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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.

Welcome to meeting number eight of the House of Commons Special Committee on 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, with a focus on the Canada-Taiwan 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 using the Zoom application.

I would like to take a few moments for the benefit of witnesses and members to pass along the following.

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

For those on Zoom, you have the choice of interpretation, at the bottom of your screen, of floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel. I remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

For members in the room, when the time comes, if you wish to speak, you could raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the “raise hand” function. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as well as we can, and we appreciate your patience and understanding in this regard.

I understand that we have managed to do the sound check and that, at least for our first panel, we're in good shape.

That said, an old friend of mine used to describe skiing as a series of linked recoveries, and this is kind of our story here at the committee. We had originally intended and scheduled to have officials here for the first hour. At the very last minute, our officials were pulled away for a senior briefing and are not available to us, certainly not in person and certainly not virtually either. We have therefore adjusted the order of things.

With that, I understand there are a couple of things.

I'll recognize Mr. Chong first.

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

I'd like to register my disappointment with these two witnesses, Weldon Epp and Jennie Chen of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, for cancelling at the last hour before this committee began, and I would like you, Mr. Chair, through the clerk, to register this disappointment with these two witnesses.

I have to say that I've noticed this happening at other committees where witnesses are cancelling at the last minute, so I hope this doesn't start a trend at parliamentary committees. We sit late here, and I understand that the witnesses in this case were invited a week ago or more, so I wanted to register that disappointment, and I hope, Mr. Chair, that you would, through the clerk, register that disappointment with these two witnesses too.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chong.

Mr. Oliphant, go ahead.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): I would simply echo that sentiment completely. I think that our committee should make a strong statement from all the members of the committee that it is unacceptable, except in the case of an emergency, that officials do not appear when adequate notice has been given.

Parliament is paramount, and that should be understood by our officials. I don't believe this is a partisan issue. I think that we should be very clear in expressing that concern, and it should go to both the minister and the deputy minister as something that is not acceptable and should not happen.

There may be an emergency that I don't know about. I mean, I heard about this when I walked into the room, and I'm the parliamentary secretary. It is unacceptable, and I don't think it's acceptable for anyone on the committee. I think you would take that with unanimity, I would propose, from the other members of the committee as well.

• (1840)

The Chair: Thank you.

It is duly noted. I appreciate your intervention on this.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Is it noted or moved?

The Chair: There was no motion, Mr. Bergeron. If somebody wishes to make a motion, I'll entertain that, absolutely.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I move that the chair be instructed to report the concern that the committee is expressing around the failure of officials from the government to appear as scheduled and ask for their co-operation in an immediate future appearance.

The Chair: Following the procedure, are there any additional comments, or can we just accept that the committee agrees with that unanimously?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: It is so done. Thank you.

Yes, Mr. Oliphant.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I have a second point of order. I want to wish Mr. Chong a happy birthday.

See how magnanimous I am tonight? I can't think of a better group for you to spend your birthday with than this committee.

The Chair: If this were the natural resources committee, we would have to saw you in half to count the rings, but we don't. Happy birthday, Mr. Chong. Where is Ms. Desbiens? We need her in here to sing *Happy Birthday*.

With that, we do have to thank Dr. Antoine Bondaz, director of the Taiwan program at the Foundation for Strategic Research and an associate professor, for rescuing us and agreeing to come on an hour early. We very much appreciate that. I'll ask Dr. Bondaz to give us a five-minute opening statement.

Before we do that, though, I would also like to welcome to our group tonight Mr. McCauley and Mr. Iacono. Mr. Iacono was in Taiwan with our colleague Judy Sgro a few weeks ago and will have some reflections on that.

With regard to the business at hand, then, we'll go to Dr. Bondaz for an opening statement of five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Antoine Bondaz (Director, Taiwan Program, Foundation for Strategic Research and Professor, Sciences Po, As an Individual): Good evening.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the House of Commons Special Committee on the Canada–People's Republic of China Relationship, it is an honour and a responsibility to speak to you.

As well, with the 18th Francophonie Summit taking place this weekend in Tunisia, it is obviously a pleasure to be able to speak in French.

In August 2022, as you know, China deliberately provoked a fresh crisis in the Taiwan Strait, with the visit by Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, as the pretext. The instruments of coercion used by China are well known: military exercises, cyber attacks, twisting international law, large-scale disinformation, and economic sanctions.

However, this new crisis was remarkable in its intensity and is part of an older strategy, since the election of President Tsai Ing-wen in 2016. That Chinese strategy is designed to increase pressure

on the island, whether military, economic or information-related, and to isolate it on the international scene.

The unprecedented military exercises were held from August 4 to 15, 2022, and had been prepared well in advance. The People's Liberation Army, or PLA, conducted exercises intended to simulate a blockade to suffocate the island and prevent any foreign support, including American. Beijing tried to demonstrate its capacities for precision strikes, area and access denial, air superiority, submarine war, or logistical support.

While Chinese military aircraft crossed the median line in the Taiwan Strait only very rarely—four times since the beginning of the year—over 400 planes crossed it in August and September. Beijing also uses civilian drones to fly over the Taiwanese islands of Matsu and Jinmen, located off the shores of China.

These hybrid operations tested Taiwan's response and give me an opportunity to point to China's use of civilian capacities for military operations. In fact, the same is true for large-scale exercises that recently demonstrated the Chinese navy's ability to use large civilian ferries to launch a massive amphibious invasion of Taiwan.

As the parallels between the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the risk of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan grow, we must remember that the issue is not merely the influence of one state over another, or the territorial expansion of one state at the expense of another. The most important issue is the ambition to be a permanent member of the Security Council and to have Taiwan disappear as a sovereign and independent political entity. The choice is therefore not between the status quo and secessionism, as Beijing calls it, but between annexation, on the pretext of reunification, and the status quo. Beijing's determination is made even clearer in the latest white paper on Taiwan published in August 2022, the third after the ones in 1992 and 2000.

The Chinese Communist Party has at least three motivations for taking control of the island. Politically, the Communist Party intends to put an end to the last vestiges of the civil war that saw the Nationalist Party shrivel back to Taiwan. Ideologically, the Communist Party intends to enforce its argument that there is no alternative to its leadership on the continent and seeks to eliminate the counter-model presented by Taiwan, that is, a society that is culturally Chinese and multi-ethnic, and has democratized from within after a period of brutal dictatorship, and that has seen very strong economic growth since then. And militarily, the People's Liberation Army intends to have the capacity to install its armed forces on the island in order to expand its strategic depth and project itself toward the Pacific Ocean without impediment, so that, for example, it could strengthen the maritime component of Chinese nuclear deterrence.

Before concluding, I want to point out that conflict scenarios in the Taiwan Strait are not limited to the widespread caricature of a massive invasion of Taiwan by China. They could involve a whole series of actions by Beijing, including taking control of the Dongsha Islands in the South China Sea and violation of air space, or even a partial or total maritime blockade, around the island.

We should note that any conflict in the strait, far from remaining local and limited to China and Taiwan, would have global implications. It would involve at least the United States and potentially Japan, as well as other treaty allies of the United States, all countries that are essential economic and security partners for Europe and Canada. While the NATO treaty does not cover the Indo-Pacific region, transatlantic solidarity would obviously be put to the test.

• (1845)

With the Taiwanese voting to elect their next president in January 2024, there is a high risk of a new crisis initiated and exploited by Beijing.

Westerners have stopped ignoring Taiwan in their official communications, as witnessed by the G7 joint statement in June 2021, which mentions Taiwan, and the and the G7 joint statement in August 2022, which is entirely dedicated to Taiwan, which is a first.

To conclude, being aware of the issues and risks is the best thing to do, to avoid the worst scenarios materializing. As I regularly explain to your parliamentary colleagues in Europe, we have a clear albeit limited role to play in this regard: to contribute to maintaining stability in the strait.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Bondaz.

We'll now go to Mr. Chong for our first round of questioning, for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

Thank you for your testimony, Mr. Bondaz.

My first question is this.

Was Ms. Pelosi's visit to Taiwan the cause of China's military exercises in August? Did Beijing use Ms. Pelosi's visit as an excuse to start those military exercises between August 4 and 14?

• (1850)

Dr. Antoine Bondaz: Thank you for the question.

The visit by Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi was obviously exploited by Beijing and used as a pretext.

There are several reasons for that.

First, Beijing was prepared for the visit, which was to have taken place in the spring of 2022 and was postponed because the Speaker had COVID-19. She therefore had to cancel her first visit.

Second, August is an extremely busy month in China when it comes to military exercises. So there were two factors: classic military preparation, but also an expectation on the part of the Chinese leadership that the visit would take place.

It was possible to organize the exercises very rapidly because they had been prepared. Similarly, the publication of a white paper on Taiwan a few days after Nancy Pelosi's visit had obviously been prepared. As you know, no government, even the fastest, can pro-

duce a white paper in a few days. The white paper had been prepared and the government was more or less waiting for an excuse to publish it ahead of the 20th national congress of the Chinese Communist Party, which took place in October.

So China exploited an event that the Chinese authorities were expecting. In fact, that is why some people criticized the visit in advance, explaining that Beijing was obviously going to use it to conduct that exercise and try to change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait.

