatively recent op-ed:

...even though Canada has not been struck as hard or wounded so dangerously as some other democracies, there are plenty of warning signs for our political and pundit class[es] to take seriously.

Again, that's in reference to right-wing nationalism and populism.

What are the implications of that observation, sir, for Canadian foreign policy, specifically relating to the question of Canada-China relations?

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: I haven't thought about it strictly in those terms. I think you're referring to a book I wrote after *Claws of the Panda*, which is called *Restoring Democracy*. I'm actually a little more concerned now about the state and future of democracy in Canada than I was when I wrote that book two years ago. I think we need to examine it very thoroughly.

If we find ourselves gripped by right-wing nationalism, of course it will affect our foreign policy as well. I don't see it being quite as dangerous here as it is in the United States and some parts of Europe, such as Hungary and, under certain circumstances, Poland. However, it's something we need to recognize. Our democracy needs constant tending. I think we've been too lackadaisical over the last 20 or 30 years, and we need to sit down and recognize....

After the COVID pandemic, which exposed so many good things as well as weaknesses, would probably be a good moment to sit down and think about where Canadian democracy goes from here.

The Chair: Mr. Fragiskatos, you're unfortunately out of time.

We will finish the round. We will take the time necessary.

Mr. Bergeron, you have two and a half minutes, sir.

[*Translation*]

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

Considering everything we've heard today, I almost feel like asking Mr. Manthorpe how the monarchy reassures him about the state of democracy in Canada, but I'll refrain.

During her testimony on April 19, 2021, Carolyn Bartholomew, chair of the United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission, told the committee that state media representatives from the People's Republic of China in the United States are required to register with the U.S. Department of Justice under the Foreign Agents Registration Act.

Do you believe it would be appropriate for Canada to have such legislation and, if so, how effective would it be?

[*English*]

Mr. Jonathan Manthorpe: I think it would be a very important step. It's important to know who is doing what in our country. Having a registration of foreign agents is probably the primary step, and then setting out boundaries for what those agents can and can't do in our country.

Yes, I think a registry is a necessary first step.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Youde, how does Taiwan's non-participation in the World Health Organization affect global efforts to prevent the occurrence of new pandemics or efforts to combat potential pandemics?

• (1930)

[*English*]

Dr. Jeremy Youde: Taiwan's inclusion would be incredibly important.

During the SARS pandemic, Taiwan had the second-highest number of cases. The fact that we had to go through the People's Republic of China government in order to have any sort of engagement between the Taiwanese government and the World Health Organization caused a huge delay.

Similarly, when we're looking at COVID-19.... Taiwan was incredibly blessed to have had a vice-president who was an epidemiologist. That is the sort of expertise and knowledge that would be incredibly important for helping to stop the spread and look at the sorts of efforts that might be effective at reducing the spread of an infectious disease.

It is definitely a challenge. Unfortunately, everything has to go through the People's Republic of China right now. They are understandably incredibly reluctant to do so, to the point where they have even blocked Taiwan from participating in the annual World Health Assembly, which takes place every May in Geneva and is like a Parliament for global health.

Having these sorts of insights from Taiwan—having all parts of the globe represented—is going to be incredibly important if we're going to be able to effectively stop the next pandemic.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Youde.

We'll now go to Ms. McPherson for the final two and a half minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Youde. I agree with you on that last comment you made. I also think it's very important that Taiwan be able to share their expertise on things, such as the sustainable development goals and a range of different things that are so important and that Taiwan has taken leadership on.

I'm concerned. We are hearing testimony today that Canada needs to, diplomatically, be more stern. "Put our elbows up", I think, was one of the quotes I heard. On the other hand, I'm hearing you, Mr. Youde, talk about the need for China to be at the table because of those major gaps that would be exposed if they weren't there.

I'd love to finish by getting some more information from you. First of all, what are those gaps? How do we ensure that we are balancing them? What does that balance look like between stern diplomacy and the need to have China at the table as we talk about health?

Finally, as we see a China that is looking more inward, how trustworthy is the information that are we receiving from China, as well?

That's a lot. Good luck.

Dr. Jeremy Youde: Oh, my goodness. It's a lot to go through in two and a half minutes.

To take the second point first, this is a classic case of "trust, but verify". This is why we need to have multiple sets of eyes involved. It is important to get the information that is coming from official sources. It's also important to make sure that we can triangulate that information, that we can trust it and that we can operate effectively on it.

The inward focus that the Chinese government is engaging in now is not going to keep them safe in terms of future pandemics. That's just the reality of the movement of goods and people across borders.

Historically, when we look at the outbreaks of things such as COVID, SARS and some of the influenza outbreaks we've had, they came from China and that region. That's a quirk of geography in many respects, but it also means that it's all the more important that we have those opportunities to get that sort of information and to conduct that surveillance. It's not because we're trying to spy or do anything nefarious, but because if we know when outbreaks are happening, if we know how that spread is starting to begin and see those patterns, we can address the concerns more effectively and more quickly and we can get the World Health Organization and the other organizations involved.

I don't know that it's so much a choice between being stern and bringing them to the table. It is, as you point out, more about how to strike that balance. We need to have a stern measure, but it can't be so stern that it completely closes China off. That would put all of us at further risk.

The Chair: With that, we're at the end of our first panel. What a fascinating one it was.

Mr. Youde and Mr. Manthorpe, we were delighted to have you here.

I know the second panel is gong to be wonderful as well. I'm sure that if you ask nicely, you can stay on and listen in, if you wish.

Otherwise, this is being televised somewhere, is it not, Nancy?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Nancy Vohl): We're being televised.

