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• (1105)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.)): Good morning, honourable members. I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting No. 6 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Pursuant to the motion adopted on January 31, the committee is meeting on the situation at the Taiwan Strait.

[English]

As always, interpretation is available through the globe icon at the bottom of your screen.

Members participating in person, please keep in mind the Board of Internal Economy guidelines for mask use and health protocols.

[Translation]

Please note that screenshots and screen photos are not allowed.

[English]

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you're not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

[Translation]

I would also like to remind you that all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair.

[English]

Colleagues, just before we begin, procedurally there is a potential vote scheduled within the next hour. If that does happen, pursuant to Standing Order 115(5), the committee requires unanimous consent to continue once the bells have begun.

[Translation]

I would now like to welcome our witnesses.

[English]

We have with us today Weldon Epp, director general, North Asia;

[Translation]

Kevin Hamilton, director general, international security policy;

[English]

Stephen Randall, executive director, oceans, environment and aerospace law;

[Translation]

and Jordan Reeves, executive director, Canadian trade office in Taipei.

Thank you very much, Mr. Reeves, for joining us today.

[English]

Last, we have Mary-Catherine Speirs, executive director, trade policy and negotiations, Asia.

Colleagues, I understand that Mr. Epp will deliver the opening remarks for our panel. I will give the floor to him now for opening remarks for five minutes. We will then go into rounds of questions as usual.

Mr. Epp, please go ahead. You have the floor.

Mr. Weldon Epp (Director General, North Asia, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I'm pleased to be here today to respond to questions on the situation regarding Taiwan, together with colleagues from the international security bureau and legal and trade policy bureaus at GAC, as well as, of course, our head of mission in Taipei, the executive director of the Canadian trade office in Taipei, who stayed up late especially.

[Translation]

Since 1970, Canada has forged significant economic, cultural and people-to-people ties with Taiwan within the framework of the one China policy. Under this policy, Canada recognizes the People's Republic of China, or PRC, as the only legitimate government of China, while noting the Chinese government's position on Taiwan, but not endorsing or challenging it. This framework has allowed Canada to build unofficial but substantial ties with Taiwan based on our complementary interests, shared values and the rule of law, while maintaining diplomatic relations and pursuing our interests with the PRC.

[English]

As a modern, prosperous and democratic society, Taiwan is globally connected and has an international footprint to match. There are currently around 60,000 Canadians living in Taiwan, which makes the island the home of one of the largest Canadian diaspora communities in the world.

These direct people-to-people links are supported by daily non-stop flights and deep trade relations with two-way trade in merchandise valued at, in 2021, \$10.2 billion, up 38.1% year on year. Taiwan is Canada's 15th-largest trading partner and a critical member of global supply chains, particularly for chip manufacturing and international shipping.

During the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Taiwan was among the first to donate masks to Canada.

[Translation]

On issues from global health to civil aviation, Canada has always supported the effective participation of Taiwan in global discussions, where a practical imperative exists and the absence of Taiwan would harm global interests.

Despite international efforts to promote greater inclusion in international organizations such as the World Health Assembly and the International Civil Aviation Organization, Taiwan remains excluded from important discussions where its presence would benefit the international community.

[English]

In the past four months, we have observed a significant increase in military activity, including over 600 incursions into Taiwan's self-declared air defence identification zone by the PLA Air Force. Whatever the motivations, Canada believes these moves threaten regional security and serve only to push back the possibility of dialogue and co-operation across the Taiwan Strait.

For its part, Canada has communicated directly to the Chinese authorities its concerns about destabilizing military actions across the strait, while reiterating Canada's strong support for constructive efforts that contribute to peace and stability in the region.

To be clear, we remain committed to advancing our interests with Taiwan within the framework of—and I should emphasize—Canada's one China policy. Canadian engagement with Taiwan is multi-faceted and has, on its own merits, an important role to play in advancing Canadian interests. The value to our two societies goes beyond the cross-strait security question.

As our sixth-largest trading partner in the Indo-Pacific, Taiwan's economic stability matters to Canadian exporters. For instance, recognizing Taiwan's crucial position in global supply chains, Canada recently launched exploratory discussions on a possible foreign investment promotion and protection arrangement with Taiwan.

Mr. Chair, as a progressive democracy, Taiwan demonstrates that Confucian values and individual rights and freedoms, including for women, the LGBTQ community and indigenous peoples, can co-exist. Canada has many other unique reasons to advance its ties with Taiwan without reference to the agenda of third parties. This long-standing approach has guided Canada's engagement with Taiwan

for over five decades and will remain a cornerstone of our continued engagement in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

● (1110)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Epp, and thank you for sticking to the time limit. In fact, you're under. I was just starting to mention to colleagues and the panel as well—I will continue to use a 30-second flashcard just to give you guidance when your time comes to an end. I think this has been helpful. Whether it's a colleague member of the committee speaking or a witness, when you see this card, please try to wrap up your remarks. The allocations are quite tightly timed and negotiated, so I'd be grateful for your adherence to them.

We will now go to our first round, which is a set of six-minute interventions by members of the committee, the first of which goes to Mr. Chong.

Mr. Chong, you have the floor for six minutes. Please go ahead.

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

Minister Joly's mandate letter instructs her to develop an Indo-Pacific strategy. I have two quick questions. When will the strategy be released, and will it be made public?

Mr. Weldon Epp: As you mentioned, the Indo-Pacific strategy has been identified as a policy priority for the government, both in mandate letters and in the Speech from the Throne. That policy is under development, and our advice to ministers continues to be prepared, so I'm not in a position to speak to the timelines for that at this time.

Hon. Michael Chong: Will it be made public?

Mr. Weldon Epp: Again, the exact nature of the approach to communicate this both diplomatically and publicly, I can't speak to, but the anticipation is that yes, it will be.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you very much. I appreciate that answer.

Last October, the Royal Canadian Navy frigate *HMCS Winnipeg* sailed through the Taiwan Strait alongside U.S. destroyer *USS Dewey*. The United States classifies these operations as freedom of navigation operations. The Canadian government does not. What does the Canadian government classify this operation as?

Mr. Weldon Epp: Mr. Chair, with your permission, I'd like to turn to my colleague Kevin Hamilton from our international security bureau to provide a response on that.

Mr. Kevin Hamilton (Director General, International Security Policy, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Mr. Chair, the United States, as the member correctly notes, conducts freedom of navigation operations throughout the world, but particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. The joint transit of the Taiwan Strait between *HMCS Winnipeg* and *USS Dewey* would not fall into the category of what the United States classifies as a FONOP, a freedom of navigation operation. Both the *Dewey* and the *Winnipeg* travelled exactly equidistant between mainland China and Taiwan, so the two vessels were in fact passing through international waters.

Different operations that the United States undertakes that are classified as FONOPs move into territories or territorial waters that are claimed, rightly or wrongly, by one country or another. That was not the case in this transit of the Taiwan Strait.

Hon. Michael Chong: The People's Republic of China claims much of the South China Sea as its territorial waters.

Are you suggesting that this is not the case?

• (1115)

Mr. Kevin Hamilton: It's the case that China does claim much of the South China Sea as its territorial waters. Canada does not take a position on claims by any particular country.

Hon. Michael Chong: We don't oppose China's claims to the South China Sea, even though the court in The Hague upheld UN law and ruled against China in respect of its claim to the South China Sea?

Mr. Kevin Hamilton: I would defer to my colleague, Stephen Randall, who is the director of our oceans law division, on that question.

Outside of particular claims under the court in The Hague, as you mentioned, and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, my understanding is that we typically do not take a position on the various claims in the South China Sea.

