HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

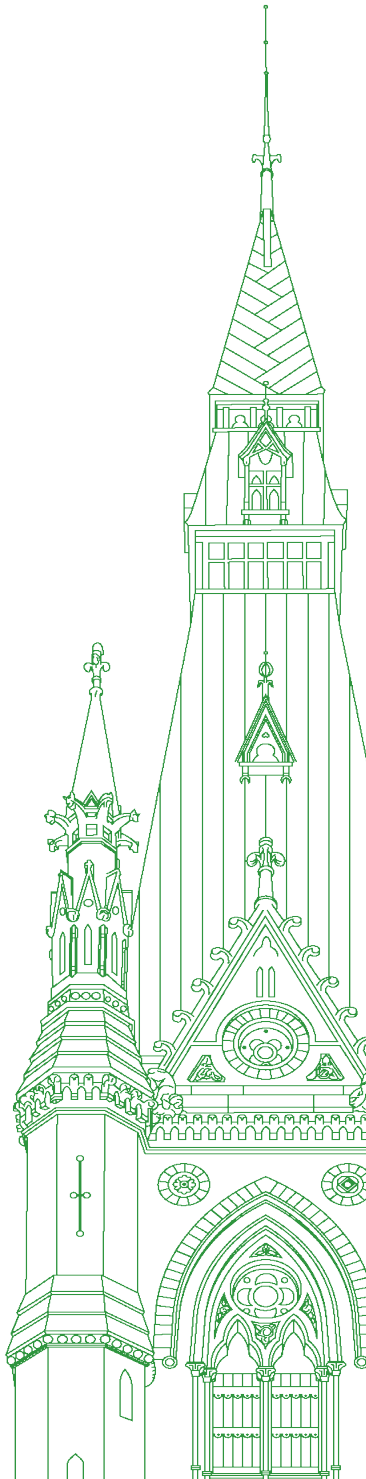
44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on National Defence

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 069

Thursday, September 21, 2023



Chair: The Honourable John McKay

Standing Committee on National Defence

Thursday, September 21, 2023

● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

I want to welcome our witnesses to the 69th meeting of the defence committee. All three of our witnesses have appeared at previous meetings. Major-General Prévost was so excited about last Tuesday that he thought he'd come again today.

With that, I will ask Major-General Smith to make an opening five-minute statement. Then we'll turn to our colleagues for questions.

Major-General Smith, please go ahead.

Major-General Greg Smith (Director General, International Security Policy, Department of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, we are honoured to once again appear before you. As stated, I'm Major-General Greg Smith, the director general of international security policy. With me is someone who needs no introduction, Major-General Paul Prévost, director of staff for the strategic joint staff here at DND and the Canadian Armed Forces.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for this opportunity to support the committee's discussion of the Indo-Pacific Strategy and to provide an overview of the progress made by the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces in the implementation of our initiatives.

You will recall from my previous appearance at this committee that, among the five interconnected pillars of the Indo-Pacific Strategy, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces are primarily focused on the Peace, Resilience and Security pillar. But we also have an important supporting role in the Active and Engaged Partner pillar.

[*English*]

It is important to remember that prior to the release of the Indo-Pacific strategy, Canada already had a significant regional presence, including a commitment of over 70 years to the United Nations Command in the Republic of Korea, regular ship and aircraft deployments in support of forward presence operations and sanctions monitoring, participation in major regional exercises, and capacity-building activities through our military training co-operation program.

Through new and significant investments announced under the Indo-Pacific strategy, the defence team has moved forward to broaden and deepen its presence in the region for years to come and position Canada as a positive contributor to peace and stability in the region.

In fact, we have aggressively leaned forward on our five lines of effort to help implement the strategy. So far, the Canadian Armed Forces has augmented Canada's naval presence in the Indo-Pacific, moving from two to three warships per year. Earlier this year, His Majesty's Canadian ship *Montréal* deployed from Canadian Forces Base Halifax to conduct operations in the Indian and Pacific oceans. His Majesty's Canadian ships *Ottawa* and *Vancouver* are currently in the region working with our allies and partners. Their contributions in upholding the rules-based international order have been well noted across the region, specifically when HMCS *Ottawa* conducted a Taiwan Strait transit in company with the U.S. Navy—a bilateral activity that the U.S. Navy only conducts with the Royal Canadian Navy.