The Chair: Yes, we're being televised. There you go. If you can find that, you're still in business.

We will take a brief break.

We're going to do another sound check with Mr. Hamilton, and then, hopefully, we'll be back in a few minutes with the second panel.

Thank you.

• (1935) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1940)

The Chair: We're ready to start our second hour.

Mr. Hamilton, we are still challenged to provide the interpreters with a clear enough audio signal to provide the interpretation in French that we require as part of our system here. We will try a question—Mr. Chong will be first—but if the audio quality isn't up to standard, we will have to impose on you to perhaps provide us with written answers. We'll keep you here, though, to be available for questions, if that's okay.

With that, joining us on our second panel—we hope—is Clive Hamilton, a professor of public ethics at Charles Sturt University's Canberra campus.

Online, we have Stephen Nagy, senior associate professor at International Christian University and senior research fellow at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute.

Joining us in person tonight is Alex Neve, a senior fellow at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Ottawa.

Mr. Hamilton, let's see if you can give us a statement. If not, we do have it printed, so we won't lose that piece if the audio quality isn't good.

We will start the clock at five minutes, but I may have to interrupt.

Mr. Clive Hamilton: Thank you, Chair.

My apologies for [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] technical troubles. It's a pleasure to appear before the committee [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

The Chair: No, I'm sorry, sir. It's just not going to work.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I wonder if he could try turning his camera off to see if there's a possibility that we could hear him. There could be a bandwidth issue in transmission from Australia.

Sometimes that helps.

The Chair: It does. Yes.

Mr. Clive Hamilton: I have turned the camera off.

Is that any better, Chair?

The Chair: No, I'm afraid it's not better, sir. You can turn your camera back on so that we can see you.

As I said, we have your statement printed out, so that is available to us. I will advise the members to ask questions, but if we could impose on you to provide us written answers, that would be very—

Hon. Robert Oliphant: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, have we received the statement as members?

The Chair: I'm told that we did. Did we not receive...?

Oh. We have received the English copy.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: When it has been translated, can I ask that it be circulated to all members and be entered as evidence into our study?

The Chair: Absolutely.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Nancy Vohl): The answers can also be appended.

The Chair: Yes.

We will make sure that the written answers we receive will be translated and passed on appropriately.

That said, though, it's unfortunate, because in our committee business we will also be offering some instructions to our analysts for our report. We'll have to make the best of it, I suppose.

With that, Mr. Nagy, we will go to you for an opening statement. You have five minutes or less, please, sir.

Mr. Stephen R. Nagy (Senior Associate Professor, International Christian University and Senior Research Fellow, MacDonald Laurier Institute, As an Individual): Thank you very much for the opportunity to share my views.

Just to give you a bit of background, I'm based in Tokyo. I've lived in Tokyo and I see China relations and Canada-China relations from Tokyo, but I've also spent five years in Hong Kong as well.

I'd like to start with a statement, and I think it's really important. The cardinal rule of diplomacy is never to make binary choices. I think this is really critical as we discuss Canada-China relations and how we move forward.

In 2021, according to a Statistics Canada report, all our agricultural product trade went up with China. That agricultural relationship and the export of other raw materials to China continues to deepen despite record unfavourable ratings. I think this is really important. It places us in a position of thinking about what the economic benefits are of a relationship with China and the realities of the politics.

Second, I think we have many challenges globally and regionally that we need to be thinking about in terms of our relations with China. Whether we're thinking about non-traditional security issues such as transnational diseases or whether we're thinking about environmental problems, China will be part of that solution. As a result, we need to find and build bridges.

Notwithstanding, I would like to focus on three specific areas that I think are really critical to thinking about Canada-China relations.

The first thing is China's broad intentions to weaken international institutions, redefine how we understand democracy, redefine how we understand human rights and redefine how we think about rule of law.

The second thing, I think importantly, is to look at the political influence campaigns within Canada that particularly target ethnic Chinese Canadians and how they influence our democracy and create challenges in terms of creating coherent, rational and fact-based policy to build a productive yet awkward coexistence with China.

Third, I think it is real important to clearly understand China's that intentions within the Indo-Pacific region are to reorganize the regional security architecture so that like-minded states like Japan, South Korea and Australia defer to Beijing's wishes before they consider their own priorities within the region.

With that, I think Canada has a deep interest in working with like-minded countries, whether it's the United States, Japan, Australia or South Korea, in strengthening collaboration on building a rules-based order, and that means working within the United Nations, working within the International Monetary Fund and working within the World Health Organization to ensure we have a rules-based, transparent process to protect this international system and protect middle powers, such as Canada, from a might-is-right approach to foreign policy.

On my second point, in terms of political influence campaigns within Canada—and Canada's not the only victim of this, of course; there are Australia and others as well—it's really critical that we not only protect our Chinese-Canadian citizens but also ensure that our Canadian businesses, as they interact with China, are thinking about Canadian interests. This means increasing transparency with regard to Chinese-language media, understanding who the owners are of those Chinese-language media resources and understanding and creating much more Chinese literacy in the ethnic Chinese community within Canada and in the Canadian community in general about the kinds of operations that the United Front Work Department is deploying in Canada to shape our political choices and shape our relations with China.

The third area that I think is really important is to understand the importance of a stronger, forward-leaning presence in the Indo-Pacific region that does support a rules-based order. About \$5.5 trillion U.S. of trade goes through the South China Sea, the East China Sea and in and around Taiwan. Of that, about \$25 billion of Canadian trade is moving in and out of the region. Any kind of friction within the region, a cross-strait contingency in which China pursues a reunification, will fundamentally affect both the regional economy and Canadian economic interests within the region.