Hon. Michael Chong: I have more questions, but... I'm surprised at that, because China clearly lost the case in international court, based on international law—the Convention of the Law of the Sea—with respect to its claim to the South China Sea. I'm surprised, therefore, that Canada's and the government's position is not to uphold that court ruling.

My other question has to do with President Xi and President Putin. President Xi and President Putin recently met and issued a joint statement of some 5,000 words, which some people are calling an alliance of autocracies.

What is the Government of Canada's position on this new alliance between Russia and the People's Republic of China?

Mr. Weldon Epp: It's a development that we are monitoring very closely. We take note of the statements released. Canada is concerned with a growing disruption to long-standing principles and practice in international law.

The Canadian government, with partners, has repeatedly spoken out, both bilaterally and through fora like the G7, whether with respect to activities by the Chinese government that break rules and norms in international law, or those of the Russian government.

The issue that the honourable member raises is one of great concern. We continue to monitor it closely.

Hon. Michael Chong: I have a very quick question. Does the government support Taiwan's accession to the CPTPP?

Mr. Weldon Epp: I will turn to my colleague from our trade policy branch for that please, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Mary-Catherine Speirs (Executive Director, Trade Policy and Negotiations, Asia, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Mr. Chair, Canada does not have a position on Taiwan's application at this time. At this time, the parties to the CPTPP are focused on the accession process for the United Kingdom. As with any accession application, Canada would need to undertake an analysis in order to properly assess the implications.

At this time, our position on any aspirant economy seeking to join the CPTPP would be guided by the best interests of Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Speirs and Mr. Chong.

I will now give the floor to Ms. Bendayan for six minutes.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

Thank you to all of the officials who are here today on this important question.

I met recently with Representative Chen, who is, as you know, the representative of Taiwan here in Canada and based out of Ottawa. It is a priority of his that we conclude a foreign investment promotion and protection agreement, also known as a FIPA, with Taiwan.

On January 9, 2022, Minister Ng also spoke with Minister John Deng from Taiwan. During that meeting the two ministers agreed to begin exploratory discussions on a FIPA.

Can you perhaps elaborate and speak to this recent announcement of exploratory discussions between Canada and Taiwan?

Mr. Weldon Epp: Mr. Chair, I'll turn to my colleague, Ms. Speirs, again in a moment to speak to developments in trade policy.

I'd like to say at the top that Canada has a very robust relationship and strong interest in promoting more integration of our trade relationship with Taiwan. Taiwan plays an incredibly important role in global supply chains, not least in the tech sector. One of the largest Canadian investments in Asia is in Taiwan. We've seen increased investments into Canada, not least through the work of Mr. Reeves here, but also thanks to Mr. Chen. We look forward to pursuing exploratories that might identify ways to strengthen those two-way relationships.

Ms. Speirs can speak to the next steps and the process.

• (1120)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you.

Ms. Speirs, perhaps you can focus on the timeline for the FIPA, in that case.

Ms. Mary-Catherine Speirs: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, Canada is presently pursuing exploratory discussions as a first step towards potential negotiations for a foreign investment promotion and protection arrangement with Taiwan. There are exploratory discussions scheduled in February and March. They are a first step in assessing our levels of ambition and whether we are in a position to recommend moving to formal negotiations.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Picking up on a question from my colleague, Mr. Chong, I would be interested in also hearing about something that, again, Mr. Chen raised. There is an obvious interest for Taiwan to be able to join other international organizations. ICAO was mentioned specifically. Can you provide the committee with an overview of how Canada is supporting Taiwan in this regard, particularly with respect to its interest in joining ICAO?

Mr. Weldon Epp: Mr. Chair, I'd be happy to take that question in the first instance and turn to my colleague, our head of mission in Taipei, to elaborate.

Canada has repeatedly stated, both through the Prime Minister's own statements and those of various other ministers, and also through our positions taken at relevant international organizations, that the Canadian position is that we welcome the participation of Taiwan in the international community and in organizations where the context permits and the interest of the international community in having the participation of Taiwan's 24 million people at the table merits it. That has included, but not been limited to, pressing for Taiwan's observer status, which it at one point enjoyed at the World Health Assembly with respect to the work of the WHO. It has also included our efforts to ensure that when it comes to aviation and aviation security and safety, Taiwan's participation at ICAO is facilitated. Canada will continue to push for those.

There are other fora in which Taiwan has a seat or plays a meaningful role, including in various fisheries organizations. As the committee will be aware, Canada works with Chinese Taipei in the context of the WTO and APEC. Where possible, our policy has always been to be pragmatic and look at ways in which we can increase the effectiveness of those organizations, not least over one of the more dynamic and important economies in the Asia-Pacific region. We do this together with partners who share that view and share the view that, particularly given its democratic government and governance and its dynamic economy, Taiwan brings a lot to many tables. We do that through coordination with like-minded [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] and through conversations with the secretariats of the organizations mentioned.

I'd like to turn to Mr. Reeves to speak about some of the ways we do this, not least through other bodies, like something called the GCTF.

Mr. Jordan Reeves (Executive Director, Canadian Trade Office in Taipei, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): The GCTF is a good example. This is a platform called

the Global Cooperation and Training Framework, based in Taiwan. There are a couple of other partners; the U.S. and Japan are the principal partners, and Australia has just joined. This is a platform that Taiwan uses to promote essentially good governance throughout the region and beyond.

For the very first time this past year, Canada co-organized one of the sessions and joined with the other partners. This one was on women's political participation, so we had the Honourable Rona Ambrose on as one of the speakers on that panel, as well as Carole James, the former deputy premier of British Columbia. That is a great example of where we can be working with Taiwan alongside other like-minded partners in the region.

As Mr. Epp has so eloquently explained, yes, Canada has been quite consistent in calling for an inclusive approach, a non-politicized approach, to international organizations, especially when it comes to dealing with issues around the environment, aviation safety, which was mentioned, and certainly health—the latest pandemic. These are issues that do not respect political boundaries.

On ICAO, I'll say one other—

• (1125)

The Chair: I apologize. We'll have to leave it there. There will be an opportunity to follow up in successive rounds, but thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much, Ms. Bendayan.

Mr. Bergeron, you have six minutes.

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

Thank you to our witnesses for taking the time to shed light on the current situation and relations between Canada and Taiwan.

Special thanks to Mr. Reeves for joining us at this late hour. I am closely following the Beijing winter Olympics, so I understand that the time change really takes its toll over time, as the Olympics progress. In any case, thank you for joining us.

I must admit that I was also surprised by the answers that witnesses gave to questions from the honourable member Michael Chong on the Taiwan Strait and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. That said, I certainly will not criticize them because our desire is to have open and frank discussions, rather than hearing rehashed official lines. Therefore, I thank them very much for that.

The President of Taiwan has established a working group under the National Security Council to closely monitor the evolving situation between Russia and Ukraine, and to determine its potential impact on Taiwan.

We addressed this issue last week in a meeting on the situation between Russian and Ukraine. Professor Anessa Kimball, from Université Laval, told us that most of the west's attention was focused on Ukraine and that very little attention was being given to Taiwan. Furthermore, quite surprisingly, at a town hall on October 21, President Biden was asked directly whether the United States would defend Taiwan in the event of a possible attack by the PRC. He responded that the United States was committed to doing so. However, we know that the United States has already said that it would not intervene if Ukraine were invaded.

Was Professor Kimball misinformed when she told us that the west is more concerned about the situation in Ukraine?

My second question is somewhat tied to President Biden's response. If Taiwan were invaded, would Canada be willing to take military action?