[*Translation*]

We have increased and diversified our regional engagements by participating in new multilateral exercises, with the Royal Canadian Air Force joining for the first time exercise Mobility Guardian across multiple locations in the Indo-Pacific this summer, among other new exercises and activities planned in the upcoming weeks.

[*English*]

We have expanded our capacity-building efforts through new programs and activities, with discussions under way to identify other relevant opportunities with regional partners. Notably, the Canadian Armed Forces co-hosted a "women, peace and security" conference with the Malaysian armed forces, one of the focus areas for capacity-building and security co-operation efforts. As well, the Royal Canadian Navy supported capacity-building efforts during SEACAT, the Southeast Asia co-operation and training multilateral exercise led by Singapore. These activities are important in building interoperability and trust with regional partners.

The defence team is ready to establish four defence policy advisers in the region, with candidates identified and preparing to assume their posts in the coming weeks. These new positions will have an immediate impact on deepening key partnerships and raising Canada's visibility in regional discussions on sensitive defence and security issues.

Finally, the defence team co-hosted with U.S. counterparts a cyber-defence co-operation workshop with the Japanese Self-Defence Forces, focused on cyber-incident response and workforce development, to improve their ability to detect and respond to threats. These activities strengthen overall resilience and preparedness, protecting against coercive tactics and preventing theft of valuable intellectual property.

As we deliver on these initiatives, the defence team is concurrently supporting the Indo-Pacific strategy's objective to be an active and engaged partner in the region by focusing our activities, engagements and port visits on ASEAN countries, including the Philippines, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam. These efforts, among those across the whole of government, have contributed to tangible outcomes in support of our ASEAN-related objectives, including invitations to observe for the first time ASEAN defence ministers' meeting plus, or ADMM-Plus, and experts' working group meetings and activities in 2023.

● (1535)

In my view, this reinforces the good news coming out of Jakarta just two weeks ago, following the Prime Minister's successful visit at the ASEAN summit, where ASEAN and Canada officially upgraded our relationship to the level of strategic partnership. In concrete terms, these complementary efforts across the whole of government to strengthen our presence in the region and increase our co-operation with ASEAN partners help us to deliver on the defence and security objectives outlined in our Indo-Pacific strategy.

[*Translation*]

In sum, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces are on the right path to deliver a meaningful and multi-faceted regional presence for Canada, from which we can promote peace and stability in support of our international interests and values.

I look forward to your questions.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Major-General Smith.

Mrs. Kramp-Neuman, you have the opening six minutes.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Perfect.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here today.

As my first question, within the Indo-Pacific strategy, it states, “Canada will increase our military engagement and intelligence capacity as a means of mitigating coercive behaviour and threats to regional security.” As well, “Canada will deploy additional military assets and increase its investments in border and cyber security, as well as in intelligence.”

I recognize that this is something that we definitely need to do, and that it's a great commitment. However, as we all know, commitment needs to be backed up with capability. I'm wondering if you could address how the Canadian government intends to increase our capabilities, in both the cybersphere and more traditional military areas, to meet our commitments laid out in the Indo-Pacific strategy.

MGen Greg Smith: Thank you, Chair. I'll go first, but I'm sure my colleagues here will do better than I will.

In terms of the Indo-Pacific strategy, you've heard talk of reconstitution and how we're trying to rebuild the Canadian Armed Forces. The CAF indeed was rebuilt with that just in mind. Everything we just described in satisfying the different pillars of the Indo-Pacific strategy was done in mind with a reduced size of the Canadian Armed Forces. We've nevertheless been able to do everything I just described. We're participating in cyber. We're participating in intelligence sharing. I can speak from a defence perspective that it's actually happening very well within the existing resources that we have.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: I'll go on to my next question.

Just a short while ago, I met with the military attaché of the embassy of Japan, who was kind enough to give me a briefing on the threats facing the nation in the region. They indicated that the primary causes of concern for them came from Moscow and Beijing, both independently and in the form of joint operations, as well as some rattling coming from North Korea.

Specifically with regard to the first two, what are the capabilities of the Russian forces and the People's Liberation Army in the region, and how do you see Canada contributing to dealing with both these threats?