It's critically important that we work with like-minded partners, such as Japan, the United States, South Korea and Australia, to engage in what we call "transit operations", ensuring that maritime domain awareness is robust and identifies the challenges that the Chinese are making in terms of grey zone operations, lawfare operations, and of course the use of force.

It's critical that Canada continues to engage with China through key lines of co-operation, such as environmental co-operation, trade, thinking about non-traditional security co-operation on transnational diseases, piracy and illegal fishing, but at the same time we need to draw strong lines and encourage transparency at home and in our bilateral relations.

• (1945)

We need to increase the literacy of Canadians and Canadian politicians about what's happening with regard to China-Canadian relations and the broader Indo-Pacific region.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nagy. I think we'll have to call it there for time, but you'll have more to say, and I'm sure you'll work it into some of your answers.

Now we'll go to Mr. Neve for five minutes or less.

Mr. Alex Neve (Senior Fellow, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa, As an Individual): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate having the opportunity to be in front of the special committee this evening.

Perhaps it's no surprise that my primary message to you is a simple one. It is that a strong commitment to human rights must be at the very heart of all aspects of our relationship with China. I'd like to offer four recommendations to take that a bit further.

I'm not going to focus on any of the many groups that are at grave human rights risk every single day in China, including Uighurs, Tibetans, the people of Hong Kong, Falun Gong practitioners, human rights defenders and pro-democracy advocates. Of course we could spend the entire session focusing in on any of those groups. I've had that opportunity in the past. My recommendations this evening are more overarching.

The first is that we need much more concerted action on behalf of Canadians who are unjustly imprisoned in China, as well as for the relatives of Canadians who have fled persecution in China and are stranded abroad seeking reunion and resettlement with their families. This should include perhaps appointing a special envoy dedicated to taking up these kinds of cases when Canadians and permanent residents are imprisoned in China in contravention of international human rights norms.

I think, of course, of Huseyin Celil, a Uighur Canadian who has been imprisoned for more than 16 years and has not seen his four children grow up in Burlington. His family has had no news of him for five years.

I think of Sun Qian, a Canadian citizen and Falun Gong practitioner, who has been imprisoned since 2017 and was sentenced to an eight-year prison term in 2020. Supposedly voluntarily, she has renounced her Canadian citizenship. There has been no news of her for the last two years.

I think of Ayoub Mohammed, Salahidin Abdulhad and Khalil Mamut, who are three Uighur men who escaped China in 2001. They were turned over to U.S. forces in Afghanistan by bounty hunters and ended up in Guantanamo Bay. After several years of that dystopian injustice, they were cleared by the U.S. government and resettled over a decade ago, through absurd diplomatic deals, to Bermuda and Albania. They are all married to Canadian citizens or permanent residents. They all have Canadian children. For years, they have been seeking reunion with their families here in Canada, but that has been blocked at every turn. We can do much better.

Second, picking up on Jonathan Manthorpe's comments, we must more directly confront the harassment of human rights defenders in Canada who are working to uphold human rights in China, particularly with respect to Uighurs, Tibet, Hong Kong and Falun Gong. These unlawful and sometimes violent actions against activists in Canada emanate from the Chinese government and its agents. Now we have added to the mix the reported establishment of these three police service stations mentioned earlier, in at least three locations in Canada.

The intimidation extends to family in China. Uighur Canadians tell of their relatives being detained and threatened in retaliation for their activism in Canada. Tibetan Canadians tell of being forced to sign forms renouncing the Dalai Lama if they wish to be granted visas to travel to visit their loved ones.

The intended impact is clear. It is to frighten activists and community members into silence. Amnesty International, on behalf of the Canadian Coalition for Human Rights in China prepared two comprehensive reports on this, in 2017 and 2020, with numerous recommendations for the Canadian government. There has really, sadly, been very little progress.

Now, activists increasingly do not even bother to report incidents. They find it too confusing to ascertain where to turn or are dispirited by past attempts that have gone nowhere. Civil society has laid out a blueprint for action, which we can get into in the questions if you like.

Third, we need a whole-of-government human rights action plan to guide the Canada-China relationship. Concern about human rights in China cannot be limited to the human rights desk at Global Affairs. Human rights are implicated in all aspects of that relationship, including trade, environment, health, natural resources, national security and so much more. We need that human rights action plan—we've needed it for years—that cuts across the entirety of government and ideally would draw in provincial, territorial and municipal governments as well.

Finally, there is an urgent, growing need to devote dedicated expert resources to advancing a serious multilateral strategy with respect to China and human rights.

• (1950)

On the world stage, China has long been adept at escaping scrutiny, let alone consequences, for the country's abysmal human rights record. Other governments are cajoled, hoodwinked and even threatened into voting against the very few attempted UN-level resolutions that have come forward over the years.

Earlier this month, of course, a resolution proposing a debate at the UN Human Rights Council about the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' recent report on the Uighur situation was defeated. Only 17—that's just over one-third—of the members of the UN Human Rights Council voted in favour of that resolution.

• (1955)

The Chair: Mr. Neve, I'm afraid we've gone into questioning time, so I'd better get to that.

For that, I will turn to Mr. Chong. You have six minutes or less.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to ask four very quick questions to Professor Hamilton. I hope he can respond to the clerk and you, Mr. Chair, in writing.

First, Australia's National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator has now been in place since 2018. What is the role of the coordinator, and how effective has the office been in combatting foreign interference?

Second, Australia is generally seen as a model for western nations in addressing the threat of foreign interference. What can Canada learn from Australia in order to build resilience against PRC foreign interference?