[English]

Mr. Weldon Epp: As we know, and as the member mentioned, colleagues from Global Affairs Canada were before the committee recently to speak about the situation in Ukraine. I know that the comparison with Taiwan came up in that context. It's very much a discussion point. I would say that this committee and Global Affairs—the government—are very alive to that issue.

We continue to watch closely, not least because whether you're sitting in Moscow, Beijing or Taipei—or Ottawa, for that matter—there is a risk that developments in Ukraine present a sort of unwelcome natural experiment, if you would, that will allow various parties to watch closely and see the effectiveness of different diplomatic tools to respond to a very alarming situation.

Notwithstanding that, I would say Canada remains very concerned separately with developments in the Taiwan Strait. We mentioned off the top, in the opening statement, the increasing operational pace of very unwelcome and destabilizing incursions from the PLA Air Force. Those are also, unfortunately, opportunities to test potential options for the future.

The Canadian government is monitoring all those developments very closely. These are quite unique and separate, but of course there are some cross-pollinations in terms of how international diplomacy and various means of responding to coercion, be it outright or through other means, are most effectively done.

• (1130)

[Translation]

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

Even though everyone can agree that they are two completely different issues, thank you for recognizing that they are most certainly directly linked. I think that the joint statement issued by President Putin and President Xi Jinping a few days ago, which Michael Chong referred to, is a testament to the closer ties between Russia and China, including on the issue of Taiwan. There is therefore certainly a link to be drawn between the two.

Since you do not want to weigh in on the link that could possibly be established between them, let's talk more specifically about the situation in Taiwan.

If the People's Republic of China were to invade the island, what would be the Canadian government's reaction, given Canada's adherence to the one China policy?

[English]

Mr. Weldon Epp: Mr. Chair, I'd like to speak to that. I have very limited time, but I won't speak to the hypothetical various future scenarios.

China, in its own words, has never ruled out, never precluded, using force to reunify with Taiwan, and Canada is deeply concerned by recent activities. I'll just speak to the facts as we see them rather than to some hypothetical future.

There are increasing activities by the PLA Air Force, and not just overt activity by the military but also what we would call “below threshold” activities, which include things like cyber-attacks, interference and united front tactics. We're alive to all of those. We will continue to monitor those together with partners, and continue to encourage both sides to step back from provocative actions, particularly the Chinese side, which has changed the dynamic recently, in the last year. We will also continue to seek dialogue and a space to maintain stability and resolve the outstanding historical differences through peaceful dialogue.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Epp.

[Translation]

Thank you very much, Mr. Bergeron.

[English]

The final six-minute intervention in the opening round goes to Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to thank the witnesses for coming and sharing their expertise with us today. Happy Valentine's Day to all of the witnesses and to the members of the committee.

I'd like to follow up a bit on some of the questions that Monsieur Bergeron has asked, because of course we're all very preoccupied with what is happening in Ukraine and the potential for an invasion by Russia. It's interesting to get your perspectives on that.

Does the Canadian government believe that a Russian invasion of Ukraine would make Chinese aggression toward Taiwan more likely? Could you give me a bit of clarity on why or why not that is the case?

Mr. Weldon Epp: We need to be frank here. Whether it's think tanks, academics or governments, we are all monitoring developments in Ukraine, not least for the question you're raising.

It's very dynamic, of course, and I'm not going to speak to how the government would respond or what we assess to be the likelihood of that impact at this time. Given the open line we're using for this call, let's stick to what we know about with respect to China.

We know China has been quite explicit in identifying its own strategic goals. In the words of Xi Jinping, they include national rejuvenation by 2049. He's made an implicit link, but we all understand that rejuvenation would definitely include reunification with Taiwan.

There is increasing concern that China may be putting a timeline on those goals to achieve its general rejuvenation and its goal of becoming a great power globally but also the predominant regional power by 2049. It's been investing heavily in its military, and we see activities within the region that are increasingly alarming, not just in the Taiwan Strait, but—

• (1135)

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt you. We have bells that are currently ringing. I've hit the pause button on this intervention. We need unanimous consent by the committee in this case to continue to work. Customarily, if the committee grants it, it's usually for no more than 15 minutes, and I think it's a 30-minute bell.

Do we have unanimous consent to continue for up to an additional 15 minutes? Is that enough time for colleagues to cast their votes? Is there any opposition?

Hearing none, we will continue for 15 minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. Can I seek consent to extend for another 10 minutes, beyond the proposed 15? We can vote by app, so I don't think we need more—

The Chair: Sure, if colleagues feel that's okay.

Do you want to put a particular time on it?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: We've agreed to 15. I would say extend it by another 10, on top of that.

The Chair: Is it 25 minutes?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Yes.

The Chair: Is there any opposition from colleagues?

You seem to have agreement, Mr. Genuis.

Thanks very much.

I will pass the floor back to Mr. Epp, with my apologies.

Mr. Weldon Epp: Mr. Chair, perhaps I'll pause there and turn it back to you.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you. I'll step in.

I understand that we are asking you questions on hypotheticals and that is always a bit of a challenge, but knowing the situation we find ourselves in, this is something the committee is deeply concerned about.

When we look at what's happening in Ukraine and the potential for Russian aggression there, my other concern and the other thing I'd like more information about is how what happened in Hong Kong over the last several years has impacted what's happening in Taiwan. Knowing that Taiwan has been governed in a progressive, democratic way, I'd love to get some context on, first of all, the human rights protections—the human rights that are happening in Taiwan and the reality around things like LGBT+ rights, indigenous

rights and women's rights—and how you see them interacting with what happened in Hong Kong in 2019 and later.

Mr. Weldon Epp: Mr. Chair, let me make a quick response to that, and then I'd like to turn it over to the executive director of our CTO team in Taipei to speak to the latter part of the question.

Obviously Canada, with others, has spoken out, is on the record and has taken policy decisions to respond to the deterioration of rights and freedoms under the implementation of the national security law in Hong Kong. Those developments came quickly, not least opportunistically, because of conditions provided by COVID, and Canada and others have looked at that with concern.

Taiwan is a very different situation in the sense that the processes and tools used to shift those goalposts in Hong Kong were effectively through legislative means and law enforcement. Obviously Taiwan, de facto, is administered by a different government, a democratically elected one and, as you point out, one that has been a bastion of human rights and progressive policies within the region.

With that, I'd like to turn it over to Jordan Reeves.

Mr. Jordan Reeves: I could comment a bit further, perhaps, that what we saw happening in Hong Kong had a profound impact on Taiwan and Taiwanese politics, for sure. In Taiwan, basically the Hong Kong reality of what happened with the national security law...essentially told most Taiwanese that “one country, two systems” was clearly out; it was no longer an option for the majority of Taiwanese.

We saw this correspond with an increase in the number of people in Taiwan who also identified themselves as Taiwanese, as opposed to being both Taiwanese and Chinese, or only Chinese. In terms of the latest numbers we have for the end of last year, 62.3% of the Taiwanese population now identify as being purely Taiwanese. Many of these tend to be the younger Taiwanese, and they tend to be strong supporters of the current administration, the DPP. To generalize, to simplify a little, it is considered to be the pro-independence party in Taiwan.

This had a profound impact on the local politics. In 2018, after local elections, there were many who saw that there was an opportunity for the opposition, the KMT, which had usually been taking a stance that is a bit closer to China, to make a comeback. However, as a result of the Hong Kong situation in that context, the politics shifted in Taiwan and President Tsai was re-elected. We see some of the impacts of that within the region. That would probably be the largest impact that the situation in Hong Kong had on Taiwan, as the Taiwanese watched what happened there.

• (1140)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Reeves.