Once again, we have to be clear. This amounted to exploitation of the visit; using it was a pretext, and especially, more precisely, the pretext that there had been a change in American policy toward Taiwan. There has, however, been no change in American policy regarding Taiwan. The Biden administration has said that repeatedly. Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the House, has said it herself.

So there is an obvious intention on China's part to exploit a visit and be able to conduct exercises intended not only to train the Chinese armed forces, but also to change the status quo. I think that point is even more disturbing.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you for your answer.

My other question concerns a potential attack by China on Taiwan.

I think you said that China might not launch a massive attack on Taiwan.

What would the other scenarios for a Chinese attack on Taiwan be, though?

Dr. Antoine Bondaz: Thank you for your question.

I think the risk lies in engaging in purely binary reasoning, in connection with the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine, and thinking that the only possible option in the strait is either a form of precarious peace or a large-scale invasion by China.

China's objective is to take control of Taiwan, which, we must recall, is a territory that has never been part of the People's Republic of China since it was established in 1949. Obviously, its objective is to take control of that territory without having to resort to force. Beijing's objective is therefore to put pressure on Taiwanese society, to try to demoralize the population and make it lose confidence in its government, and to weaken it in order to potentially take control of the island.

A large-scale military operation would be China's last resort situation, and is obviously not the preferred scenario. With that said, that scenario cannot be ruled out. Other military scenarios to put pressure on Taiwan also cannot be ruled out.

As I very quickly alluded to, questions arise, for example, regarding a violation of Taiwan's airspace by Chinese fighter jets. So far, that has not happened. It might be the question of taking control of the islands of Matsu and Jinmen, which are located only a few kilometres off the Chinese coast and are extremely difficult for Taiwan to defend. The question might arise in relation to large-scale military exercises that might, this time, amount to a partial blockade of the island. All these military scenarios would be aimed not at invading the island, necessarily, but at bringing enormous pressure to bear on the island to try, perhaps, through a negotiated political option put forward by Beijing, to take control of the island.

The situation is therefore not a binary one between precarious peace and an invasion, and China has all the military options available to it to try once again to pressure and isolate Taiwan on the international scene.

• (1855)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chong. Your time has expired.

We will now go to Mr. Cormier.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to float this. If it takes a lot of discussion, I won't hold it on.

I'm suggesting that.... Normally, we would have a panel of witnesses and have an hour. The witness has been an excellent witness, but I'm wondering about shortening this panel by about 10 minutes, ending it at about 7:20, and taking five minutes out of the next panel to do about 15 minutes of committee business to look at the report outline. I think we may be able to do it in 15 minutes. We'd have 55 minutes for the next panel and we'd be out at 8:30 as opposed to 9:30.

I think it could work if the committee agreed to that. We have an hour. We have a shorter panel in the second one and only one witness in this one. It may be fairer to the witnesses not to have them grilled for an hour.

The Chair: If we can get through at least two rounds, I think we will be in good shape there.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: We can shorten the other one.

The Chair: We will try that.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: It's Michael's birthday, so we should do it.

The Chair: There's that, too.

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would also like to wish Mr. Chong a virtual happy birthday.

Mr. Bondaz, thank you for being with us today and changing your schedule.

The first question I wanted to ask you is substantially the same as the one asked by my colleague Mr. Chong. I wondered whether Ms. Pelosi's visit was a pretext for using these military maneuvers.

So I will move on to the other questions.

Earlier, you said we all had a key role to play in terms of global stability, and probably in all our discussions, whether they are diplomatic, trade-related, or otherwise.

When you talk about a role to play, you are certainly talking about members of Parliament, about parliamentarians. With that said, you are certainly also talking about everyone who does business with these countries.

What do we have to do, to preserve that stability in the near future?

There are certainly going to be a lot of upheavals if a conflict erupts between China and Taiwan. We need only look at what has happened in Ukraine.

In your opinion, how can we preserve that stability?

Dr. Antoine Bondaz: Thank you for your question.

As you pointed out, stability is fundamental today, since any conflict in the Taiwan Strait would have considerable consequences, exceeding by far the already tragic consequences of the war in Ukraine.

There are several ways to contribute to maintaining this status quo and, most importantly, to making the Chinese authorities understand, and convincing them, that any unilateral change to the status quo in the strait accomplished by force would not only be risky, but would come at too high a cost for Beijing.

We have to be very clear: we are now increasingly coming around to using cost, rather than denial, as the deterrent. In the years to come, China will one day have the military capacities it needs to take the island of Taiwan. The question that arises is therefore not whether or not China is militarily capable, in the long run, of taking control of the island by force, but whether the prohibitive cost of taking control is acceptable to the Chinese authorities.

Obviously, if taking control of Taiwan by force resulted in political instability in China because of the problems or costs it engendered, then, obviously, the Chinese authorities would think twice before launching into that undertaking.

So there is a role to play, not only for many countries, but also for parliamentarians directly, if only through declaratory diplomacy. Talking about Taiwan is already, in itself, a message sent to the Chinese authorities, the objective, again, being not to change the status quo, but actually to call for it to be upheld. The objective is therefore not to press any particular policy on the Taiwanese authorities; it is to deter the Chinese authorities from ratcheting up the pressure on the island a bit more.

I would say, regarding declaratory diplomacy, that what was done at the G7 18 months ago was already a good thing. The parliamentary visits were also positive. Those visits have always happened, regardless of what government is in place in Taiwan or in the countries that send parliamentarians. Pursuing these parliamentary exchanges is obviously an excellent thing.

The embassy of China in France has brought express pressure to bear to prevent visits by French senators, for example. Those visits took place. The provocation would actually be to halt the visits, much more than to continue them. Those visits have always existed and they are useful as a reminder that even though there are no diplomatic relations between our various governments and the Republic of China in Taiwan, there is economic cooperation and trade, in particular, and they are extremely advanced.

• (1900)

Mr. Serge Cormier: Speaking of China's military expenditures, I think you said they had quintupled.

Where is Taiwan if we compare the two powers, in terms of military investments rather than in terms of weapons power?

Where are they, generally, in that respect?

Dr. Antoine Bondaz: The balance of power has actually changed enormously in the Taiwan Strait, in favour of Beijing and against Taiwan.

Today, the figures are between \$250 and \$300 billion dollars in military spending on the Chinese side and more along the lines of \$15 to \$20 billions on the Taiwanese side. So we are now looking at a 1 to 15 ratio, and this forces Taiwan to develop weapons systems and strategies that are increasingly asymmetric.

Over the months and years to come, that is going to result in a change in the policy of buying American weapons or, more broadly, the development of the most asymmetric possible capacities in Taiwan in the context, in particular, of a change, including in Taiwan's doctrine on the use of these weapons systems for some years now.

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Cormier. You are just about out of time, so we'll call it for the moment.

[Translation]

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

Thank you, Mr. Bondaz.

[English]

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

We will now turn to Monsieur Bergeron for six minutes or less.

[Translation]

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

When I started out in politics, I always claimed that no one would ever make me sing. Today, however, for the very first time—and one swallow does not a summer make—given that it is Mr. Chong's birthday, I will sing: “Happy birthday, dear Michael, Happy birthday to you.”

So there, now you can say publicly that you made me sing. With that said, I am very happy to be with you this evening.

I would like to thank Mr. Bondaz for his very informative remarks and also for agreeing to accommodate the members of this committee who were caught a bit short at the last minute.

In your article entitled “La France, une puissance d'initiatives en Indo-Pacifique”, you pointed out that the French intelligence-gathering ship *Dupuy-de-Lôme* transited the Taiwan Strait in 2021. In an interview about that crossing, you said that operation illustrated the consistency of France's Indo-Pacific strategy and its desire to stay the course in defending freedom of navigation despite the threats from the People's Republic of China.

I have some questions for you in that regard.

This summer, I had the opportunity to meet European Parliament member Raphaël Glucksmann. He told me that for Europeans, and the French in particular, Taiwan was something that had more to do with the United States. Obviously, he disagreed with that perception.

You said that the transit of the Taiwan Strait by the *Dupuy-de-Lôme* is an illustration of the consistency of France's Indo-Pacific strategy and its desire to stay the course in defence of freedom of navigation, despite the threats from the People's Republic of China.

To what extent does that view reflect reality?

From a strictly political perspective, we are told that Europeans have little interest in Taiwan, too little, in fact, and seem to believe it is something that has more to do with the United States.

• (1905)

Dr. Antoine Bondaz: Thank you for your question.

I think a distinction has to be made in relation to the actors that have the biggest role to play. In that regard, the United States is obviously the leading actor, in particular as a result of the security guarantees given in the Taiwan Relations Act passed by Congress in 1979.

That doesn't mean that Europeans have no role to play or that Europeans are not interested in what goes on in the Taiwan Strait. Clearly, there is growing interest in Europe in helping to maintain stability in the strait.

Europeans have started to stop ignoring Taiwan. That is a criticism I make on a regular basis: that for a very long time, we never mentioned Taiwan in our official communications. Even in France, in certain official documents, the tension in the Taiwan Strait was not even mentioned. Now, it is, for example in the new national strategic review announced by the president a few weeks ago. The tension in the Taiwan Strait is mentioned there expressly. So there is growing awareness in Europe of the importance of maintaining stability in the Taiwan Strait. Europeans are talking about it more and more.

The next question is about the asymmetry between our interest in maintaining stability and the resources, including military, that we have for making sure that stability is maintained.