Third, of all recent measures taken by Australia to counter PRC foreign interference, which have been the most effective?

My fourth question for Professor Hamilton is this: Does not joining AUKUS—the recent defence treaty between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States—and not being a member of a quadrilateral security dialogue represent a missed opportunity for Canada, and why, or why not?

Those are the four questions, Mr. Chair, that I would like Professor Hamilton to respond to.

Now, I'd like to ask Mr. Neve some questions.

You mentioned that human rights should be at the centre of our approach to the People's Republic of China. You mentioned the establishment of three illegal police stations here in the greater Toronto area.

I have a question related to state-controlled broadcasters getting government licences here in Canada. There's been evidence that these state-controlled broadcasters from China have actually violated human rights by broadcasting the coerced and forced confessions of prisoners of conscience. As you know as well, several months ago the CRTC pulled Russia Today, RT, off the air, because it is a state-controlled broadcaster spreading disinformation. In some cases it may even be violating international law with what it's been doing.

I'm wondering if you think that the CRTC licences of state-controlled broadcasters from China operating here in Canada should be revoked.

Mr. Alex Neve: I won't take a definite yes or no position, because I'm not sufficiently familiar with those. I'm very much aware of the allegations and concerns.

What is evident, though, is that there absolutely cannot be a double standard here. There were very clear, compelling and cogent reasons for the decision to revoke the Russian licence. Those should apply not only because we have heightened concern and scrutiny now with respect to Russia in the midst of the Ukraine crisis. The same concerns, approach, standards and principles should be applied to Chinese state-owned media as well. Absolutely, we should be looking very closely at any concerns with respect to how any of that media is a vehicle for propagating, advancing or promoting human rights violations.

Hon. Michael Chong: Just to be clear for the record, Mr. Chair, I'm not at all in favour of banning any print media or any non-CRTC media, because I believe in the fundamental freedom of expression.

I think it's a dangerous thing for the government to ban free expression in print media, but I certainly don't believe that the Government of Canada is under any obligation to grant a licence to state-controlled broadcasters like those operating from either Russia or China to operate on government-regulated airwaves.

I have a second question before I run out of time. You mentioned in your second recommendation that the countering of the harassment of human rights defenders here in Canada needs to be a priority, and we know that has taken place. We even recently have seen in the United Kingdom people who were protesting at the consulate in Manchester being violently assaulted by accredited diplomatic staff before British police intervened and stopped the physical assault.

We know here that pro-Hong Kong democracy activists have been harassed, that people defending the rights of Uighurs and Tibetans have been harassed by proxies acting on behalf of Beijing. What are the one or two things that the government isn't doing that it should be doing to better protect the safety of those Canadians here?

• (2000)

Mr. Alex Neve: I referenced the fact that two fairly comprehensive reports were put in print in front of the government in 2017 and 2020, with a number of recommendations. These were prepared by Amnesty International, but they were on behalf of the Canadian Coalition for Human Rights in China, which comprises Uighur, Tibetans, Falun Gong and Hong Kong groups. It's a very wide-ranging coalition.

Some of those recommendations were very simple, things that really could have been advanced in a few months. For instance, one of the things that activists find the most frustrating and very disappointing is the response from law enforcement or security agencies when they do seek.... When something has happened, whether it's intimidation, something that's happened by way of online surveillance or even something that has perhaps involved an act of violence; they are frequently sent from one agency to another. The response is that it's not really for the RCMP but for municipal police, or it's not really a policing matter and they should go to CSIS, or that it's not really intelligence, so they should raise it with foreign affairs, and people give up.

A recommendation was made that there is the need for what we called a central clearing house, an office that is going to coordinate the efforts of departments and agencies that all have a piece of this pie, because right now it is scattered and ineffective.

The Chair: We'll have to pause there. I'm sorry, Mr. Neve, but Mr. Chong is out of time—a little bit more than out of time, in fact, but that's okay.

We'll now go to Mr. Oliphant, who will be given, I'm sure, the same latitude.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to both of the witnesses for being here tonight.

I wanted to begin with Professor Nagy. I'm just sorting out a couple of your remarks.

You said in your remarks that it was important for Canada to work with allies in our geopolitical strategy and in sorting out our relationship with China, and you mentioned the United States, Japan, Australia and others. You've also written that it's important for Canada to differentiate from the United States in our approach on the Indo-Pacific, which includes China.

I'm just wondering where that is. Is one on national security issues or international security issues, the other on trade and commerce? In your opinion, where should we be aligned and where should we differentiate, particularly with the United States?

Mr. Stephen R. Nagy: I think it's critical for us to continue to ensure that we are an independent stakeholder with regard to our bilateral relationship with China and also our relationships within the Indo-Pacific. There is a danger that if we align too closely with the United States, particularly on a securitized approach to dealing with China, we will become another victim of U.S. policy.

China understands—and they often use the expression that you kill the chicken to scare the monkeys—that the best way to pull apart a U.S. approach to the region is to work on its weaker partners. The weaker partners include Canada, Australia, South Korea—to a certain degree—and European countries.

We need to ensure that as we engage with China, we have a policy that is less securitized than that of the United States, and we need to find opportunities to use Canadian diplomacy to work with China. At the same time, I think it's very critical that, again, we work with the United States, Japan, Australia and other partners in concerted ways to promote trade, to promote a rules-based order, to fight against the human rights violations within the region, and to

really send the message to China that as we work to shape its behaviour, Canada does have a slightly different approach. I think that is going to continue to be important so that we can build an awkward coexistence with a rising state that really does have values that are different from ours.

• (2005)

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Thank you.