Thank you very much, Ms. McPherson. There will be an opportunity to follow up in subsequent rounds.

We will now go into our second round of questions.

Leading us off will be Mr. Genuis, with a five-minute round.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Order Paper question 41, which was mine, was with respect to AUKUS and the Indo-Pacific strategy. I had asked about whether Canada was interested in becoming part of AUKUS and about Canadian views of an engagement with AUKUS. The response, understandably, noted the role of nuclear submarines as part of AUKUS. It says, quote, “Canada has not and does not seek to be directly involved in the nuclear-powered submarine aspects of this trilateral arrangement”.

That's fair enough, but it seems to leave a lot unsaid. Is Canada interested in being involved in aspects of this agreement not related to nuclear-powered submarines?

Mr. Weldon Epp: Mr. Chair, with your permission, I'll turn to my colleague Kevin Hamilton to respond to that.

Mr. Kevin Hamilton: The member is quite correct that there are other aspects of the AUKUS agreement beyond the centrepiece, which was the Australian acquisition of nuclear submarines. There are such aspects as advancing applied research and innovation, emerging technologies, artificial intelligence and quantum computing. These are areas and aspects that we deal with already with the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia in the context of the Five Eyes arrangement.

The question of whether Canada would need to be part of AUKUS to continue with those very important aspects of our relationship is somewhat moot. We have that relationship already. Leaving aside the nuclear submarine aspect, which, as the member correctly notes, we're not particularly interested in right now, we feel that we have that relationship and that it is strong.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm a bit confused by that answer. Of course, all of the countries involved in AUKUS are part of the Five Eyes. They already co-operate on the areas you mentioned, but they are committing to, presumably, further and deeper co-operation by signing on to AUKUS.

Should I infer from your response that there is nothing new in these areas with respect to AUKUS, or that there are things that are new being advanced in terms of co-operation? If there are things that are new and that are being committed to, and Canada is not a part of them, then that's potentially a problem, is it not?

Mr. Kevin Hamilton: It's my understanding that there is no exclusivity with respect to those other areas of the AUKUS agreement that would exclude Canada or New Zealand or the other partners of Five Eyes. AUKUS creates essentially a commercial deal around the nuclear submarine procurement and then re-emphasizes the other aspects of co-operation in those areas that I mentioned earlier.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Your understanding of those other aspects of AUKUS, then, is that they are simply re-emphasizing or repeating things that are already committed to in the context of Five Eyes co-operation.

Mr. Kevin Hamilton: That is my understanding. Yes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On another matter, have any ministers from the current government since 2015 met with representatives of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office here in Ottawa?

Mr. Weldon Epp: To my knowledge, they have not.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Is there a reason that would be the case?

Mr. Weldon Epp: There is no specificity in our one China policy that would preclude it.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: What's the most senior level of official or member of the government that has met with representatives of that office?

Mr. Weldon Epp: To my knowledge, apart from ongoing engagement, including by me and other members of senior management within our department, most recently through the annual Canada-Taiwan economic co-operation platform—our annual joint planning council—it would be at the assistant deputy minister level.

• (1145)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Why did Canadian government officials not want to see Tsai Ing-wen receive the John McCain prize from the Halifax security forum?

Mr. Weldon Epp: With respect, I'm not sure I would entirely agree with the premise of the question. What's on the record is that Minister Sajjan, then minister of defence, made it clear to Parliament that the Government of Canada supports the Halifax international symposium and will continue to do so, and that the decisions taken by that independent Canadian conference or institution will remain independent, including who they invite to meetings and who they choose to provide awards or recognition to.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Were any representatives [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, I apologize. That's your time. We'll have an opportunity to follow up, I'm sure.

Thank you very much, Mr. Epp.

We'll now go to Dr. Fry for five minutes, please.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you, everyone, for coming and giving us such great answers.

I wanted to focus on a big picture issue here. I've heard my colleagues Michael Chong and Heather McPherson ask about the broader implications.

We are seeing a global movement to get rid of democracy. We know that Taiwan and Ukraine are democratic. We see Russia doing what it's doing in Ukraine and we see China taking steps against Hong Kong and Taiwan. They're invading air space, moving very close to naval lines, etc.

Is your sense that this is part of a joint action to get rid of democracy in the two major regions, i.e. Europe and the Asia-Pacific?

We're members of the G7. The Japanese prime minister talked a lot about that free and open concept in the Indo-Pacific region. Is this something you're concerned about?

Is Canada planning a longer-term strategy to ensure that democracy remains clear, with the rule of law, free and fair elections, freedom of the press, and adherence to human rights? All of these are being denied right now by both of those countries: China and Russia are absolutely ignoring them.

Are we concerned about that big picture and that long-range plan to rid the world of democratic institutions and democratic nations?

Mr. Weldon Epp: That's a big question, but I'd like to thank the member for it. I would like to speak to that in a couple of ways.

I'll also take the opportunity to return to the question of the Canadian mandates in letters to ministers and the statement in the Speech from the Throne of the desire to comport with an Indo-Pacific strategy, as the member raised. That will be the context going forward—as we understand it—for the government to reinvest in and communicate even more clearly its commitment to the values of rule of law and principles that we've invested in and fought for in the Asia- and Indo-Pacific region. It is particularly the case on the Korean peninsula, where we continue to work with partners to uphold the rule of law and all of these, not least sanctions, to prevent nuclear proliferation.

Canada, as you know, has been very active in participating in augmenting a rules-based approach to the region in international trade. My colleague Ms. Speirs can speak directly to that in the context of the CPTPP and bilateral FTAs.

To the question of democracy, across that landscape which, at points, can be bleak, we have numerous partners within the Indo-Pacific region, including Taiwan, with whom we share a commitment to democratic governance, human rights and the rule of law.

As executive director Reeves mentioned earlier, rather than only working to include Taiwan more meaningfully where it should be and where our interests require it in international organizations, we also need to be creative in working with Taiwan and other partners through platforms like the GCTF to amplify its experiences, not least, for example, in the area of media freedoms. Taiwan has an incredibly robust and, frankly, very active domestic media context.

Those are the sorts of values and practices that Canada shares with Taiwan. We want to work through a number of platforms to do so. To your—

• (1150)

Hon. Hedy Fry: Go ahead. I wanted to ask you another question, so if you could...

Mr. Weldon Epp: As the government develops a new Indo-Pacific strategy, I want to emphasize that it has not stopped decisions being taken to move forward and work more closely with our partners, not least Japan. You mentioned the free and open Indo-Pacific approach of the Japanese. You will have seen last year and summer that the Canadian government announced further, deeper co-operation with Japan within that framework.

Hon. Hedy Fry: You don't like hypothetical questions. Nobody likes them. They make an idiot of all of us if we answer them.

What I wanted to say is Ukraine is a sovereign nation. Taiwan is not. Will it embolden China—not that China needs to be emboldened any further—to follow through on what Russia is doing in Ukraine? If so, who are we going to be allied with in that case, if we have to take a step?

Mr. Weldon Epp: I think Canadians will look forward to hearing from the government as it develops an Indo-Pacific strategy, which will address some of those issues as they come forward.

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

[*Translation*]

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

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

I will continue on the exact same subject.

I was a bit surprised by the response given by Mr. Epp. First, he said that he didn't want to respond to the hypothetical question about a possible invasion of Taiwan by the People's Republic of China. Then, in the same breath, he added that the PRC had never closed the door on reunifying China by force. Concerning a response to hypothetical questions, I believe that Canada has very clearly stated what it would do in the event of a hypothetical new invasion in Ukraine.