Regarding France, the transit of our intelligence-gathering ship, the *Dupuy-de-Lôme*, was not intended so much to get France involved in the Taiwan Strait issue as to remind China that freedom of navigation and overflight in international waters, including the Taiwan Strait, is extremely important. That is why France, like Canada, Australia, the United States or Japan, regularly has ships transit in the international waters of the Taiwan Strait.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you for that answer, which tends to confirm that France is an Indo-Pacific power, like the United Kingdom and other European countries, and that it does have a role to play, with the allied countries or countries that share common values in this important region of the world.

How can we incorporate the French strategy into what is happening in the region, for example, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or the Quad, and the AUKUS accord?

Might France eventually want to join it? Will it want to continue to maintain an independent policy that is entirely aligned in ideological terms, if I may put it that way?

Dr. Antoine Bondaz: Thank you for your question.

As you know, the French government wants to emphasize the concept of strategic autonomy. The alliance with the United States in no way means a 100% alignment. France is obviously not equidistant and neutral, but it does not want to align itself completely on certain cooperative actions that may take place in the region, for example the quadrilateral cooperation among the United States, Japan, India and Australia known as the Quad. In fact, let's be very clear: those four countries are not inviting France to participate in or join the Quad.

For both France and Canada, the question of joining certain working groups within the Quad might arise, since the work done by those groups goes well beyond security and military matters. However, when it comes to joining the Quad, per se, the question does not even arise. In addition, regarding AUKUS, since France was excluded from this trilateral accord of industrialized nations from the outset, there is obviously no reason to join it. Once again, we have to distinguish between full and complete participation in certain security and military cooperation and the role that France can play. France has played an extremely proactive role in the region, together with all its partners, including Canada.

As you pointed out, France is an Indo-Pacific nation. Seven of France's 13 overseas territories and communities are in the Indo-Pacific and more than 1.6 million French citizens live there. We have 7,000 soldiers stationed there permanently and we have five military operations and command theatres there. France is therefore an Indo-Pacific nation and an Indo-Pacific power and obviously plays its role with limited resources as a balancing power. I refer to balances in the plural, because the actual term "*puissance d'équilibres*" with an "s" is the one chosen by the French president to try to explain France's policy in the region and, more broadly, in the world.

• (1910)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Bondaz.

We'll now go to Ms. McPherson for six minutes or less.

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

My gift to Mr. Chong will be not to sing for him today. That will be a present I won't provide. I come from a long family line of people who mouth the words in church, so we are not musical.

I'd like to thank the witness for his testimony today. It's been very interesting. Of course, he's been speaking an awful lot about the changing status quo and how dangerous that is.

I think what I've gathered from your testimony is that you don't necessarily expect that there would be a full-scale invasion—of course, not ruling it out—but rather more of an incremental approach to taking control of Taiwan by China.

What I'm trying to think of and trying to get my head around is this. How can Canada ensure that we are responding to those small steps, not waiting for the small, incremental steps to build up but rather having the ability to push back—and knowing when to push back and how to push back—on that incremental change that we see China trying to impose upon Taiwan?

Dr. Antoine Bondaz: Thank you very much for your question.

As you mentioned, it's a very incremental push on the Chinese side, what some people might call the salami-slicing tactics.

For sure, we need to support Taiwan and make sure that every time China tries to change the status quo by force, there is a collective and coordinated answer at least at the G7, because that's one of the key levels that have been chosen over the last few years to make sure we have a united answer, and more broadly a transatlantic answer to address what's going on in the Taiwan Strait.

China will keep changing the status quo. Their ultimate objective, of course, is to completely alter the status quo by taking over Taiwan. Once again, I think it's very important to underline that every time the Chinese try to shape the narrative, try to make sure that their language elements are being spread out, we need to counter it.

I think there is also an informational battle in which we need to make sure that the words we use are not the ones that Beijing has chosen to use, but are the ones that can best present and describe the situation in the most accurate manner. That's why in the concept of "taking back" Taiwan, those words should not be used. We talk about "taking over" Taiwan. The concept of reunification is not even a real concept. It's a unification, because Taiwan has not been part of the PRC since 1949.

I think we need to push back every time China tries to change the status quo—of course physically, but also in terms of words, in terms of narratives. In the so-called battle of narratives, we should make sure that the Chinese narrative is not the one we start using and that we keep describing and analyzing what's going on in the Taiwan Strait in the most accurate and neutral way possible.

Ms. Heather McPherson: You spoke about how important parliamentary visits are, delegations going to Taiwan. Is there a risk that they would change the status quo? I certainly think there is some real value in them, and I would like to just hear your thoughts on the risks as well. We recognize the benefits. Are there some risks there with regard to how the PRC would respond?

Dr. Antoine Bondaz: I would say the risks are limited. To be clear, the provocation would not be for these visits to continue in the same way they have for decades, but to stop them. What would be the message sent to the Taiwanese if suddenly the French, Canadian, European or even American parliamentary officials and MPs just stopped visiting Taiwan?

What's going on is that China is trying to change the status quo by preventing us...by threatening foreign MPs in order to stop them from going to Taiwan. I think the case of the Speaker of the House was kind of specific because it was, of course, a major visit with a lot of political significance. China used it, of course, to try to change the status quo. For all of the other visits, even though China has been opposing and criticizing them, they have not been overreacting and trying to use these kinds of regular and average visits to try to change the status quo.

Once again, I would say the provocation would be to stop visiting Taiwan, to not keep doing what we've been doing for four decades. All of these parliamentary visits are not challenging the one China policy that each of these democratic states has been implementing over the past few decades. These parliamentary visits are one way to make sure that we can strengthen and deepen co-operation and exchanges with the Taiwanese society, with the Taiwanese economy and so on.

● (1915)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

I am running out of time, but I did want to ask some questions about... I know you spent some time speaking to the secretary-general of the Taiwan international co-operation and development fund. I am the international development critic for the New Democratic Party. Taiwan has now gone from a country that was a recipient of foreign aid to a country that is a donor country. How has that worked in the diplomacy efforts and the efforts of the Taiwanese to maintain the status quo?

Dr. Antoine Bondaz: Thank you very much for the question.

I would say that that Taiwanese ODA has been quite limited for the last few years. Compared to the U.K., Sweden, or even Canada, it remains a very tiny percentage of Taiwan's GDP. Taiwan could do even more. Taiwan is doing that not only with its "diplomatic allies", the term that Taipei uses to mention the 14 countries that have diplomatic relations with the Republic of China. The political regime in Taiwan is of course trying to expand these supports.

I think we need to be clear that in the Indo-Pacific, there is a huge potential for multilateral co-operation projects, which the Taiwanese could be part of. As you may know, Canada, with France, Australia, New Zealand and the EU, through the Kiwa initiative, has a huge co-operation project in the South Pacific to promote biodiversity, and countries, NGOs or non-governmental bodies can join. Why not offer Taiwan to join if they can fund, like we fund, these kinds of initiatives?

Once again, the idea is not to change the one China policy that each of our countries implements but to make sure we can integrate Taiwan as much as possible, including and especially when we are all together addressing global issues, and of course climate change, biodiversity and environmental issues in the Indo-Pacific are some of them.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's really interesting testimony and evidence you've given today, Mr. Bondaz.

When you look at how China is trying to change the status quo, you mentioned the 400 incursions of the median line. Would you say that's part of an attempt to change the status quo? Have those incursions continued at a heightened level since the visit from Nancy Pelosi?

Dr. Antoine Bondaz: The incursions are not as frequent as they were in August. Let's say the trend is slowing down a little bit, yet China has successfully changed the status quo because these incursions keep going. You have fewer of these, but you still have some incursions when you had almost none in the first part of the year or in 2020 or 2021.

Yes, China successfully changed the status quo militarily, and the objective through these incursions is to increase the pressure on the Taiwan military, because when you cross the median line, you are maybe a three- or four-minute flight away from Taipei, so you are very close to the capital of Taiwan. Second, you try to discredit the government for being incapable of preventing these incursions from happening. You try to get the Taiwanese air force to use its materials. You try to discourage the population and demoralize the population.

I would say that these incursions not only try to change the status quo, but they also have some clear military and political objectives, including in the so-called psychological warfare domain, not only in the operational military domain.

● (1920)

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Ultimately, would you agree that the goal is to get rid of the median line by all these incursions?

Dr. Antoine Bondaz: This is exactly what the Chinese have been saying. They are now explaining that the median line never existed, and they are quite right. There was never a legal agreement between Beijing and Taipei on the median line, but it was a tacit agreement, and de facto that line was respected on both sides. That's no longer the case on the Chinese side.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Let's look at this incrementalism that you've been talking about. You talked a little about prohibitive costs. What would you say are the prohibitive costs that we should be looking at with respect to various levels of incrementalism? For example, you mentioned some islands that could be taken over or a partial blockade. What kind of prohibitive costs do you think should be put in place now to ensure that incrementalism doesn't actually happen in the future?

Dr. Antoine Bondaz: It's a very tricky answer because it depends on our political determination. To go until the end, in the sense of escalating the ladder if the Chinese choose to escalate, is very tricky and very complicated. The only answer might be a coordinated answer, not only from the U.S. and its key allies but more broadly from the international community.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Do you think that deepening the integration of Taiwan into other organizations is an effective buffer against these things? For example, Taiwan has asked to join the CPTPP, as has China. What would be your thoughts on that, if Taiwan wasn't invited to join?