My next question is for both of you, and it builds on that one because we've been hearing conflicting testimony tonight. Ms. McPherson raised it as well.

We've been hearing.... One witness tonight said that we should have no diplomatic relations with China, but then also said that we should reconstruct our relationship with China, so I'm kind of confused as to what he really meant. However, last week a professor from Queen's told us that it's not a question of whether or not we have a relationship with China—because it exists, it's large, and it is influential—it's how we have a relationship with China.

I'm just trying to understand that, because in the context of health, we also heard tonight that it was absolutely critical for the health of our global population that we find a way to work with China because of its significance in issues of health. We also hear that we should withdraw from or sometimes actually isolate China.

For both of you, I'm just trying to work out that dichotomy. I'm on dichotomies tonight. I have about a minute and a bit for both of you to comment on that.

Mr. Stephen R. Nagy: It's a country of 1.4 billion people. We have shared interests in dealing with environmental issues and in dealing with health issues. We have to find a way to work with China. It has considerable resources that can be used to deal with these challenges. I think that those are clear areas or cross-connections on which Canada can engage with China.

Of course, there are red lines where we need to be very upfront. We need to be transparent. We need to ensure that China understands that on human rights, on interference with our democracy, and on interference with the democracies of like-minded countries like Japan and Australia, we will stand by our partners to ensure that the system we have benefited from and that is core to our prosperity remains intact.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Neve, would you comment?

Mr. Alex Neve: We can't not have a relationship with China. It's in no one's interest, including the many communities in China whose human rights are so fragile and violated every day. I think it is a question of the nature of that relationship.

I'd go back to my core message, which is that we have to go much further in very deliberately and thoughtfully putting human rights at the centre of all aspects of that relationship.

We have some tremendous work that has been done. I've seen it first-hand over the years by diplomats—both in the Pearson Building and at our embassy—who have the human rights file. However, far too often, other corners of the relationship, which extend probably across literally every single government department, pay hardly any attention at all to human rights. I think there are a lot of opportunities that are missed there. If that defined the relationship, then I think we would feel much better about what it looked like.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: You mentioned the disappointing vote at the UN Human Rights Council. That signalled to me that we have a long piece of work to do with allies and friends and not-like-minded.

Do you agree on that?

Mr. Alex Neve: I do, absolutely. That's why I was starting to say that we need an expert and well-resourced multilateral strategy, because I think far too often what we see is that there's a bit of a mad scramble every time an opportunity or a challenge arises at the UN Human Rights Council or somewhere else—

Hon. Robert Oliphant: No, really?

Mr. Alex Neve: —and it's not part of a well-planned, long-term, proactive strategy to try to put pieces in place to start to take China on meaningfully in some of those settings.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Bergeron, it's over to you for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

Thank you to our witnesses for being with us tonight.

Mr. Nagy, I'm going to go back to your answer to the first question posed by Mr. Oliphant, to whom you said that the People's Republic of China was attacking America's weakest allies.

Knowing that the most vulnerable or weakest partners of the United States are being targeted by the People's Republic of China, which is trying to isolate them, isn't that, on the contrary, an argument for closer rapprochement and coordination with the U.S.?

• (2010)

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen R. Nagy: Thank you very much for the question.

Again, we need to engage in a nuanced approach in working with the United States when it comes to how we engage with China. China understands that U.S. allies, such as Australia and even European countries, are much more vulnerable to Chinese coercion. If we work too closely and have an over-securitized relationship with the United States when it comes to China, it will put Canadians and Canadian businesses in a position where they could be coerced or be used as leverage for that relationship.

The cases of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor are very good examples of how Canadians were used to change the relationship and weaken the partnership between the United States and Canada.

We were fortunate they were able to come out of China eventually. Again, the relationship and the choices we make with the United States need to be highly calibrated and nuanced.

Strengthening a securitized relationship on China will put Canadian businesses and Canadians in danger in China. This is why we need to continue to think about how we can have a Canadian approach that complements the United States but also very much understands how we could be leveraged to put pressure on the United States.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Nagy, I confess that I still can't quite grasp the nuance you are trying to convey to us. What you are telling us seems to be more in favour of strengthening Canada's relationship with the U.S. Anyway, I'll move on to another question.

Since the Special Committee on the Canada–People's Republic of China Relationship was established in the previous Parliament, there have been three foreign ministers.

The first of them, Minister Champagne, promised us a new policy on China. Now we are not talking about a new China policy, but a new Indo-Pacific policy.

Some critics say this is a way for the government to dodge the need for a China policy, while others think it is instead a way to foster synergy among the states in the Indo-Pacific region, in order to better oversee the actions of the People's Republic of China. What do you think?

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen R. Nagy: I think it's critical for us to engage with China through an Indo-Pacific strategy. China is part of the region; it is not the region. As we engage in the region, we work with like-minded countries such as Japan, South Korea, Australia and Singapore, as well as countries that have different political systems, such as Vietnam. As we work with those partners, we can create a more robust, institutionalized and rules-based region that can potentially shape Chinese behaviour over the long term.

If Canada is not part of that... We use the expression, “if it's not at the table in creating the regional rules and supporting the regional rules, it's on the menu.” This is a very critical part of how we engage with China: by creating and shaping the Indo-Pacific region along with like-minded countries that have significant resources to complement Canadian resources.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Neve, you ended your opening remarks by talking about the vote that took place last October at the UN Human Rights Council, where a draft was rejected by a slim majority.

Amnesty International's Secretary General, Agnès Callamard, reacted by saying that the vote put the UN's main human rights body in the grotesque position of ignoring the findings of the UN's own human rights office.