MGen Greg Smith: I'll take a swing at this one, unless somebody [*Inaudible—Editor*].

I can't actually tell you—I'm a policy person, so I don't know—what capabilities Russia and China have. Obviously, China particularly is a world power. Russia is a very large military power. What we're doing, though, is reinforcing the rules-based international order. I talked about three frigates. I talked about exercises; capacity building, including women, peace and security; putting more policy people into the region to have a presence; and cyber. These are all important steps in reinforcing and deterring, if you will. We're there. We're present.

You mentioned Japan. They're a great partner. They know that we're there. We have an excellent relationship with them. We're continuing to build on that. The fact that we're showing that we have skin in the game—we physically have presence there, constantly—is very helpful to deter, I would say, both Russia and China, and, for that matter, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Let's now speak to the most recent defence update, indicating the need for tripling the size of our submarine fleet. Given the recruitment and retention crisis, could you speak to whether it's even feasible to triple the number of our current submariners and train our current ones on new equipment?

MGen Greg Smith: I'll take a swing at this one too. I'm not an expert in the defence policy update, because that's not my file, but I'm not trying to cop out of this one.

That said, I can tell you that it's consistent with the Indo-Pacific strategy. We're not going off in a direction unexpected. They will be coherent together. They'll be respectful of our present capacity and any future capacity that we're going to build.

● (1540)

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Outside of submariners, what sorts of commitments in terms of manpower will our Indo-Pacific strategy commitments, our IPS commitments, mean in terms of ship complements, support and logistical staff? Are we currently able to meet these commitments?

MGen Greg Smith: I'd reinforce that the Indo-Pacific strategy was built within our current capacity. We went from two frigates in the region to three, a very heavy presence for Canada now. That was designed very specifically by the navy, which participated in this, to be respectful of what they were doing to rebuild the force under reconstitution. We are able to do both.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Switching gears here, given that the development of our military and of our NATO allies in tactics, equipment capabilities, etc., has largely been geared toward conflict in Europe, could either of you elaborate on some of the unique challenges, be they diplomatic or military, that we may consider as we look to increase our presence in the Indo-Pacific region?

MGen Greg Smith: Sure. Thanks for the question. I'll start, having served in NATO.

NATO is a very solid military organization. It's a military fighting force that works from diplomatic to tactical. Currently it's 31 countries, soon to be 32. Canada, of course, is one of the original founders of that organization. There is no equivalent in the Indo-Pacific. We have partners there. We've described Japan and the Republic of Korea. We're working with Malaysia, Indonesia, etc. However, there is no comparable military headquarters or military system to plug into.

I think the recent progress we've made with ADMM-Plus and ASEAN writ large is a good indicator of how our continued presence is a good-news story in showing that Canada is heavily involved in the Indo-Pacific, but we also have to understand that there is no equivalent of a 70-plus-year-old organization called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The Chair: You have 30 more seconds.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Do you have anything further on that?

Mr. Peter Lundy (Director General, Indo-Pacific Strategy Secretariat, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you for the question. I'm Peter Lundy, director general of the Indo-Pacific strategy secretariat at Global Affairs Canada.

On the diplomatic front, I think the general has outlined some of the recent successes. It was really a triumph of diplomacy over many years to get the strategic partnership with ASEAN across that particular finish line. It's that demonstration of commitment to the partners in the region that's so important to move forward.

As you look to implement the types of initiatives that the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces are undertaking, a lot of diplomatic groundwork needs to happen in advance. At some point, depending on the state of the relationship, you may need certain types of MOUs and legal agreements. In order to put those in place at the time that you need them, that requires, absolutely, Canadian diplomacy.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kramp-Neuman.

Just following up on her second question, this is a threat analysis study. It would be helpful if we understood what the threat is from a military standpoint. What are the assets that China in particular puts into play and has access to? I'm given to understand that they have the largest navy in the world.

Is either of you capable, or is the department capable, of sharing with the committee the actual nature or extent of the Chinese military capability in particular?

Major-General Paul Prévost (Director of Staff, Strategic Joint Staff, Department of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Without getting too much into classified information, I think the best way to look at it is that China has been increasing tenfold—or maybe not tenfold, but close to it—since 1999.

The Chair: This is not classified information.