Dr. Antoine Bondaz: I do not think it would be a game-changer, to be honest. Within international organizations, it would be impossible for Taiwan to participate because the Chinese would block these attempts in the same way they've been doing since 2016. We can still of course wish and support stronger participation of Taiwan in international organizations, but China has the ability to block it. We need to deepen our economic integration, to make sure we have more leverage in case China tries to unilaterally change the status quo.

It's of course a much broader issue than just the question of Taiwan. There's the question of our interdependence with China. There's also the important question of the way we still de facto contribute to changing the status quo by providing China with some technologies that may be used by the People's Liberation Army to change the status quo. With all of these scientific and technological transfers that have been fuelling what we call the military-civil fusion in China, that's where we actually, against our interest, contribute to changing the status quo in China's favour.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Seeback.

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

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I, too, would like to highlight my colleague Mr. Chong's birthday. *Tanti auguri*.

I would also like to thank the witnesses for being present.

I had the pleasure of joining the recent Canadian delegation to Taiwan last month. It's my second time, and once again I witnessed how strongly Taiwan embraces and shares with Canada the values of democracy, freedom, respect of the rule of law and cultural di-

versity. Just like we have done recently, the Taiwanese government invested in much effort to address past injustices towards indigenous communities, to create a safe and inclusive society, to protect the environment and to develop green energy. This governmental perspective and behaviour are certainly refreshing to see in the Asia-Pacific and create a counterbalance to some regimes whose values and approach can represent a clear contrast with our western values.

How do you see Canada's role in supporting Taiwan's place in the Asia-Pacific as a haven of democracy and freedom?

• (1925)

Dr. Antoine Bondaz: I would say that it's by being inclusive, as inclusive as possible, not only at the political level but in every single co-operation project we may have in the Indo-Pacific. We mentioned the ODA and a development project in the South Pacific—and it could be, of course, in southeast Asia, etc.—and making sure that Taiwan is part of it.

This would not necessarily be at the governmental level; it could be at the NGO level, or at the academic level, or at the civil society level, but we need to make sure that the Taiwanese are not left behind, are not left aside, that they are fully integrated. That's one way to make sure that Taiwan matters, and that Taiwan is one of us in the sense that it's one of the members of the international community. Even though, of course, on the political and diplomatic level there are lots of difficulties, a lot of hurdles, and Taiwan is not a country like any other, for sure, we can make sure to be as inclusive as possible, something we do not necessarily do all the time these days.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

As you know, Canada has supported meaningful participation by Taiwan in international forums, arguing that its absence would damage the global equilibrium. In September 2022, in your conversation with the secretary general of the Taiwan International Cooperation and Development Fund, you talked about the transition of Taiwan, about a country that provides foreign aid, as we have seen in the case of Ukraine recently. Canada did this during the pandemic, as did Japan, a few years ago.

By coordinating its foreign aid strategy with its diplomatic policy, will Taiwan increase support in the international community for its diplomatic efforts? What opportunities are available in Canada and Taiwan to expand their cooperation in connection with development aid?

Dr. Antoine Bondaz: Thank you for your question.

I think you are perfectly correct. Today, Taiwan is often an underestimated actor when it comes to development aid, and yet Taiwan not only has financial capacities, but, most importantly, it has relatively unique experience in the Indo-Pacific countries. Given that, it is obviously possible to expand cooperation projects and ensure that Taiwanese actors, whether governmental or not, are able to contribute to certain energy transition projects in the region and certain more broadly marine projects. For example, Taiwan plays an important role in promoting biodiversity and combating ocean plastic. I think those projects should lead to the most concrete possible cooperation between Taiwan and international partners to try to depoliticize that cooperation and to avoid, to reduce criticism from China to the extent possible.

If we are to successfully address global issues, including global warming and others, Taiwanese society is essential, as are all societies in the world. So there is a place for the Taiwanese, and we simply have to find the forms of cooperation that are the most practical and technical, and least political, possible, so that such cooperation can take place.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: You agree that Taiwan has taught us a lot...

[*English*]

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Iacono. I think you are out of time, unfortunately, but you'll have another opportunity shortly.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: We will finish this round with Mr. Bergeron, and then Ms. McPherson.

One of our next panellists is already online and ready to go, so we will slide into the next panel as soon as we have concluded this one.

Mr. Bergeron, the floor is yours for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Bondaz, in an article that recently appeared in the magazine *Esprit*, you argue that the People's Republic of China is engaging in a campaign to reinterpret the 1971 United Nations General Assembly resolution 2758, which is based on the one China concept. The new interpretation by the People's Republic of China seeks to convince the nations of the international community that Taiwan is part of the People's Republic of China.

Are we to understand, Mr. Bondaz, that the members of the international community have somehow been lured into this new narrative that the People's Republic of China is trying to impose?

If so, how can we get out of it?

● (1930)

Dr. Antoine Bondaz: Thank you for your question.

As you say, China's objective is to impose this language and ensure that the Chinese position is presented as the universally recognized position, which is not the case.

Resolution 2758, which was passed in 1971, does not mention the status of Taiwan, as the United States, for example, does not in the Taiwan Relations Act. They take note of the Chinese position, but do not, properly speaking, recognize it.

The objective is therefore to point out that there is a fundamental difference between what is called the one China principle, which is the concept used by Beijing, and the one China policy, which is the concept that Canada, France and the United States use. In the first case, Beijing obviously considers Taiwan to be part of the People's Republic of China, while in the second, various countries such as Canada and the United States make no comment on the special status of Taiwan.

So there is a desire on China's part to impose this language and use what is called discursive power. Within international organizations, that concept is fundamental.

In recent years, as a result of our own negligence, China has managed to incorporate certain Chinese language into certain international documents, including technical procedural documents at the United Nations Secretariat. These are points on which we were not careful a decade ago. Those points are now used by China to try, once again, to impose this language and spread the idea that the Chinese position is a universally recognized one. That is not the case, however.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

Now we will go to Ms. McPherson for two and a half minutes.

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

I want to thank the witness. You have been extremely generous with your time, and of course we've grilled you now for almost an entire hour, so I do appreciate that you've been so generous.

You spoke about those places where Canada can learn from Taiwan, where we can build those relationships. We previously spoke a little bit about international development. We know that Taiwan has taken a real leadership role within the sustainable development goals, the SDGs; how they are dealing with indigenous rights within Taiwan; their response to COVID and other health care matters; and, as you mentioned, climate change.

I want to give you one final opportunity to share anything else you'd like to add on what countries like Canada, which share those same democratic values, can do to show our solidarity and our support to Taiwan.

Dr. Antoine Bondaz: Thank you very much for this.

I think we need to speak out and make sure that Taiwan is mentioned in our official communications, not because we want to change our one China policy but because we want to make sure that the status quo is being maintained.

We need to make sure, also, to address directly the Taiwanese civil society, not always making everything political, but making sure that all of the changes, people-to-people changes, concrete co-operation projects can be promoted among and between our civil societies.

I would say, last but not least, that we need to depoliticize some of the co-operation we have with the Taiwanese. It's not about China. It's about Taiwan. It's not about provoking China. It's about deepening our economic, technological, cultural and educational co-operation with Taiwan and making sure, through many co-operation projects in the Indo-Pacific, that Taiwan can be included and can be a part of these projects. In that respect, of course, the French and the Canadians will soon release an Indo-Pacific strategy.

We have much to do together. We are already doing a lot in the Pacific. There are many more projects that we can have between Paris and Ottawa on that, to make sure that Taiwan, like any other country in the region, can be fully integrated.

The Chair: With that, we will say thank you.

It's already tomorrow morning where you are, Dr. Bondaz, but I hope that getting you on an hour earlier will facilitate an earlier bedtime than you had been thinking of. We do thank you very much for your attendance tonight at our committee.

[Translation]

Dr. Antoine Bondaz: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would also like to thank the members of this committee.

[English]

The Chair: If we can just take a very brief moment to make sure that our next panel is teed up, I propose that we do precisely the same. Everybody will get two opportunities, and then we will go into what will probably be a short in camera session.

We'll just take a quick break while we get the next panel totally teed up.

- (1935) _____ (Pause) _____
- (1935)

The Chair: We will resume now.

I'd like to thank and welcome to the Canada-China committee our two witnesses: Dr. Robert Huebert, associate professor, University of Calgary, and Dr. Yeh-Chung Lu, professor and chair, department of diplomacy, National Chengchi University. Both gentlemen will have five minutes each to make an opening statement.

Mr. Huebert, you warned us in advance that you didn't have anything prepared, so I'll give you the old floor signal when it's time to wrap up your comments, and we'll take it from there. Then we'll go into our questioning after that.

With that, Mr. Huebert, we will give you the first five-minute opportunity.

Dr. Robert Huebert (Associate Professor, University of Calgary, As an Individual): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I have to make a slight correction. I didn't say I didn't have anything prepared. I just don't have formal notes prepared in that context. I have been preparing for what I have been wanting to say for quite some time, actually, because this is such an important topic.

First of all, I welcome the committee's efforts to understand what is very complicated. I have seen from your list that you have come to many of Canada's leading experts and many experts outside.

I'm going to be focusing my comments on Canada, China and the Arctic in terms of how we can understand moving forward.