In your view, to what extent is this Human Rights Council vote representative of the growing influence of the People's Republic of China in international institutions and organizations? How does it reflect the strategy that the People's Republic of China is pursuing through international institutions?

• (2015)

[English]

The Chair: Please give a very brief answer, sir.

Mr. Alex Neve: Okay.

Well, absolutely, I think it is very reflective of the growing influence of China in those institutions, and within the Human Rights Council in particular. It's also more broadly reflective of other challenges that exist within the council. It's not only reflective of China's role; I think the degree to which China actively and energetically pulled out all the stops to make sure that the resolution was defeated tells us a lot.

That's why, to go back to my response to Mr. Oliphant's earlier question, I think Canada really needs to get in the game, with our partners, of developing and putting in place a very comprehensive, resourced, forward-looking strategy for how we're going to start to respond to the dysfunctional, divisive and undermining influence we're seeing from China in those institutions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. McPherson, you have six minutes.

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

I'd like to thank our witnesses for being here this evening. I know it's late.

Mr. Neve, I'd like to follow up on some of the questions asked by my colleague Monsieur Bergeron on what that multilateral strategy would look like. Obviously, Canada can play a role. We do have that diplomatic role or that middle power role that we can play, but if we are trying to have a forward-looking strategy and if we are trying to make sure we're not always on our heels when these things come up, what exactly would that look like? Can you give me some more details on what Canada should do right now to make that happen?

Mr. Alex Neve: Certainly this is not a strategy that we develop on our own. I think it's a very clear example of a strategy that needs to be developed collaboratively with a number of partners, and not just the United States, western Europe and Australia. I think when we look at some of the voting patterns we've seen recently with respect to some of the statements dealing with Uighurs and Hong Kong, etc., there are starting to be a few other countries willing to come to the table and be part of saying the right thing.

The strategy needs to be developed with them, because I think you're quite right that if we just sit around a table on our own here in Ottawa and craft a strategy for how to deal with China at the UN Human Rights Council, that will largely be ineffective. We really

need to start to think about relationships and who can perhaps be brought on board. We need to have a larger constituency of countries than the usual suspects who have been coming together so far, and bring some real experts into thinking this through.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Yes. We're talking about the Human Rights Council, but there are the other multilateral institutions where that same sort of consensus-building or community-building, I guess, is very important.

Of course, one area that I also see—we've seen this with the vote, to some degree—is the growing influence of China in sub-Saharan Africa as other traditional partners with sub-Saharan African countries have stepped back. Can you talk a little bit about the implications of that and how we could counter that influence?

Mr. Alex Neve: I think that would have to be a key plank of the strategy, because there's no question that this is a very real trend. It's not just problematic within the Human Rights Council. We saw it, and it was very problematic, with respect to this vote, obviously. China's economic footprint in sub-Saharan Africa is immense. It's being leveraged and used in a whole host of ways when it comes to those sorts of votes.

It sometimes feels as though we're just kind of watching and letting it happen. We need to come together with other countries who share that concern to come up with some meaningful strategies for how to respond, whether it is starting to more meaningfully respond to that growing presence on the ground in countries in sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, or having different approaches to relationship-building within some of the institutions.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Yes. I would suggest that the abandonment of many of these countries by Canada and others has left a void that was very easy to fill.

Mr. Nagy, if I could ask you, as well, I'm also concerned when we talk about China's growing influence. I'd love it if you could share your thoughts on the growing influence of China in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as the growing threat of China with regard to the Canadian Arctic region.

Mr. Stephen R. Nagy: Thank you very much for the question.

In terms of sub-Saharan Africa, I think the primary influence that China is deploying is anything related to aid and anything related to the belt and road initiative. That creates dependent relationships through the provision of infrastructure connectivity within the region.

You mentioned sub-Saharan Africa. I think we should be more concerned about areas such as the Congo, which has a supply of rare earth materials. The Chinese government is very intent on monopolizing those rare earth materials so that they can capture the market and use that to again pressure allies of the United States that depend on those rare earth materials for the production of electronics. They go into our vehicles and into many things.

I think the belt and road initiative is very critical. We should be looking at where that's deployed in Africa and how it's related to the monopolization of critical minerals.

With regard to the Arctic, I think it's premature to say the Chinese are very proactive within the region, first because they lack the resources and second because they lack the expertise. Also, they are challenged right now in engaging within the region.

Most evidence suggests that they will eventually be interested in acquiring resources in the Arctic, especially as global climate change opens up the Arctic Ocean, creating opportunities for resource exploitation. However, how will they deploy resources? This is an open question at this particular time.

I don't think the evidence suggests that they are intent on deploying military resources; rather, they're in a premature stage of developing the expertise to exploit resources.

How will they do that? Most likely they will co-operate with Russia, and this will create more complications. I think an area that we haven't brought up in today's discussion is where China and Russia are in their alignment on many different issues.

● (2020)

The Chair: You have time for a very quick question and a quick answer.

Ms. Heather McPherson: You always give me these very quick questions. I'll save it for the next round.

Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

We'll now go to Ms. Dancho for five minutes or less.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here. I've listened very intently to your expertise and your testimony today.

I'm going to start with some questions for Professor Nagy.

I'm listening to what you're saying. Please correct me if I'm wrong, but you seem to be suggesting that we move away from aligning ourselves with our American allies in a security relationship in response to China and instead move toward other allies and international institutions like the UN, the World Health Organization and the IMF.

Is that a correct assessment of what you've said?