MGen Paul Prévost: This is not classified. Classified is what threats we're most concerned about and what the gaps are within the allies, but there's a match to every capability that China puts forward there. This is why it's important for us to work with our partners in the region. With Five Eyes we exercise together. We make sure we're interoperable.

As the general mentioned, it's not—

The Chair: I don't want to interrupt you, and I don't want to take away from colleagues' time, but were I sitting over there, this is what I would be asking you: How many ships? What are the kinds of ships? What are the airplanes? What are the kinds of airplanes? What are the drones? What's the overall capability of the People's Republic of China? You can't really understand the threat unless you know what the capability is.

Let me end it there, but I'll ask colleagues to follow up, because I think it's pretty significant for us to actually know what the threat environment is.

Anyway, I'll leave it to Ms. O'Connell. It's her last day here, which is unfortunate, I would say.

You have six minutes.

● (1545)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I could just say, “Can you please answer the chair's questions?”, because they are very good, but part of my new parliamentary secretary role is actually on cybersecurity. I think everyone on this committee knows that it's something I've been really interested in here as well.

Through you, Mr. Chair, to our witnesses, this question is for whoever can answer it.

Could you elaborate a little bit more on the work around the cyber-incident response team? Is that building capacity for our partners and allies in the region or building capacity for us? Given the fact that obviously you can't disclose all confidential information, can we maybe have a little bit more there in terms of what cyber work you're doing in the region?

MGen Greg Smith: I'm not a cyber expert, but I do recognize that Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces are very good at cyber-defence.

Particularly within the IPS, this is about working with allies and partners. I'm talking about Japan and the Republic of Korea. These are sophisticated, capable allies as well, but it's a good partnership. We learn together. As I said in my opening statement, we did a recent exercise with Japan. They were very appreciative of what we did. I would call this a partnership whereby we work on our capabilities together.

You probably know the cyber space better than I do, but protecting it over there helps us here. Yes, this is about helping partners and about being present in the Indo-Pacific in a cyber sense, but it helps us as well.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you for that.

Following up on the chair's questions in relation to cyber-threats and the threat analysis, I recognize the classified situation, but would cyber be a capability or an area of concern where our allies would be saying that this is why they want to build on the Canadian experience and the capabilities that we have? Do they deem cyber a major threat? I've talked before about being in Estonia. That was a fundamental priority for the Estonian government.

How is this seen in the hierarchy of threats, again building on the chair's comments about better understanding what the priorities are in this region?

MGen Greg Smith: Again, I'm not a cyber expert, but there is a threat. It's extensive in that region.

That being said, again, I gave the example of the Japanese exercise. They were very welcoming to us and the American forces going there to practice together. They were very receptive to our capabilities.

That is just an example of how we are welcome in the region. We have very valid defence capabilities. For our allies and partners in the region, that's one of the things they're asking for. It was built into one of the five pillars of the Indo-Pacific strategy deliberately. We're actioning it now.

Mr. Peter Lundy: Perhaps I can jump in and note that it's not entirely a DND effort on the cyber side. The funded initiative under the Indo-Pacific strategy on cyber included funding for Global Affairs, Public Safety, RCMP, CSE and DND as well, reflecting that whole-of-government approach on these issues.

There's a demand in the region, for sure. Some of the work we're doing is technical and highly classified, obviously. Some of it is from the Global Affairs side in that realm of cyber diplomacy. We're working with our partners in the region on establishing the international norms that will govern the cyber space. As I'm sure you understand, others may have a different approach in terms of how the cyber space will be governed. There's a lot of diplomatic legwork to do on that.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you. I appreciate that. That is helpful.

In terms of other on-the-ground capabilities, you mentioned two to three warships and air force capabilities. We know the strategy and the policies, but are there additional examples in terms of how our partnership is playing out in reality and how our allies are in particular counting on the Canadian Forces to fill some of these capacity gaps? Is there anything additional that we should know about? I think that leads to some of the threat assessment where Canada is helping.

● (1550)

MGen Greg Smith: I'll start. Maybe we can get to some specifics, but I think this is a tremendously good-news story. As you know, the Indo-Pacific strategy came out in November 2022. The Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence tried to move very quickly. We had that third frigate in the region within weeks.