One of the things, of course, that we have to understand—and this goes with the theme of so many of your previous witnesses—is that there are a lot of misperceptions about what China is doing.

China has a long-standing interest in both polar regions, going as far back as 1984. In fact, for Canada, we first became aware of this in 1999, when their polar research vessel, the *Xue Long*, showed up at Tuktoyaktuk. They did ask our consent. There was a bit of a bobbling on it nevertheless.

When we look at China and the Arctic, there are five major issue areas that we have to be the most concerned with. They are related to the Chinese efforts with science, with governance, with shipping—and this is related to the polar silk road—with resources, and with the strategic and security dimensions.

The first four are the ones that everybody talks about, and those are the ones that are fairly well documented. The strategic side of China in the Arctic is the one that people are a bit more hesitant to really discuss, but in my view it is going to be the most important for Canada as we move forward.

We look at the issues coming forward, and I would love to get into these in more detail, but I will just highlight some of the key issues.

On the science side, what we know now is that China is one of the busiest countries in terms of mapping the Arctic Ocean sea bottom. They are allowed to do this under the terms of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and they have been focusing so far on the areas that can be considered high seas. We think they are doing mapping in preparation for submarine transits of the region, though, once again, that's still an area of speculation.

In terms of resource development, there are at least three issues we have had with the Chinese in the Arctic. The first one is of course gold mining, as we know with the Holt Mine, and the issue of foreign involvement in that region. There is the ongoing issue of strategic minerals, and there is the issue of fishing. On the one hand, they have agreed to join the high seas Arctic fishing agreement. On the other hand, any observer knows the issue of ghost fleets and the fact that the Chinese really fish with two sides of their understanding to see how that works.

In terms of governance, this is the important one. This is one that I hope we can spend time on.

With the suspension of the Arctic Council, we're not quite sure what is going to be happening, because of the second stage of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February of this year. China has been making some statements that any consideration of what happens to Russia vis-à-vis governance is something that they will be strongly against, so we have this issue of trying to understand the Chinese-Russian relationship in the Arctic, which is by no means certain but is going to be problematic for us as we try to move forward in the post-Ukrainian stage.

The last issue I will raise is the strategic issue. Be aware that the U.S. just released its most recent nuclear and defence policy, back at the end of October of this year. They highlight China as their "major issue of interest" in the long term—enemy, one could say when you read between the lines—and that is going to spill over into the Arctic.

This October, most people probably are not aware that the Chinese and the Russians for the first time ever sent a joint surface fleet operation into the Aleutian Islands. There were about eight vessels—four Chinese, four Russian—and we have never seen this done before.

We also have a very strong suspicion that the Chinese are trying to prepare their next-generation submarine for under-ice capabilities, which, of course, is going to vastly complicate the issue in terms of how we understand the geopolitical maritime dimension of what is happening in the Arctic.

In sum, there are a huge number of issues happening, all of which are going to have a major impact up in the Canadian Arctic, and one that I don't think is receiving the attention that it needs to.

Thank you very much.

● (1940)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Huebert.

Now it's over to Dr. Lu, for five minutes.

Dr. Yeh-Chung Lu (Professor and Chair, Department of Diplomacy, National Chengchi University, As an Individual): Thank you very much, honourable committee, for inviting me to join this meaningful event.

I believe our honourable committee members have a lot of knowledge about the current Taiwan-Canada relations and Canada-China relations, so I will touch on those two issues a bit as a background, and then I will focus on the cross-strait relations.

Generally speaking, the Canadian government has continuously supported Taiwan's meaningful participation in the international community, including specialized agencies of the United Nations, such as WHO and ICAO, as well as regional trade partnerships such as the CPTPP. Taiwan already put in our bid, and we hope that we can join this arrangement sooner rather than later.

In terms of geopolitics, Taiwan is a critical strategic hub in east Asia, and the Taiwan Strait together with the East China Sea and the South China Sea constitute major maritime shipping routes between northeast and southeast Asia. Thus, peace in this region is essential to global trade and stability.

As cross-strait relations intensified in recent years, Canadian officials have expressed concerns over China's intention of unilaterally changing the status quo, and the passages of Canada's warships in safeguarding this region are highly appreciated.

If we take a close look at the bilateral trading relationship between Canada and Taiwan, we can see that Taiwan is Canada's fifth-largest trading partner in Asia, with a total volume amounting to \$8.2 billion U.S. dollars in 2021. Arrangements such as the avoidance of double taxation between Taiwan and Canada signed in 2016 helped pave the way to creating an environment conducive to promoting investment.

When it comes to China-Canada relations, China is one of Canada's largest trading partners worldwide, placing third only after the United States and the European Union. Trade relations between China and Canada expanded rapidly, yet recent incidents have cast a shadow over the prospect of this bilateral trading relationship.

This year, Canada joined its Five Eyes partners in banning Huawei and ZTE from its 5G networks due to security concerns. Many high-profile cases presented some of China's most concerning trade practices, hence as trade with China remains essential to a certain extent, it is worth a close examination with caution.

For relations across the Taiwan Strait, China has seen Taiwan as a renegade province since the Chinese Civil War and an integral part of President Xi Jinping's enterprise of the national great rejuvenation, which even takes national unification as part of the redemption to the 100 years of humiliation. War games and Xi's own words that "we will never promise to give up the use of force and reserve the option to take all necessary measures" over Taiwan demonstrate how serious and determined Beijing is in retrieving the island democracy.

China, from time to time, has also employed peaceful overtures to lure Taiwan into its plot. The most obvious policy of “carrot” included attracting Taiwan business people, performing artists and students to invest, work and study in mainland China under a policy dubbed “integrated development”.

Across the Taiwan Strait, however, people have found it less and less attractive when asked about unification with China over the decades. The Mainland Affairs Council of Taiwan revealed that in October 2022 only 8.7% of the respondents favoured unification, now or in the future. The number dropped significantly from 26.8% in August 1996, only five months after Taiwan's first direct presidential election. Domestic politics mattered in shaping Taiwan people's identity, wherein more and more citizens view Taiwan as a de facto independent country from mainland China.

• (1945)

China's sale on “one country, two systems” has no market in Taiwan, especially in the aftermath of China's rule with an iron fist over Hong Kong in 2019.

After U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit on August 4-7, the PLA conducted a 72-hour live-fire test in six areas surrounding Taiwan, together with aircraft and navy ships manoeuvring across the median line of the Taiwan Strait. Taiwan considered it to be a blockade simulation. In reaction, Taiwanese people's negative view on China soared, echoing the feelings held by the other side across the Pacific, the United States. From Taiwan's perspective—

The Chair: Dr. Lu, I think we'll have to pause your commentary now. If you have more reflections, you can certainly work them in to the answers that you give to the questions that are coming your way, including from Ms. Dancho.

Ms. Dancho, go ahead for six minutes or less, please.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for being with us today.

My questions are for Professor Huebert. It's wonderful to see you again, Professor, and thank you again for being a witness for us at the public safety and national security committee when you attended back in the early spring to give us testimony about Canada's security posture in response to Russian aggression and the invasion of Ukraine. It's wonderful to hear your insights here today.

I want to sort of repeat back to you some of what you've shared with us and then give you the floor to elaborate. You mentioned that when we're thinking about China and the Canadian Arctic, we should be thinking about four areas. You mentioned science and how they have been doing scientific exploration in the Arctic since the eighties. You mentioned resources and how they have an interest in gold and strategic minerals up there. You mentioned fishing. You also touched on governance in terms of the Arctic Council being suspended and what that means for the governance structure we have had with that council, and how since then they seem to have been cozying up to Russia. That's what I understand from what you shared. You ended by talking about the strategic implications, and you highlighted even further that China and Russia now seem to be working very closely together. From what you said, it sounds as

though they've done joint missions now into the Arctic with various marine vessels.

Taking all of that into consideration, can you give us your expert opinion with respect to what China wants to achieve in the Arctic, particularly in what we would consider to be our Arctic territory? What are they looking to achieve? Could you kind of sum that up in simple terms for us?

• (1950)

Dr. Robert Huebert: The summation is that they are looking very much forward. They are seeking to become a hegemon. In political science terms, that basically means they want to be the most dominant player in the international system, and that means that they have to have the ability to go to any region and to take advantage of having that ability to go into any region. The Arctic is part of that.

Unlike the Russians, the Chinese are not interested in the Arctic because it is a central strategic location for them. It is the central strategic location for Russia and the United States. If the Chinese are dealing with any of these other issues, such as Taiwan, Hong Kong or any of the issues that are of direct interest to the Chinese state, they want to be able to keep their enemies off guard. So what we see in the long term is that China wants to ensure that, first of all, it is a player in terms of the governance side of what is happening. It wants to ensure that it has the advantage of all the economic opportunities that are there, but, most critically, it wants to ensure that in the long term—and we always have to think long-term when we talk about China—it does not allow the Arctic to be a safe zone for the Americans and the Russians.

I want to stress that the relationship that the Chinese have with the Russians right now is a relationship of convenience, and in many ways in the longer term Russia actually has as much to fear from China as China becomes the great power in the region as, say, the Americans have to fear. Right now, because of the events of the war with Ukraine, starting, as you well know, in 2014, we see China taking advantage of that, but in the longer term, they want to have that dominant ability to ensure that they are the hegemon, and that includes being in the region of the Arctic.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you very much.