Mr. Stephen R. Nagy: No. Again, I will reiterate that I think it's really important that we co-operate with our closest ally, the United States. We also need to be conscious how the degree of co-operation we engage in may open us up to being used as leverage in the U.S.-China competition. This happened with the arrest of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor. The economic coercion that happened against Australia is another example.

We need to be finding and threading the needle in terms of how we co-operate with the United States, but at the same time, we need to find an independent way to engage.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you very much.

You mentioned specifically that if we move closer to.... I believe the word you kept using was "securitized". I'm not quite sure.

I believe you're referring to our security relationship with the U.S. If we move closer and align ourselves more closely, you said we can have Canadians and Canadian businesses in danger in China. Is that not what you said?

Mr. Stephen R. Nagy: Yes, I said that.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Right.

You would disagree, then, that we should be pursuing relationships with AUKUS, for example—which, as you know, is a security agreement with the U.S., the UK and Australia—or with the quadrilateral security dialogue with India, Japan, Australia and the U.S. We should, in your opinion, not be joining these.

Mr. Stephen R. Nagy: No, and I've written explicitly about this.

I said that Canada should co-operate with the quadrilateral security dialogue in an ad hoc, functional way, not as a membership in the quad but in finding ways to co-operate in maritime security. If you follow the developments of the quad, they're talking about technological co-operation, infrastructure and connectivity co-operation. AUKUS is as well.

I think the nuclear submarine aspect of AUKUS takes up a lot of media space, but the real area for Canadian co-operation is in AI and quantum computing. We've already allocated budgets to work in international partnerships for AI and quantum computing co-operation. We should be fully on board in those areas and contribute the resources and our excellent institutions and experts to add value to both the quad and AUKUS in those particular areas.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you, Professor.

We heard recently from our top generals in the Canadian military, and I think they have an opinion very different from yours on the need to align ourselves with our allies in terms of defence equipment and procurement. They seem to have a different opinion in terms of protecting our Canadian sovereignty. I could go on, but our defence experts in this country don't seem to be aligned quite with where you're at on this aspect.

Would you suggest, then, that we should be putting our time into the UN, for example? In your opinion, is that where we should be putting a little more of our time?

● (2025)

Mr. Stephen R. Nagy: I think the UN is a compromised institution.

Again, I think we should be working with like-minded countries, and I don't think we need to solely focus on the defence area of co-operation. We could work on enlarging the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership so that we can shape the rules of the region that will potentially shape Chinese behaviour. We can talk about digital co-operation. We can talk about AI and quantum computing co-operation.

Defence is important, but there are many other partners within the region that can help us engage with the Indo-Pacific and also with China, and it doesn't necessarily need to revolve strictly around defence.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Understood:

I do have some concerns about your position, though, in the sense that the United States is the only power in the world that can really rival anything that China has. I don't think you would disagree with that.

On the idea that we would move away from aligning ourselves with our oldest and strongest ally and of avoid international agreements with our allies that include the U.S., AUKUS and the quadrilateral security dialogue, I feel that that's a bit reckless. The farther away we are from the U.S., the more we may open ourselves up to being hurt.

I take your point fully regarding the two Michaels, though I think that may be more of a case of the President of the United States and our Prime Minister not having a strong enough relationship. I think there's something to be said there. That said, I do have concerns with your position.

I'll just conclude, Mr. Chair.

You said earlier that we need to align with the UN and the IMF and the World Health Organization a bit more, but as was pointed out by Mr. Neve, the UN Human Rights Council voted against condemning the Uighur genocide in China. I do have concerns with the priorities you've outlined today, but I do very much appreciate your perspective.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Dancho.

We will now go to Mr. Cormier for five minutes or less.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Nagy and Mr. Neve, I think you both have some expertise regarding our trade relations. We've had a number of witnesses who had a somewhat different view of our trade relationship with China.

Do you think Canada can really do without China in terms of trade, in terms of what we import from China and even in terms of our exports? I'd like to hear your views on that.

Can Canada really do without its trade and business relationship with China without a direct impact on Canada's economy and its businesses?

[*English*]

Mr. Alex Neve: On the question of what the nature of our business dealings and trading relationship with China should be, again, from my perspective, I think it has to much more seriously take human rights on board.

Over 20 years, in my previous role as secretary general of Amnesty International, I can't count the number of times that I and other civil society leaders were putting in front of governments from both parties a set of recommendations as to how human rights considerations need to be much more directly brought into shaping the nature and extent of our business relationship—not ending it and not even necessarily limiting it, but very deliberately bringing human rights into its core, including human rights impact assessments, for instance, and having human rights considerations shape the nature of trade missions; and so much more.

We really haven't seen that. I think that's where we need to start in terms of really grappling with the nature of our business dealings.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Thank you, Mr. Neve.

Mr. Nagy, do you have anything to add?

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen R. Nagy: I agree fully with Mr. Neve that human rights should be a critical part of how we engage in our trading relationships, including our trading relationship with China. However, I do think that we need to think broadly in terms of the broader region and the partners that we need to build within the region.

If we have Canadian-style human rights as the litmus test for economic engagement within the region, we will cut off critical partners that are going to be essential for building a resilient relationship with China and a relationship within the broader Indo-Pacific region that will pull China in a more positive direction over time.

We should continue to trade, but we should ensure that when we can, and at all possible junctures, we put human rights at the centre of that relationship. In thinking about shaping behaviour over the long term, we need to build partnerships, and then we need to be sensitive to the different heterogeneous natures of governments and their human rights approaches within the region.

● (2030)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Thank you.

We all agree that human rights should be at the centre of this. However, changing a way of doing business that has been established for many years and going out to find other trading partners is easier said than done. The strategies we want to put in place will certainly facilitate this.