Equally, I know it doesn't sound particularly interesting, but I will have analysts—people physically posted into the region, to be on the ground constantly—there within weeks. That isn't bad for the purposes of going into foreign countries, getting accreditation and being allowed in. That might not be so interesting in terms of what they do, but we have army forces looking for different exercises to do in the region to do capacity building—or partnership, as I like to call it. These are very capable countries, so we're partnering with them.

Special operations forces are quickly moving out. We've named one exercise and there are others that they're doing. There are a lot of activities. The fact that we have two frigates in the region now, going from exercise to port visit, delivers a tremendous Canadian presence in the region.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Normandin, you have the floor.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To our witnesses, thank you once again for being here, gentlemen. My questions are along the same lines as what the chair was asking about less conventional elements.

We heard yesterday that a Chinese buoy was found in Japan's exclusive economic zone. I would like to hear your thoughts on these buoys. There were also balloons that flew over North America.

I have a lot of questions. What does this represent? Is it a threat? Is it a message? Is it to gather information? Do we have any more information about what this represents and how many such objects there might be? Similarly, are we able to effectively detect and destroy them? Is Canada playing a role in this, in this region?

MGen Paul Prévost: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for her questions.

Yes, it is worrisome. We are aware of buoys in various places around the world. China leaves buoys in various places for marine sciences research, but we are afraid that the information gathered may be used for other purposes, specifically military purposes. We and the intelligence community are monitoring the situation, especially when there are new discoveries based on intelligence shared among our allies, in order to better understand what is going on. Those buoys have been found not just in Japan, but in various places in the Pacific, Atlantic and Arctic. Everyone is trying to understand the type of data being collected.

Ms. Christine Normandin: So you are saying it is something we can and should be worried about. Should we also increase our analysis and research abilities? Does Canada have anything to offer relating to research and analysis of these buoys?

MGen Paul Prévost: Thank you.

Yes, we do have analytical capabilities. We have DRDC, Defence Research and Development Canada, and various resources, both military and civilian, to mine the data.

This raises another question. The chair asked what kind of threat China represents since its navy is now among the largest in the world. It has the conventional abilities that we are familiar with in the naval, air and armed forces, with all the related combat abilities in terms of artillery and infantry.

What is worrisome and requires our attention are the newer and less conventional abilities. For example, we should really pay attention to what is going on in space, and in cyberspace. These areas are more insidious. We tend to look at the size of an armada or fleet, but we overlook things that can be harmful. China does a lot of research to exploit weaknesses in these areas. It is indeed worrisome.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

I would like to move on to another topic, the AUKUS cooperation agreement, a trilateral agreement intended to isolate China in the Indo-Pacific region. Canada is not part of it, particularly as regard nuclear submarines, but we have heard that there might be other ways for Canada to participate. We know it is a two-way street. If we want to be part of it, we have to be able to bring something to the table.

Have there been any developments in this regard in recent months?

MGen Greg Smith: I want to thank the member for her question.

As you said, the first pillar of AUKUS is nuclear submarines. Canada is not involved in that aspect.

The second pillar is high technology. Canada has a lot to offer in this regard. We are working with our appropriate allies to see what we could contribute in the future. We are talking and negotiating with them to see what is possible. There are various technologies that are very strong in Canada. Canada is world-class in certain fields. We have a lot to bring to the table, and that is what we are offering our allies.

● (1555)

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

High technology is very broad. Could you be more specific please?

MGen Greg Smith: Yes. I am referring to submarine technology, or technology for hypersonic weapons or to counter them. There is also artificial intelligence. Those are some examples of high technology.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

Now I have a question that I might also ask the Taiwanese representatives later on. I understand that Taiwan is somewhat alone in militarizing and acquiring materiel. I know this issue was raised when my colleagues visited Taiwan.

Can you explain why Taiwan is isolated in this regard? Could Canada provide military assistance to Taiwan in the future?

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Peter Lundy: To start with the diplomatic answer, Canada, of course, pursues a one China policy. That dictates our interactions with Taiwan in all respects. We do have regular unofficial contacts with key members from Taiwan.

On the question of future military.... I can't answer the question about their military capacity or procurement. I can only say that it's hypothetical to consider whether Canada would assist in the future. I could not answer that.