The Minister of Defence has recently made a few announcements regarding surveillance and upgrading NORAD. Recently she was interviewed on CTV's *Question Period*. She said that we are investing in our military bases. Do the announcements made by the current government and Minister of Defence give you hope that the current government is taking this issue seriously? Do you think that is enough? What should be done in addition? Perhaps you can just outline that for the committee.

Dr. Robert Huebert: I think the government is taking it seriously in terms of what we need to be doing. I'm still waiting to see whether or not in fact we see this follow-through, because if we see any of the statements that have been coming forward in terms of what we need to do for the modernization of NORAD, the entire focus on the Canadian side is on the Russian threat. That's appropriate, given the fact that that's where all the attention is.

What we're not seeing is really what that means in the much longer term for China, particularly on the maritime side. When we look at what has been promised in terms of NORAD modernization, recognize also that the \$4.9 billion is being drawn out of the \$8.1 billion in the budget. In other words, as I think Mercedes Stephenson and Murray Brewster were able to bring out so brilliantly in their reporting, that's not new money that was announced in June. That is what we'll be doing with what is coming out of the defence budget.

The big money, the \$36.8 billion, of course, is going to begin in six years, and as somebody who has watched politics over a fairly significant, long time, I can assure you that we have very little record of any government ever continuing a very large policy from the government before. The one exception, of course—and I'll give credit to both the Liberals and the Conservatives on this—is the decision to make it bipartisan to build the Arctic offshore patrol vessel. There is an instance where funding has gone across on a bipartisan basis, but that doesn't happen. So I am always concerned whenever I hear of any government, Conservative or Liberal, that says the bulk of what we're going to be doing is in the next term, because history tells us that that doesn't really happen.

In the longer term, the real problem we'll be facing with the Chinese is going to be their maritime capability. Most people will not be aware that the Chinese have the largest navy in the world. The American navy is still stronger and better. It has a better carrier capability, but in numbers, the Chinese navy overtook the American navy in 2014 or 2015. They are going to have that capability. They will focus on underwater capabilities. They are reinvigorating their entire submarine force, and what we can see from outside scientific literature is that they're examining what it means for their submarines to go under the ice, which means into the Arctic region. And—

• (1955)

The Chair: Dr. Huebert, we'll have to call it for time there for Ms. Dancho's time to ask questions.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you very much, Professor Huebert.

The Chair: We'll now go to Mr. Oliphant for six minutes or less.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to follow up on Ms. Dancho's really fine questions. I think they were really good. I want to drill down a little bit more on the Arctic, so I'm going to stay with Dr. Huebert for the time.

China refers to itself as an Arctic-adjacent country. I live in a part of Toronto that real estate agents call "Lawrence Park-adjacent". We're nowhere near Lawrence Park. They do it to up the value of houses they're trying to sell or something.

I've been following China's rhetoric around the Arctic and have read some of what you've written. I want to drill down a little bit about where you think Russia's and China's interests are aligned and—you've already gone into this a bit—where they are quite different, one of them being really an Arctic country and the other being so-called Arctic-adjacent. They have very different proximity. Where are their interests lying? Is it a marriage of convenience or is it a convergence of interests?

Dr. Robert Huebert: It's a little bit of both. That's an excellent question, by the way.

This is something that is not properly appreciated. We have a tendency right now to simply assume that because both of them are authoritative states, they will be allies in the same sense as, say, the United States and Great Britain, in that there's a sharing of overall interests. This is not the case. It's specifically not the case when we talk about the relationship that's developing in the Arctic.

Right now, what Russia gets from China is that it gets backing. Remember, it is isolated by the western states in terms of the sanctions that we have brought forward. It is isolated in the context of the fact that we are providing so much military assistance to Ukraine in its fight against the Russians. China provides this background. That's what Russia gets out of it.

What China is getting from Russia is really cheap energy. The Chinese have never released what the deal was that they cut with the Russians following the imposition of sanctions when the invasion began in 2014. You will recall that even Canada was involved at that point in time in terms of trying to punish the Russian state. There was a series of sanctions. The Chinese moved in and said, "Yes, we'll take your oil, Russia, so you can keep it flowing, but we want a deal on that." We don't know what it is, but we know that it is good.

I would like to touch on something related to a point that Dr. Lu raised in his testimony when he talked about the "century of humiliation". A component of the "century of humiliation", which is the central piece that is driving long-term Chinese policy, is that some of the unfair treaties involve Russia. If we look once again in the history, just as our attention is on Taiwan and Hong Kong, the Chinese have never forgotten that they have also lost significant territory to the Russians during that period. Once again, as we've heard from today's testimony and other witnesses, the Chinese are very serious about remedying that when then feel they are ready to do so. I think the Russians recognize this.

The third element that we have to take into consideration here is what happens if the Russian state actually implodes and there is a vacuum. That is increasingly looking as if it may be a probability. China will not allow a vacuum on its border. So the question is.... If we have a very violent implosion of Russia or, even worse, if Russia was to make a military move on, say, the supply lines on Poland or any of the NATO, resulting in a much larger regional war, China will move to take advantage of that. As a result, we know the Russians are aware that they have the partnerships with the Chinese right now, but if they have a misstep, the Chinese will in fact be very capable of moving into that region, which they now see, of course, as theirs, not as Russian.

• (2000)

Hon. Robert Oliphant: In my last two minutes, I just want to ask about indigenous peoples.

The Arctic Council is made up of eight countries, with seven participating now, Russia having been essentially frozen out. Six permanent indigenous groups are also part of it, including a Russian indigenous group. This may be outside your expertise, but do you have any insights into the peoples of the Arctic, including the indigenous people and their thoughts around conflict or their thoughts around China? Are they targets of China, as well?

Dr. Robert Huebert: The big problem there.... I'm so glad you raised this question, but it's something that we have not been addressing. The Russian group is called the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, RAIPON. About 2014, right when the Russians were moving into Ukraine at the start of the war, and when Putin was of course centralizing, he also engineered the takeover of RAIPON.

RAIPON is no longer, as understood, the voice for Russian indigenous peoples. Rather, what has happened is that this board has been basically made up of Russian government supporters or Russian government people. In fact, if you look at RAIPON's statement about the second phase of the Ukrainian war, back in February 2022, you will see that RAIPON issued a statement in full support of the Russian state intervention into Ukraine, accusing Ukraine of the Russian propaganda, Ukraine being a fascist state and all of the other justifications that the Russians have, of course, given.

Have we seen anything in terms of China trying to take advantage of that? To my knowledge, there's no evidence whatsoever of it. It would be difficult, but probably not impossible in this context. Once again, given the control that the Russian state now has of any NGOs, never mind just those on the indigenous side, it would be something of a challenge. It's something, of course, that we in the west have tended to overlook when we are talking about what has happened in the Arctic. RAIPON no longer speaks for the indigenous northern Russian people, in my assessment. They speak for the Russian state.

The Chair: Dr. Huebert, thank you.

See if you can adjust your microphone and speak up a little bit. Our interpreters are noticing the sound levels going down for some strange reason, but that's the Internet for you.

We will now go to Mr. Bergeron for six minutes or less.

[*Translation*]

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

I would also like to thank our witnesses. It is late for everyone, so I thank you for being with us to give us your insight.

Mr. Huebert, I have to tell you that I find your presentation on the Arctic absolutely fascinating.

Some of your writing can be found in a text entitled "Debating Arctic Security, Selected Writings, 2010-2021", written by yourself and P. Whitney Lackenbauer. The authors' thesis seems to be that the People's Republic of China will assign greater weight to regions located closest and sees the world as a series of concentric circles where closeness diminishes as you move away.

As a result, the authors argue, the People's Republic of China may initiate provocative actions closer to itself, but refrain from do-

ing so in regions farther away, such as the Arctic. However, listening to you, we might think that China not only takes a close interest in what happens in the Arctic, but is in the process of developing the operational capacity to interject itself in that region.

How do you reconcile that vision of concentric circles, as cited by Mr. Dean and Mr. Lackenbauer in the text that contains some of your writings, with the vision you presented to us, which seems instead to point to the threat that China represents for a region like the Arctic?

● (2005)

[*English*]

Dr. Robert Huebert: Thank you for the excellent question.

I want to give a shout-out to my two co-authors, who are former students. Dr. Lackenbauer in particular and I have a disagreement in terms of how to understand the direction of the Chinese threat. Whitney is much more focused on the understanding that the Chinese will be focusing most of their geopolitical effort onto issues that are geographically central to them—that's Taiwan and the South China Sea—and that this, in fact, means that the interest in the Arctic, particularly from a strategic perspective, probably will not be nearly as dangerous as what I have highlighted.

I see the Chinese in the longer term being very interested in being able to interject themselves into the Arctic because that is then going to allow them to challenge the Americans, and it's going to allow them to challenge the Russians in the even longer term. Where we have a disagreement is trying to determine what we can interpret in terms of future force development that will either accentuate his argumentation, which would mean that their aerospace and maritime force composition is going to be strictly blue-water, or my argumentation that we have to be looking at more white-water capability. That means basically the submarine capabilities.

The reality is that we don't know at this point, but it is a very vigorous debate that we and other members of the community have been trying to address. My position, I will be very frank, is that in the long term we can expect the Chinese to be a major strategic player within the context of the Arctic.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you.