Why, then, is there this resistance to answering the question about a possible invasion of Taiwan, given that many Canadian citizens live on the island and are very certainly interested in knowing what the Canadian government would do if the island were invaded?

[*English*]

Mr. Weldon Epp: Mr. Chair, I want to be clear. Canada does have a policy, hypothetical or not, and we've been consistent.

As we have for 50 years under our one China policy, in calling on both sides to seek to resolve outstanding differences through dialogue and peaceful means with regard to potential future actions taken by one side or the other, we need to respond to events as they evolve and not preclude the possibility for positive outcomes.

What I said in my earlier comments was that we are deeply concerned with actions being taken by the Chinese side, which are adding both pressure and tension to the region and potentially being seen as a dress rehearsal for future actions.

The Chinese government, as I said, has never ruled out reunification by force, but it is also active in other means of putting pressure on Taiwan. We're alive to all of those, including economic coercion and reducing Taiwan's international space. That also includes the kind of activity we've seen recently with respect to Lithuania and the EU. That's why the government is seeking to join consultations on the EU's action against China and the WTO with respect to Lithuania. Canada will continue to stand up and oppose economic coercion as well as more overt military coercion and threats.

Last, I would say that as you've seen in the last year—and my colleague Mr. Hamilton can speak to this further—given the rising tensions not just in the Taiwan Strait but across the region, in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, you will see an uptick in the operational frequency of deploying Royal Canadian Navy assets in that region, working with our partners to undertake new, interoperable exercises. All of those are part of our preparations and contributions to stability today and in the future in that region.

• (1155)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

[*English*]

Colleagues, we've moved inside of the 10-minute time frame for the votes.

What I propose is that we give our colleague Ms. McPherson the floor for her two and a half minutes, which will take us very close to five minutes.

I'm also advised that we have the capacity, on the House of Commons side, to extend to 1:15. If colleagues want to check their schedules and obligations, I'd like to do that by consensus if the committee agrees to do it. Please turn your mind to that possibility.

In the meantime, Ms. McPherson, you have the floor now for two and a half minutes.

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

I want to follow up on the Indo-Pacific strategy, when we can expect that and what it will look like.

You answered my colleague Mr. Chong that you didn't know when it was going to be done, when it would be released, and whether it would be public, but that the plan was for that strategy to be public. Obviously, it is very important for parliamentarians to have access to that strategy so we can see how it's being implemented.

One of my key concerns is the feminist foreign policy, which we have also not yet seen but which is meant to be released by the government.

How will we ensure that the Indo-Pacific strategy incorporates the FFP, and what will that look like? What are the processes that are in place right now to ensure that this happens?

Mr. Weldon Epp: Let me respond to it in a moment, but I will take the opportunity just to provide an important clarification in response not to this member's question but to the question raised earlier by Mr. Chong.

I did not mean to infer or imply, in saying that the Indo-Pacific strategy would be made public, that the entire strategy will or won't be. That will be the government's decision, and I cannot, as an official, predict that. The intent is to publicly and diplomatically communicate very robustly our strategic objectives and the way in which that strategy will advance those. I apologize if I misspoke. I didn't mean it to be literally that the strategy or policy as such will

be released. You can understand that elements of it may continue to be classified, given their sensitivity.

The intent is to engage, to the question just raised, on the wide range of Canadian interests we have in the region. Canada is no stranger to the region. We have a long history of engaging not just in security and in governance or trade but also in development.

To the question on the feminist foreign policy, the government's policy has not changed. As we look at creative and new ways to use development assistance tools to more effectively engage on shared goals and values with our partners in the Indo-Pacific, we anticipate a very big opportunity to continue to advance the principles and objectives of the feminist foreign assistance policy of the government.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I'm not talking about the FIAP. I'm talking about the feminist foreign policy, not the feminist international assistance policy.

I'm assuming that I'm out of time, so maybe I'll get more clarity on that in the next round.

The Chair: If Mr. Epp wants to put in a very quick answer to that last point, he's welcome to. Otherwise, we can follow up. We're now at inside of five minutes.

Mr. Weldon Epp: I'm sorry. The point I would like to make is that the Indo-Pacific strategy will be building upon the foundations of the government's policies, including its feminist international policy.

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

Thank you, Mr. Epp.

Colleagues, we will suspend now to allow everybody to cast their vote. We will come back in, I would say, about 15 minutes. That would be the normal time frame. We stand suspended until then.

• (1155)

(Pause)

• (1220)

The Chair: We will continue our discussion. We left off in round two, after Ms. McPherson. I will now turn over the floor to Mr. Aboultaif for a five-minute intervention.

Mr. Aboultaif, you have the floor.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Chair, could I raise a point of order? I don't know if this is a point of order or not. You can rule on it, if you wish.

During Mr. Epp's responses to Mr. Genuis's comment, the conversation was about senior officials from Canada having met with officials from Taipei. I just wanted to say—and it's not my ego at stake here, and I may not be senior—that in 2021 I had three meetings with officials from both the Taipei office here in Ottawa and the cultural office in Toronto. I think this should be on the record, that we regularly have relatively senior conversations with them.

The Chair: Mr. Oliphant, thank you. I'm not sure that's a point of order, but you'll have the opportunity to clarify that further, if you wish, in your own intervention, which is coming up.

Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On that point of order, this is clearly an abuse of points of order. I'm interested in the update. Mr. Oliphant has rounds of questioning available to him. This is an abuse of process—

The Chair: That's exactly what I pointed out to him.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: —and, frankly, it should come off his time if he tries to engage a thing. Just deduct it from his time, and he can proceed with the rest of it, because it's not really fair to others to do that.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, thank you very much. In the meantime, the clock is running. I will give the floor to Mr. Aboultaif right away.

Please go ahead, for five minutes.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Unless it's not coming out of my own time.... Thanks again.

Mr. Epp, would you be able, for the sake of this report, to identify the one China policy for us, in a brief fashion, if you can.

Mr. Weldon Epp: I'd be happy to.

Canada's one China policy forms the basis of Canada's bilateral official relations with China, but the policy has also allowed us to maintain unofficial but valuable people-to-people ties—trade and investment ties—with Taiwan. At the time of Canada's recognition of the PRC, Canada took note of China's position on Taiwan, neither endorsing nor challenging that position.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: The position you mentioned has been consistent for 50 years. There is no position right now on Taiwan joining the CPTPP. There is no position on Huawei when it comes to Canada-China relations.

There is a new reality that the relationship with China is not the same after the situation with the two Michaels. For the sake of the report, or the new policy you are drafting or working on, if there is no position on Taiwan joining the CPTPP and there is no clear position on Huawei, what is the shape of that policy going to be? What is in it that will be any different from the policy we have had for 50 years?

• (1225)

Mr. Weldon Epp: Mr. Chair, I hope members will understand that I am not in a position to speak on advice to ministers that is under development. I can assure the members of this committee that Canada's one China policy and the way in which Canada has used that policy to navigate both official relations with China in pursuing our interests with the PRC but also unofficial relations with Taiwan, have been marked by a very flexible approach. The policy is in effect, by design, strategically ambiguous. It is not particularly prescriptive.

We spoke about that a bit earlier in this conversation with respect to levels of access and such. By design, our one China policy and

how we manage our interaction with Taiwan have successfully, for 50 years, allowed us to do more and more things that are in Canada's interest: growing trade and engaging further on education ties and on research and development, precisely because we have taken a very ambiguous and flexible approach.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: I'm sorry to cut you off.

After the two Michaels, there is no more flexibility. We've probably seen the ugly side of how far China can go in punishing countries like Canada, where the relationship was basically very balanced, as you just mentioned.