I understand your point, but the fact remains that there is certainly going to be a major effect on the economy of Canada and other countries. According to a recent study, Taiwan produces 60% of the world's semiconductors and 90% of its microchips. This would make a Chinese invasion of Taiwan potentially devastating to the economies of many countries. Since Taiwan is one of the only countries that can supply us with these products, there seem to be no other options.

How then can we stabilize the situation as quickly as possible and find other options? How can we secure Canada's businesses and economy in this regard?

[English]

The Chair: Again we need a brief answer, please, sir.

Mr. Stephen R. Nagy: Mr. Cormier, you're very right. The hundreds of thousands of jobs that Canadians enjoy in automobile industries are directly related to the semiconductor chips that are based in Taiwan and built by Taiwan.

It means that moving forward, it will be critical for Canada to work with Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the United States and perhaps Germany and other countries with these capabilities, to selectively diversify some of these supply chains to like-minded countries, and safe countries, quite frankly.

However, that shouldn't mean we don't engage in trade in other areas with China. I think the key term here is selective diversification away from China in supply chains that are critical, with semiconductors and pharmaceuticals as two primary examples.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nagy.

We'll now go Mr. Bergeron for two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

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

Minister Joly emphasized that Canada's development strategy for the Indo-Pacific region would aim to complement the efforts of like-minded partners, including the Japanese vision for the region.

Mr. Nagy, why do you think Minister Joly bothered to specify that the Indo-Pacific strategy would include Japan's vision?

[English]

Mr. Stephen R. Nagy: Mademoiselle Joly was in Tokyo two weeks ago. We hosted her here at the Canadian embassy, and we had an excellent discussion. The Canadians and the Japanese put forward a six-point action plan for co-operation within the region. It focused on environmental co-operation, strengthening maritime domain awareness and supporting a rules-based structure. It focused on non-traditional security areas.

Japan is the most influential country within the region outside of Japan. It is an excellent partner in terms of taking on a nuanced approach in engaging with the Chinese relationship. At the same time, it's been a champion of building alternative partnerships within the region to build a critical mass of countries that will pull China in a different direction. They are doing this through tying infrastructure connectivity to development policies, and through building resilience into supply chains. I think these are potentially areas that Canada can co-operate in directly with Japan and other like-minded

countries, again to build resilience in the relationship and pull China in a more positive direction over time.

This is the critical aspect that we're thinking about: how we, with like-minded countries like Japan, can pull China in a more positive direction over time.

• (2035)

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Like Mr. Chong, and following on from the questions he asked Mr. Hamilton, I will conclude with two questions.

What have been the consequences of Australia's actions in trying to respond to China's influence on its policy? What consequences have all these measures had on Australia?

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

Now for our final two and a half minutes, we will go to you, Ms. McPherson.

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

Mr. Neve, I'm going to ask you a couple more questions on the human rights situation with regard to China.

One of the concerns I have is that as the Chinese government looks inward, as we have a chilling of the relationship, or I guess a continued chilling of the relationship, I'm quite worried that it will impact our ability to respond on Canadians unlawfully detained in China. How do we manage that? We want to see Huseyin Celil reunited with his family, but as we strengthen our approach to China, does that make it less likely that we can have success with that?

Mr. Alex Neve: I think you're highlighting a very troubling tension that has been the reality for quite a number of years and, if anything, is only deepening. I think it's one of the reasons that a number of civil society groups, and certainly Mr. Celil's family, have put out a variety of proposals for something like a special expert, a special envoy, a special representative. In that instance, it's been someone who would have a very dedicated role of advocating on his behalf.

This doesn't mean doing so in a very public way. In fact, I think people can imagine that this would be someone who works in very quiet diplomatic channels and has relationships they can build on, maybe through other kinds of dealings in the business world, etc.

I'd expand that out to the fact that Mr. Celil's case is perhaps the most wrenching and compelling right now, but we could quickly compile a long list of all the Canadian citizens and permanent residents over the last 20 years who have found themselves unjustly detained. These challenges around how to get access and who to talk to have always been there.

I think we really need some dedicated expertise to work that file.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I would think, too, of the protection of those people within China, within Hong Kong, within some of the regions who are the human rights defenders, who want to continue to be doing their work as China looks inward. They obviously must be at great risk. How can we act preventively to ensure that those groups, those individuals who are working on human rights, working on pro-democracy movements, are not being persecuted and are given as much protection as we can give them?

Mr. Alex Neve: That couldn't be more important, I think.

Going back to one of my other recommendations about the need for a whole-of-government human rights strategy for Canada, that very point about really lifting up the role, the work done by front-line human rights defenders right across the country.... There are many of them, and they are incredibly vulnerable. Even in the face of crackdowns, they continue with their work, but ensuring that we're doing everything we can to protect that space should be central to that strategy.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That brings to conclusion a fascinating panel, and we thank you very much, Mr. Neve and Mr. Nagy.

Mr. Hamilton, I'm told that we do have your speaking notes. They are off to translation and will be in the hands of our members

by tomorrow afternoon. When you can, we would appreciate your transmitting the answers to the questions that were posed to you. The clerk says she will bake you a cake or something if you could get them to her tomorrow, but early the next day as well would be fine, because we have two very good analysts here who are going to try to put together all of the details that we've heard over the last couple of meetings.

Go ahead, Mr. Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong: Could I also ask you, Mr. Chair, to ensure that the answers in response to the questions I posed are distributed to all members of the committee when they become available to you? Thank you.

● (2040)

The Chair: Absolutely, and they will be translated as well.

Thank you again.

We will now take a break and then go into some committee business.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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