From that perspective, we get the feeling that Canada has neglected the Arctic and its Arctic neighbour allies, including Greenland and Denmark, Iceland, and the United States and Alaska, for a very long time.

From the perspective you have presented to us, how should we see things going when it comes to collaboration with the Arctic neighbour nations?

[English]

Dr. Robert Huebert: This moves slightly off China, but the reality is that if we look at what all of our Nordic partners are doing in NATO, then we have to accept that the Turks, at one point, will allow the Swedes and the Finns to join NATO. It's a matter of what price they are going to exact for that. Once we have Finland and Sweden in.... All of the Nordic countries have been heavily engaged in creating what I would characterize as a Nordic NORAD. They're having a shared aerial space. They're having a shared maritime understanding. And all of them are working with the Americans.

We run the risk right now because we're not that involved with them on almost any level when it comes to the NATO side of issues. The real problem, in my estimation, when we look at the recently announced American strategic doctrine and when we look at Putin's threats about using nuclear weapons, is that we're now moving into an era when we're not just talking about nuclear deterrence in the Arctic but we're also talking about the possibility of nuclear war-fighting.

The fact that we have not heavily engaged with our Nordic countries is a problem. The fact that we are even less engaged with our friends in the Indo-Pacific region is even more problematic.

I'll give you one example of how we're, in my view, really not paying attention. In 2017, the Chinese requested consent to send their icebreaker through the Northwest Passage. You will recall that our official policy is that the Northwest Passage, under Canadian Arctic sovereignty, is ours. I don't understand why we gave them permission, because we know that, as they are going through, they are going to be doing deep seabed mapping. They're going to be looking in terms of determination for submarine passages. I don't know why, if in fact the claim is that Canada has sovereignty over the Northwest Passage, we didn't simply say, "Sorry, China, we don't think it's in our defence interest to allow it." But we did allow them, so I don't think we think in a strategic context.

● (2010)

The Chair: Thank you very much for that.

We will now go to Ms. McPherson for six minutes or less.

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

Thank you to all of the witnesses. It is very late this evening, so thank you for being here and sharing your expertise with us.

Obviously, Dr. Huebert, the things we're hearing from you are not necessarily surprising, but of course they are very scary. You were just talking to my colleague, Mr. Bergeron, about our allies and how we need to work with those allies in the northern countries. You talked a little bit about the nuclear deterrence, the nuclear war potential that we have there, and what we should be doing with our allies.

Is it too late? Is the power that China and Russia have militarily...? Have we acted too late? Knowing the situation we find ourselves in now, what should Canada prioritize? Knowing the limitations we have, the limitations with our capacity for procurement, the limitations with what we have failed to do in terms of develop-

ing the Arctic, if you were the Canadian government, prioritize for me what your next steps would be, please.

Dr. Robert Huebert: It's never too late. We don't find ourselves yet in the type of conflict where there is a direct potential, and I dare say our allies have become very attuned to this, particularly after the Ukrainian war started in 2014. We see this in the Nordics. We also see that with our Indo-Pacific friends in terms of how they have been responding.

I also always remind my students that if we look at determination to act.... I point out to them that at the time of Tiananmen Square, Canada had a larger defence budget than China. Our defence budget was about \$21 billion or \$22 billion, in those dollars at that point. If you look at SIPRI's figures, and it's always difficult to know with any certainty, but we think that China's defence budget was about \$17 billion. So we see the manner in which political determination will ultimately make all the difference. Now, of course, China has a much larger economy, and we can get into that.

What would I recommend? First and foremost, to deal with the Russian threat, we have to become much more serious at following through with what we say we're going to do. In other words, the map of modernization of NORAD and North American defence is a sound one, but the question of putting off the \$38.6 billion to when the next election comes, I think, is trying to play sleight of hand in this context. We have to get serious. We have to say this is as serious as anything that we face in climate change, with the pandemic, and that means making the expenditures as soon as we can.

On the Chinese side, what we need to be doing is getting as serious as we have been in the past with our European and American allies and making our Indo-Pacific friends into allies. I think the only way we can respond to all of the types of threats that we have heard in terms of what China poses in the long term...will only be able to be complete if we have a NATO variant of some form of alliance, not just friendship but alliance, with those who are like-minded in terms of being able to respond.

Politically, we need to be trying to help with that. We won't lead—no one will take us seriously on that—but we can at least be supportive of it, and we can definitely turn around and start actually getting the expenditures we need and—this is even more chilling—we need to be thinking about these worst-case geopolitical threats that we now face. They're not science fiction.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you for that. That's very interesting. Obviously, having an Indo-Pacific strategy.... One hopes that when we do get that Indo-Pacific strategy, that will help with turning those friends into alliances.

Maybe I'll ask Dr. Lu the next question that I have, with regard to diplomacy and how the diplomatic efforts can be assisted to enhance the protection around Taiwan.

In your 2014 article, “Taiwan's Viable Diplomacy in Times of Uncertainty”, you outlined the positive outcomes of Taiwan's diplomatic engagement with 22 allies. At present, Taiwan has official diplomatic relations with only 14 states. Could you talk a little bit about the outcomes of Taiwan's diplomatic engagement with its allies and what role the PRC has played in diminishing Taiwan's ability to develop those diplomatic relationships?

Dr. Yeh-Chung Lu: Yes, thank you for your wonderful question.

I would say that China right now is actually seeking a great-power status, not only in the Arctic but also in the Indo-Pacific, of course. If we follow this line of reasoning, we can see that in the past few years, especially from 2014 until 2022, China intervened in Taiwan's engagement with its international friends and Taiwan's participation in international organizations. I would say China is actually playing a role as a disrupter to some degree when Taiwan tries to engage actively with the international community.

In the past, in terms of bilateral relations, you can see that China tried to...I wouldn't say “bribe”, but they actually put a higher bid to win over our diplomatic allies. In international organizations, China tried very hard to exclude Taiwan's participation.

In the past few years, Taiwan adapted to this situation. We try very hard to collaborate with like-minded countries, for example through the GCTF. Right now, Canada is also part of this framework for co-operation. This is a very good development for Taiwan to be seen and also for the international community to have a better opportunity to cope with the global issues such as disaster relief and humanitarian assistance. Those are quite important issues in the Indo-Pacific area.

I would say that I totally agree with Professor Huebert because China always has a long-term perspective on those kinds of things. What kind of status is China looking for? I believe at the end of the day they want to become number one in the world.

From Taiwan's perspective, for now I would say maybe we need to work together to shape what China wants and let China know that China's decision would have consequences, and we keep our own word and we follow through with our commitment. Then we can help to shape China's intentions in the future.

• (2015)

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Lu.

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

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

I thank both our witnesses for appearing tonight.

The first question I have concerns Russia's and China's military co-operation in respect to submarine capacity. I read with alarm when Nord Stream 1's pipeline was blown up in the Baltic Sea, blowing a 50-metre hole in that pipeline, because there were suggestions that Russia had committed this act of sabotage. It immediately brought to mind Russia's submarine capabilities.

That led me to think about what's going on in the Canadian Arctic with China and Russia, thinking about what submarine vulnerabilities we have, not just in the Arctic but on our Atlantic and Pacific coasts. I then started thinking about the myriad of Internet cables

that carry the world's digital communications between North America and Europe, and between North America and the Indo-Pacific region. Many of those cables emanate from Halifax, Nova Scotia, from other parts of Nova Scotia, and from the British Columbia coast.

How important is it that Canada develop submarine capacity, to monitor not just the surface of our coastal waters, but also the submarine parts of our coastal waters, Professor Huebert?

Dr. Robert Huebert: Thank you for the excellent question. It's of absolute importance.

Just to add to your listing of the Russian... We think the Russians have designed a special submarine. It's basically a typical SSN, the Belgorod, but it also has the capability of carrying a deep-diving mini-sub, and that's what we suspect was doing the cut.

Not only was Nord Stream attacked, but also—and this is something that Canadians are not aware of very much—prior to the onset of the second phase of the war back in February, the Russians also cut the fibre optic cable between Svalbard Island and Norway, where a very significant amount of information of a security nature is given.

Russians have demonstrated to us that they have this capability. Within the Canadian context, we really don't have any ability to respond. We have our four submarines, which are very capable, but, as everybody knows, they are not under-ice capable. This means that entire region is left open.

The problem we face is that even in terms of what the minister promised in June, in terms of remedying many of the aerospace difficulties, I think there is nothing in terms of the modernization of our underwater listening capability, and this has been brought out so brilliantly in the very recent audit that the Auditor General released in terms of how we were able to see what we're not doing for Arctic sovereignty and security.

We're not talking about it in the context of what we do with the Americans, and we're not talking about what we may want to do. We had one scientific program called Northern Watch, but nothing really came of that, so there is nothing, sir.

• (2020)

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you.

I have just a couple of quick follow-up questions.

Is China developing the same kind of submarine autonomous capabilities that Russia has already developed?

Dr. Robert Huebert: We haven't seen any sign of it. If we go to the open literature, Janes and the usual sort of information we get, we haven't seen that, but this doesn't necessarily mean that they haven't done it. Something like this can be developed very secretly.

Most of you will be aware, of course, that at one of the Chinese bases the submarines don't surface. There is a tunnel into the island where it's based. If they're developing this capability, they could have developed it without our knowing, and that's indeed a possibility.