How far do you think China would go beyond what happened during the two Michaels situation? We don't really know the details of that, so how far can they go, and what will that mean for our future relationships and for the Indo-Pacific policy we are trying to put together?

Mr. Weldon Epp: A moment ago, I was speaking specifically to the flexibility and the long-standing Canadian durability of our one China policy vis-à-vis Taiwan, and how we manage those relations, but with respect to the concerns raised by the honourable member, obviously, all Canadians share deep concern.

There was broad support—not just within Canada, but around the world—for creative new diplomacy to define and call out the sort of activity we see increasingly from China, which is disruptive to existing international rules, order and principles. The arbitrary detention initiative, which is coming up on its first anniversary soon and continues to garner support, is an example of that.

I would also mention that there is increasing work with the like-minded to push back on what we would call economic coercion from China. I mentioned earlier the position of the government with respect to—

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Epp, do you believe that we need to have a fundamental change to our China policy, moving forward?

Mr. Weldon Epp: Mr. Chair, I don't think it's about my personal views in this regard. We continue to serve the government with advice on how to evolve our approach to China—

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: What does that advice look like?

Mr. Weldon Epp: The government has been on the record a number of times—including in front of the parliamentary committee on China that was enacted before the last Parliament—explaining, at a very high level, that the approach has evolved. We have a new assessment of China. Canada will challenge China where we see it breaking or undermining international rules and principles, and we'll co-operate with China where we're able. We need to continue to compete, with like-minded and other partners, to provide solutions and approaches that keep with the evolving geopolitical dynamic that we are—

The Chair: Mr. Epp, thank you very much. We'll have to leave it there in the interest of time.

We will now go to our next intervenor.

Mr. Sarai, you have five minutes. Go ahead, sir.

• (1230)

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): China's military has increased the frequency and number of its flights in Taiwan's air defence identification zone, and it has crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait.

What considerations appear to be motivating China's increased military activity in and near the Taiwan Strait?

Mr. Weldon Epp: Mr. Chair, I'll start by replying to that at a high level and then I'll turn to my colleague Mr. Hamilton to see if he wants to add.

It's an excellent question. We're in close touch with the like-minded, but we also speak to think tanks, including in Beijing, to understand China's motivations. I spoke earlier to the [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] higher-level motivations that China has been quite clear about. It sees reunification with Taiwan as an essential part of achieving its goals of meeting its centennial of the revolution in 2049 as a rejuvenated great power.

The ways in which it would hope to achieve those objectives, from a rhetorical point of view, have been quite consistent. If you look at it since 1979, when the party shifted from talking about the liberation of Taiwan in a more aggressive sense to talking about peaceful reunification, the rhetorical frame has been largely consistent, including under Xi Jinping in his speeches, most recently last year.

What is changing, apart from the rhetoric, is that we see incredible investment in its military capacity to keep options open, you might say, to take advantage of a changing geopolitical environment and of China's growing economic might, which has made an asymmetry both economically but militarily possible in 2022 in a way that it wasn't in 1979.

As China has grown and become more powerful, not surprisingly that potential option for its goal of reunification has been heavily invested in. As I said earlier, we continue to monitor and be concerned about other approaches, not just military. We encourage both sides to buy the time to maintain stability and dialogue for the possibility of a peaceful resolution of their outstanding issues.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Chair, has the government made any formal diplomatic communications to China regarding its concern about the rising tensions in the Taiwan Strait?

Mr. Weldon Epp: Mr. Chair, yes, we have done so through bilateral diplomacy at a working level. At my level we frequently have these conversations with the embassy here, or our embassy in Beijing raises these issues. Most recently, our deputy minister Marta Morgan raised it in a conversation with her counterpart from China.

Apart from bilateral communications, we use multilateral statements, including from the G7. There were several last year. If you noted, most recently—I think it was last week—in the Prime Minister's readout of his conversation with his Japanese counterpart, concerns about rising tensions across the strait were raised in that as well.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: What are the risks of escalation if we misrepresent the situation in the Taiwan Strait when we're seeing similar things happening in Ukraine right now where tensions are high?

What are the risks and ramifications of that in this situation in Taiwan?

• (1235)

Mr. Weldon Epp: One of our concerns, Mr. Chair, is that any increase in the operational frequency of activity, even if these are test flights, raises the risk, in an incredibly busy sea lane and airspace, of accidents of missed communication and the possibility that it could spill into open tensions.

I'll turn to Mr. Hamilton, who follows these issues very closely, to see if he wants to add to that.

Mr. Kevin Hamilton: I don't have much more to add. That was an excellent answer.

I would just reiterate that any time there's an increase to operational tempo, there is a risk of accident, and there's a risk of misinterpretation. Certainly what mainland China has been doing with respect to incursions over Taiwan is not conducive to the preservation of international peace and security. It is a destabilizing situation that we monitor on a daily basis.

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

Thank you to the witnesses.

We will now go to our third round.

Leading us off will be Mr. Morantz for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I realize that you said earlier that you couldn't comment on what we would do in the event of an incursion by China in the Taiwan Strait. I'm just wondering if you could elaborate on what measures are available to the Government of Canada in such an event.

Mr. Weldon Epp: Mr. Chair, in situations where we oppose the use of military force either in international contexts or, for example, in human rights within borders, one option that the Canadian government has developed and deployed in the past has been economic sanctions.

This committee would be aware that the Canadian government undertook economic sanctions against China for the first time in the context of our concerns about human rights abuses in Xinjiang last year. Obviously, Canada continues to enforce both UN and bilateral sanctions in the case of the DPRK.

Sanctions are one tool. They are not the only tool. One concern that Canada would continue to pursue given the increased tension we've seen in the strait, is to continue to, if I might put it this way, encourage both sides—particularly through our engagement with Taiwan, since that's the topic today—to develop peaceful engagement across the strait and with other partners within the region.

Mr. Reeves mentioned the GCTF. We will double down on our approach to supporting our exporters and investors with respect to Taiwan. We passed an arrangement to support the avoidance of double taxation a couple of years ago.

Some of the bilateral tools we can use to support trade and people-to-people engagement with Taiwan are, frankly speaking, an important part of maintaining confidence and normalcy for the people of Taiwan even as they face increasing military threats. It buys them time to find more peaceful ways to resolve those conflicts.

Canada has always been clear. We're opposed to any unilateral action that would destabilize the situation in the Taiwan Strait.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Thank you.

I want to circle back to the joint statement. One thing the joint statement said—and presumably China supports it because it signed on to the statement—was about ruling out NATO expansion in eastern Europe.

Are you concerned that China has now embarked on a foreign policy designed to interfere with the decisions of NATO?

Mr. Weldon Epp: Mr. Chair, I must turn to my colleague Mr. Hamilton for that question.

Mr. Kevin Hamilton: Mr. Chair, it's a very interesting question. Right now NATO is going through a renewal of strategic concept. It's something that's done roughly every decade. It is happening right now. The results will be announced this summer at the Madrid NATO summit.

One issue under discussion is the necessity for the North Atlantic alliance—even though it's a Euro-Atlantic alliance—to have 360-degree threat perception and the ability to deal with challenges and threats that may come from outside Euro-Atlantic spaces. China is explicitly mentioned in that regard. We're very alive to China's role in the region. China's relationship and efforts are often—

• (1240)

Mr. Marty Morantz: My time is pretty short, but I get the picture.

Obviously China's watching what's going on in Ukraine very closely. Although the situations aren't completely analogous, many parts of the two situations are very similar.

If the international community's response to an invasion of Ukraine is perceived by the Chinese government as weak, do you think that increases the probability that the Government of China might actually embark on an incursion to reunify with Taiwan by force?

Mr. Weldon Epp: We're talking about it because it absolutely is a talking point that the risks of what might happen in Ukraine have an impact globally. We are concerned that not just China but others might seek to learn lessons or draw conclusions from that. We'll continue to have those conversations with our allies, both in Europe and around the world.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Morantz. We'll have to leave it there in the interest of time.

Thank you, Mr. Epp.

We'll go to Mr. Ehsassi now, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Allow me to also thank all the witnesses for their testimony today.

Mr. Epp, allow me to start off with really good news, the fact that we launched exploratory discussions for the FIPA earlier this year. Would you mind sharing with us what you think the time frames will be going forward?

Mr. Weldon Epp: We have the benefit of a real expert on that in Ms. Speirs, so I'll turn to her.

Ms. Mary-Catherine Speirs: Mr. Chair, as I've noted, we have upcoming meetings scheduled to undertake those exploratory discussions with Taiwan towards a future FIPA. Those meetings are scheduled for February and March. They are designed to assess our relative levels of ambition. We will then be in a position to recommend whether to proceed to formal negotiations.

It is hoped that those exploratory discussions can also ensure that, should we proceed to formal negotiations, those would move relatively quickly.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Would it be correct to say that Taiwan is the most significant trade partner we have with whom we have yet to negotiate a FIPA? Is that correct?

Ms. Mary-Catherine Speirs: I won't comment on that.

I will note that Canada recently completed a review of its model FIPA agreement, and we are now in the process of reinvigorating our FIPA program, including with a number of partners.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Is there any other jurisdiction with which we do more give and take, more trade, more bilateral investment than Taiwan, with which we do not, as yet, have an agreement?

Ms. Mary-Catherine Speirs: I'm sorry, but I can't comment on that.

Many considerations are taken into account as we look at where we would consider having FIPAs with potential partners.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Could you share with us how many OECD countries have already negotiated FIPA agreements with Taiwan?

Ms. Mary-Catherine Speirs: I'm sorry, but I don't have that information at hand.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Okay, but which of our significant trading partners already have a FIPA with Taiwan? Can you name a few of them?

Ms. Mary-Catherine Speirs: I'm sorry, but I'll have to follow up on that.

Mr. Weldon Epp: I might suggest that we turn to Jordan Reeves, who follows this closely.

I'm not sure, Jordan, whether you can add to that.

Mr. Jordan Reeves: I can't give you the exact answer but I can tell you that Taiwan does have FIPAs with a number of its trading partners. Those include many of its diplomatic allies, but I don't think all of the 14. Also, I think, there are more recent FIPA-style agreements. They're not exactly the same as ours. Some of these don't have full dispute settlement mechanisms as part of the agreements, but two recent examples of investment-related agreements that Taiwan has completed are with India and Vietnam.

• (1245)

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Excellent. Thank you so much for that.

At this preliminary stage, I'm not quite sure who this should go to. Which sectors in our country can expect better prospects as we move forward in the event that we negotiate a FIPA? Which sectors in Canada stand to gain?

Ms. Mary-Catherine Speirs: Mr. Chair, I just want to note that should we proceed with FIPA negotiations, doing that would be largely about establishing investment protection. It's based on protections for our investors abroad against any potential discriminatory treatment and expropriation. It is about reaffirming our commitment to a predictable framework, so it's not specific to—

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Ms. Speirs, I'm not asking about the substance; I'm talking about what sectors appear to be most promising for us in Canada, should we negotiate an agreement.

Ms. Mary-Catherine Speirs: It's not linked to any particular sectors; it's designed to foster—

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Thank you.

Mr. Weldon Epp: Mr. Chair, if I might, I would say we've seen very positive two-way investment, including in the health sector and in environment and clean energy. We see increased interest in biotech, and of course we're all very interested in seeing further investments in co-operation in the IT sector, not least of all for chips.

As my colleague mentioned, the arrangement would be about building broader confidence across sectors, but those are all very promising sectors that, with our CTO team in Taipei, we work hard at growing.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Ehsassi. We will have to leave it there in the interest of time.

[Translation]

I'll now give the floor to Mr. Bergeron for two and a half minutes.

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

I would like to come back to the subject that Mr. Epp had started to raise: China's reaction to the opening of Taiwan's representative office in Vilnius, Lithuania.

How do you explain this knee-jerk reaction by the PRC, when many countries, including Canada, maintain unofficial relations with Taiwan? Is it a sign of the PRC cracking down on any new relations being established with Taiwan?

[English]

Mr. Weldon Epp: Mr. Chair, the questions are perceptive. We will continue to take note of, be concerned with and work with partners to push back on the “moving of the goal posts” approach

that we have seen. That's with respect to Taiwan's international space, both in terms of bilateral arrangements it may have unofficially with other partners—the case in point being Lithuania—and also with respect to Taiwan's participation in organizations of which it is already a member, be it APEC or the WTO.

Time doesn't permit it now, but there are examples of activity by one side that would seek to downgrade its long-standing role in access.

Those, again, are some of the examples I was giving earlier. We're alive both to military exercises and to threats, but also to other ways in which pressure is being put on Taiwan around the world.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, I know that my time is almost up, but I would like to come back to the response that Mr. Hamilton gave to Mr. Genuis concerning the AUKUS pact. I understand Canada's reservations about joining the Indo-Pacific alliance, given that the countries in question have nuclear submarines.

How can this position be reconciled with the fact that Canada is a member, for example, of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, several members of which also have nuclear submarines?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Hamilton: Mr. Chair, of course different countries will assess their defence and security needs in different ways. I can say that right now our assessment is that Canada is not in need of nuclear submarines at this time, but to the extent that Australia is arguably our closest partner and ally in the Indo-Pacific, they determined that they needed that resource.

From our perspective, that can only be a good thing. It increases our opportunities for interoperability with the Australians. It enhances their security and defence situation, so to the extent that we're close partners and allies with the Australians, we believe it enhances our security and defence as well.

• (1250)

[Translation]

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

[English]

Madam McPherson is next, for two and a half minutes, please.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Really quickly, this isn't a question, but I wanted to clarify that the feminist foreign policy is not the same as the FIAP, the feminist international assistance policy, and it is so important that the feminist foreign policy include all aspects of Canada's role in the world, including defence, diplomacy and trade—so not wanting to focus on that development side when we look at the feminist foreign policy.

Unfortunately, I don't have questions for our guests right now because I would like to take the remainder of my time to move a motion that I brought forward previously. I really do thank the witnesses for being here, and I look forward to having the opportunity to study Taiwan in further detail going forward, but knowing where we are in Canada, knowing that I have now asked the U.S. ambassador to Canada to come to this committee to answer questions on foreign money being used to fuel these projects, I think it's really important to recognize that yesterday the GiveSendGo website was hacked. It was redirected to an illegal leak of who the donors are.

The document indicates that 56% of the donors are from the U.S. and that foreign donors account for nearly half of the dollar amount, that work emails were tied to these donations, including from the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and that, while there was a recent provincial order to freeze the funds, the convoy organizers as well as GiveSendGo have been looking for ways around this order.

This is a national emergency. Clearly, it has dragged on much longer than it should have due to a lack of leadership and a lack of action, and it needs to be addressed swiftly. This committee is a perfect place for us to be looking at this concern of foreign interference in relation to the convoy, and to elevate this issue, particularly since the organizers, who have a say in managing the funds, have expressed hate, white supremacy and a stated goal to appoint themselves into an unelected position of government and dissolve the current government.