Hon. Michael Chong: I would note that in your earlier comments, Professor, you indicated that China has a larger navy in terms of the number of ships it has vis-à-vis the U.S. Navy. I would also note that the U.S. is a larger navy in terms of its overall tonnage compared to the navy of the People's Republic of China. I think that's an important thing for the committee to take note of as well.

Professor, what is your view on what the U.S. response would be in the event that Taiwan is attacked? Do you think it would be primarily a military response, a kinetic response, or do you think it would be primarily a response of economic sanctions and other sanctions that we've seen with Russia? If it's the latter, how do you believe that would affect Canadian trade and investment?

The Chair: We'd need a very short answer, please, Dr. Huebert.

Dr. Robert Huebert: Absolutely.

I think it would be a kinetic response. If the Americans do not respond with kinetic responses to a Chinese invasion, basically they are handing the Indo-Pacific region to China at that point in time.

There will be economics, and it would be completely disruptive to Canadians in ways that I don't think many people would understand. Few Canadians understand how much coal we now sell to the Chinese. It's our number one export. There is no way of getting that to China in a war zone, so basically B.C. would suffer very directly. The Walmarts would suffer. As with the supply chain, it would presumably catch everybody by surprise, but it shouldn't.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we will go to Mr. Iacono for five minutes or less.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for Mr. Lu.

On my recent visit to Taiwan, the members of our delegation had some enlightening conversations with the Taiwanese parliamentarians. As well, on our numerous visits to sites and businesses, we were able to discuss the subject of best practices in numerous fields. The know-how of the Taiwanese and the scientific and technological expertise they have can certainly be an advantage.

Through agreements with our partners, such as Italy and France, student exchanges and youth mobility broaden these young people's minds, stimulate knowledge sharing, and sometimes meet workforce needs and the need for expertise.

How can we develop this type of collaboration between Canada and Taiwan so that both our governments can benefit from it?

• (2025)

[*English*]

Dr. Yeh-Chung Lu: Sure. Thank you for your wonderful observation. It is quite important for Taiwan to continue to forge friend-

ships with other countries around the world, and Canada of course is one of these very significant and important countries with which we should further develop our friendship.

In the past few years, Taiwan, especially Taiwanese society, has been very open and resilient. We welcome all talents from around the world and we are willing to exchange our experiences and knowledge about these high technologies and even education. Right now in terms of bilateral relationships, Canada has invested a lot in education, and Taiwan has also benefited from these kinds of programs and arrangements.

I think in the future both countries, both governments, should continue to develop and further these kinds of collaborations. For example, in the past few months, the Fulbright program in the United States has invested heavily in these kinds of exchange programs. In the years to come, I do hope to see that both Taiwan and Canada can invest more in these exchange programs.

Thank you.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you, Dr. Lu.

Taiwan is a solid trading partner of Canada and a major player in the global supply chain, as we have witnessed in the past two years with the supply of chips that are critical to our technological market. Moreover, Taiwan embraces free and open markets, making it an ideal port of business with the Asia-Pacific region for our Canadian companies. We have had the pleasure, for example, of visiting a Canadian windmill company in Taiwan and hearing from their CEO about the opportunities they had developing in Taiwan.

How can we further develop the economic ties we have with Taiwan, and what arguments could be made in support of their joining the CPTPP?

Dr. Yeh-Chung Lu: It is quite important. As I mentioned briefly in my statement, the avoidance of double taxation, this kind of arrangement, is quite important, and now Taiwan is looking for an opportunity to develop a foreign investment promotion and protection arrangement with Canada. If this can be considered positively in the months to come, I think that would be very welcomed and appreciated by Taiwan.

With respect to other arrangements, I think there is also, for example, the CPTPP, and right now China and Taiwan already submitted our bids separately for that. In the past few weeks, some countries have expressed certain kinds of concerns about Taiwan's bid, but I do hope that Taiwan, as a strong and open market and a liberal economy, can be included in this arrangement. It is very important. After that, if Taiwan can be admitted, Taiwan can contribute more and we can all benefit from Taiwan's inclusion in the CPTPP.

Thank you.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you, Mr. Lu.

Mr. Chair, how much time do I have?

The Chair: You have 20 seconds, sir. I think you're really out of time for all intents and purposes.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: I'm sorry, Professor Huebert. The next question was going to be for you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Iacono.

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

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Huebert, I would like to come back to the question you were asked by Mr. Chong at the very end when he asked you this: what credence must be given to the statement by the President of the United States, who said, in answer to a question about the statements he had made earlier in this regard, that he was prepared, when that had not been the case for Ukraine, to send American soldiers in the event of an invasion of Taiwan by the People's Republic of China?

[*English*]

Dr. Robert Huebert: We have to take it very seriously, and this is one thing, of course, that historians in the U.S. always remind us. The issue of who lost China is a driving feature in American politics, and that goes back to 1949. It doesn't matter if it's Democrats or Republicans; you can't be seen as surrendering to China. That is sort of the third rail for any American president, and, as I said, we have seen this historically. It doesn't matter what party you're with; you have to be there for Taiwan. I think the type of forced disposition that the Americas have made in terms of responding to the Chinese buildup is clear.

Just to go back to Mr. Chong's point that the American tonnage is bigger, the American tonnage is also much more capable at the same time. They've responded directly with the means of responding to an amphibious assault. That is the type of dispositions they have, and that's what you have to look at, which means they're going to use it if they have to, because politically it's suicide for Biden not to. It would be suicide for any Republican not to.

• (2030)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Very quickly, I would like to ask Mr. Lu a question.

You referred to the fact that Taiwan was in a situation of de facto sovereignty.

Is the loss of countries that recognize the People's Republic of China a problem in the long term? Is the diplomatic network built up by Taiwan, regardless of what countries recognize it, succeeding in making up for that in some way?

[*English*]

The Chair: Again, please give us a very short answer, if you can, Dr. Lu.

Thank you.

Dr. Yeh-Chung Lu: Yes. Thank you for this question.

It is quite important for Taiwan to maintain a number of diplomatic allies in the world, because doing so is highly related to our self-identification as a sovereign state.

In the past few years, especially when China has squeezed Taiwan's diplomatic allies and asked them to change their recognition, this has not been good for Taiwan. As long as we have diplomatic allies, we can tell ourselves and also the world that Taiwan is a sovereign state. Under the United Nations, we can see that our diplomatic allies, from time to time, including Canada and ICAO, also express their support for Taiwan. This is very important. For our international participation, at this moment I think it is complementary to our presence in the international community, but in the long run, I think these two things are not mutually exclusive. They are both important to Taiwan's diplomatic survival in the world.

I do hope that Canada and our friends around the world can continue to support Taiwan in the international community.

Thank you.

The Chair: Now we'll go to Ms. McPherson for two and a half minutes.

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

Again, thank you to the witnesses.

Dr. Huebert, you were speaking about the relationship between China and Russia and how at the moment it is beneficial to them to have that relationship. I think you discussed with Mr. Oliphant where they were aligned and where there were differences. From my understanding, you're saying that the relationship will stay intact as long as it is beneficial to China and that the relationship will end when that is no longer the case. What are the triggers for that? Could you talk a little bit about that, please?

Dr. Robert Huebert: Yes.

There are three triggers.

The immediate trigger, as I said earlier, would be a collapse of Russia. If this war turns out to be exhausting and the Russian state—and that means the Putin administration—collapses and there's a vacuum, there will be nothing that moves in to fill it. That would be one trigger for China to immediately respond, because that would become a threat on their border.

In the longer term, the trigger will be, of course, when they are satisfied that they have become the dominant power. In other words, at this point they know that they are still secondary to the Americans. They are making all the necessary efforts to try to match them in military capabilities. When they get to the point where they feel that they are able to actually challenge the Americans as a full equal, that will be the other trigger in terms of being able to pursue the correction of the unfair treaties, a century of humiliation and going after the territory of Russia.

The other long-term trigger is what's going to happen to population growth on the Chinese-Russian border in the Siberian area. We know that in the Arctic region, the Russian area is being depopulated. The people are moving away just because of the difficulties. The Chinese population may not be controllable in terms of keeping them out of that region, and that could very well start to become a trigger that I don't think the Chinese government may have complete control over in that regard.

The last trigger, of course, will be what happens to the American state. We haven't talked about it, but as we watch the political struggles that are now occurring within the United States, unfortunately, the reality is that the United States could face a major domestic political crisis that could severely weaken it as the leader of the free world. If that were to happen, let's say, just theoretically speaking, due to a candidate for the presidency not accepting the rule of law and due process.... I say that half mockingly, but the reality is that we're seeing that this is a very real possibility. A collapse of America as the world leader into isolationism would also be a trigger.

• (2035)

The Chair: With that, we'll all go home and hide under the bed for a while.

I want to thank Dr. Huebert and Dr. Lu.

Dr. Lu, it's now mid-morning for you, according to my calculations. Thank you for getting up a little early to join us.

Dr. Huebert, thank you for joining us from Calgary today. We appreciate it. I hope it's not snowing and not too cold for you.

Dr. Robert Huebert: We're getting a chinook right now.

The Chair: There you go. Good for you.

All right. Thank you both.

We will now suspend briefly. Committee members online, you will have to log off and log back in for our short—we hope—in camera session to talk about a study report.

Thank you. We'll suspend.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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