I would like to move that motion, and I ask the committee to consider it and vote for it, please, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. McPherson. The motion has been moved. It's in order. It was communicated to members within the notice period and is now formally moved. That means members now have the opportunity to debate that motion.

Because we are in a hybrid format, in the sense that we have at least two members in the room in person and the rest of us online, I would like to ask the clerk and colleagues to re-establish a speaking order.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Chair, I just have a point of clarification. I just want to clarify that this is the motion on the U.S. ambassador and not the—

The Chair: That is my understanding.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Okay. I'm asking because there were two motions, I think, that Ms. McPherson tabled.

The Chair: Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I'm happy to read the motion if that would provide clarity, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Why don't we ask you to do that, just to be absolutely sure? Please go ahead.

Ms. Heather McPherson: It is as follows:

That the Committee request the appearance of David L. Cohen, Ambassador of the United States to Canada, to appear for a period of one hour to entertain questions from the Committee in regard to concerns American influence supporting a group in Canada who has a stated goal to dissolve the Government of Canada, including concerns of funding and being collected and distributed by American companies towards this goal, and concerns regarding American in positions of authority encouraging Americans to support the call to dissolve the Canadian government with funding that is foreign to Canada.

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

I'm going back to my earlier point with respect to the establishment of a speakers list. I know we have members in the room as well as online. Online it's easy. I would ask you to use the "raise hand" feature and, once you've spoken, to lower it to go back in the queue.

I will ask the clerk if there are interventions that are being sought from the floor and to let me know so that I can develop an integrated speakers list.

Right now I have Mr. Oliphant, who has his hand raised virtually.

Mr. Oliphant, you have the floor.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Ms. McPherson, for the motion.

However, I would not be in favour of it, for two principal reasons: one on process and one on content. The process is we took quite a while getting our committee going. We have an ambitious agenda. Today's meeting is just the start of the Taiwan study. We're still continuing with Ukraine, which is one of the most pressing issues for most Canadians beyond our borders. Taiwan is extremely important. I'm already getting some ideas now, thanks to Monsieur Bergeron's idea that we delay our witnesses for a while. I am getting more questions, which I think are going to be helpful as we move ahead. Then we also have the important study on vaccine equity. We'll be having a briefing on that. The principal reason would be that I believe we have done some good work in getting an agenda.

The second reason is I don't think that issue trumps our important agenda, mainly because the issue that is being raised and the content of the motion is really not about a state-to-state issue that would be appropriately addressed by the ambassador of the United States to Canada. I think he would not be the best witness for us to do that.

For those reasons I will not be supporting it.

● (1255)

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

I have Dr. Fry and then Mr. Chong. Colleagues, since we're now in a discussion that involves substance other than that on which our witnesses have come to testify, and in the interest of their scheduled time, I'm wondering if the committee would agree that we can release our witnesses at the moment, with our thanks for their service and for their expertise and testimony.

Is there any objection?

Hon. Michael Chong: Yes, I object. I have a quick point of order after my intervention.

The Chair: Does that relate to the witnesses, Mr. Chong? In that case we will ask them just to stand by.

Hon. Michael Chong: It does indeed, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We have Dr. Fry and then you, Mr. Chong.

Dr. Fry, go ahead.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you very much, Chair. I want to also agree with my colleague Rob Oliphant in saying that I do not and cannot support this motion.

We have what everyone, every day, is saying could be, at any moment, war in Ukraine. We have Taiwan, on which also we've been asking the questions and hearing the answers. Is China going to take a page out of Russia's book if they get...?

These are important and urgent issues. I agree with Mr. Oliphant as well that this is not a state-to-state issue. It's not the United States of America's government that has people running around in our country, GoFundMe and getting all kinds of money, etc. I think these are things that may be done, if they need to be done, in a bilateral manner with FINTRAC and all of that, getting our government to say, "Can you check where the money's going? Can you follow the money for us?"

This is not an urgent issue. We have too many more urgent things. I will therefore be voting against it.

The Chair: Dr. Fry, thank you very much.

Mr. Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I agree with everything Mr. Oliphant said in respect to this motion.

If I may, Mr. Chair, since I wasn't able to have my five-minute round, on a point of order I'm wondering if I could just read a question quickly into the record and ask the witnesses to respond to the clerk in writing to that question after the meeting has concluded.

The Chair: Yes. I was going to suggest to members that that option is available at any point, really.

Hon. Michael Chong: I'll just quickly read my question into the record.

Canada as a signatory has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, a legally binding treaty, as has the People's Republic of China. Under this convention, the United Nations appointed a tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague. In a clear and binding ruling, the tribunal ruled on July 12, 2016, and found that the People's Republic of China's claim to the South China Sea and its nine-dash line are invalid.

Does Canada support and agree with the tribunal's ruling, which renders the People's Republic of China's claim in the South China Sea null and void?

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

I see that Mr. Hamilton has his hand raised. If he wishes to comment.... I'm mindful of the timeline that the witnesses are under with respect to other obligations they may have, so if that will settle the remaining point outstanding to them, let's tackle that now.

Mr. Hamilton.

Mr. Kevin Hamilton: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With your indulgence and with my apologies to Mr. Chong for my first answer to his questions, he asked at that time about transit at the Taiwan Strait. I answered that accurately, I believe. He asked a question about maritime claims in the South China Sea. I answered that mostly accurately in saying that generally, Canada does not take a position.

However, as he's just read out for the record, he also asked that very specific question about the tribunal's ruling in 2016, on which we do have a view, and I'm happy to provide that in writing or to defer to my colleague Stephen Randall, who is on the panel and is director of our oceans law division at Global Affairs Canada.

The Chair: In the interest of time, Mr. Hamilton, if it could be provided in writing, that would close out the panel discussion of today's meeting. We have a motion on the floor, but I want to make sure you and your colleagues are able to get on your way with the rest of your day.

Thank you, Mr. Chong. Thank you, Mr. Hamilton.

We will allow our witnesses, then, to disconnect, and again with our thanks, particularly to Mr. Reeves, for whom it's now very late. Thank you again for your testimony this afternoon.

We will now go back to the motion under discussion. I don't immediately see any speakers. Is anybody else wishing to speak on the motion that was put forward by Ms. McPherson?

Dr. Fry.

● (1300)

Hon. Hedy Fry: Chair, I have to go. I have a committee meeting and I'm sorry. I have to say that I would move that we adjourn.

The Chair: Okay. There's a motion to adjourn on the floor.

Madam Clerk, procedurally is that dilatory and does it supersede any other motion?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Erica Pereira): Yes, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I just have a point of clarification.

The Chair: One second, Ms. McPherson. I just wanted to check with the clerk what, procedurally, happens now. Does that supersede the motion under discussion?

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes it does. You should proceed immediately to a vote on the question of whether the committee should adjourn.

The Chair: Okay. We have a dilatory motion, Ms. McPherson, to adjourn. There is no other margin to engage in debate, so we will put that to a vote. Is there any objection to adjourning?

There's at least one objection, so why don't we do a recorded vote?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Yes, I am objecting to adjourning. I would like to move to a vote on Ms. McPherson's motion and adjourn after that, so I'm against it.

The Chair: Let's call the vote on adjournment.

(Motion negatived: nays 10; yeas 1)

The Chair: The motion to adjourn is defeated.

We are back to a discussion on the motion, and I invite colleagues to once again raise their hands.

If there's no further debate, we will go to a vote on Ms. McPherson's motion.

(Motion negatived: nays 9; yeas 2)

The Chair: The motion is defeated.

We are at one o'clock. That's the time scheduled for us. We've concluded our work with the panel.

Colleagues, with your agreement, we stand adjourned until our next meeting. Please keep safe. Thank you.

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