[*Translation*]

MGen Greg Smith: Mr. Chair, I do not understand the question about Taiwan's future capabilities. Could someone explain so I understand what we are talking about?

[*English*]

The Chair: Perhaps you could give some clarification.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: We have heard from our colleagues who returned from a trip there that Taiwan is responsible for creating its own military arsenal, without any assistance from other countries. Is that expected to change in the future?

MGen Greg Smith: That is an interesting question, Mr. Chair.

Canada does of course have a some military capabilities, but other countries have much more. It is up to them to negotiate for military equipment or arms sales for Taiwan.

[*English*]

The Chair: They built a warplane in 500 days from ground zero—by themselves.

Thank you, Madame Normandin.

Go ahead, Ms. Mathyssen.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To continue with the conversation in terms of better maximizing our forces after reconstitution within the Indo-Pacific region, I can understand exactly why we would want to do that and why it's so key. I would be concerned, however, thinking about what happened this week, about how we're doing that. I would really love to hear if that includes specific partnerships with India and how the news from Monday is currently going to impact that.

The Chair: Let me just.... This is a hypersensitive area. You are all experienced witnesses. I'll anticipate that you will steer around what might be sensitive information on this issue, but at this point, I'll allow the question to stand.

MGen Greg Smith: Thanks, Chair.

I'm here with my GAC colleague. He's the Indo-Pacific guy, so maybe he can help me out a little.

We're working with Global Affairs Canada. Obviously, defence is a part of foreign affairs. Foreign affairs is an active file, as you've said. It's a sensitive one. They're looking at it. We're following the lead and working with Global Affairs Canada for any type of military interaction with India.

We have a lot of presence there. We're increasing our presence because of this Indo-Pacific strategy. It would be natural that we would have more ability to do things with India. We're obviously reflecting on all that right now as we better understand the problem, but again, with a lead from Global Affairs Canada. That really is the foreign affairs lead for this.

Mr. Peter Lundy: Thank you for the question, Chair. Maybe I'll start with the strategy itself.

One of its strategic objectives is for Canada to be a reliable, engaged and active partner in the region. That requires us to have that 10-year time horizon for the strategy. It really is intended to be the foundation to guide our strategic approach. We do expect, over the course of the life of the strategy, that bilateral issues will come up. That's certainly the case in the past few days.

I can say in this committee, and it might be recent news, that the Prime Minister in New York today did remark that there's no question that India is a country of growing importance and a country that we need to continue to work with, not just in the region but around the world. We're not looking to provoke or cause problems, but Canada is unequivocal around the importance of the rule of law and unequivocal about the importance of protecting Canadians and standing up for our values. That's why we have called upon the Government of India to work with us to establish processes, to discover and uncover the truth of the matter, and to allow justice and accountability to be served.

That's the current posture on India in the context of that broader, long-term horizon for the strategy.

● (1600)

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Obviously this is something that will continue to evolve and change. We have to be nimble in that way. I appreciate that, absolutely. Just this year, Canada participated alongside India in Exercise Sea Dragon. Will we also re-evaluate these future types of exercises?

MGen Greg Smith: Mr. Chair, I'll just reiterate what I think my Global Affairs Canada colleague said very well: India is a major player in the region, obviously. There's an Indo-Pacific strategy, so we should of course expect to do bilateral engagements with them and be involved.

We're assessing all this right now. Obviously, this is a “this week” situation. We're reassessing it. There is a problem, but we do need to continue to talk. We do need to continue to engage with their military, but it's an active analysis with our Global Affairs Canada colleagues.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: General Prévost, you'll remember that on Tuesday I had asked about the summit of the BRICS nations that came together in August. Could you, or perhaps the witnesses overall, provide an Indo-Pacific side on that emerging summit? We were talking about the Ukrainian-Russian impacts. However, as things have changed, how will we move forward in terms of reaction to that?

Mr. Peter Lundy: Thank you for the question.

In foreign policy terms, Canada certainly monitors the deliberations and outcomes in all sorts of international forums, including what recently took place at the BRICS, because it has an impact, obviously, on Canadian interests, but I don't have any particular assessment to share with the committee on the outcomes of those discussions. I mean, we watch as an external party that has an interest in a global sense.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: There were a lot of conversations, of course, about the Indo-Pacific strategy and how important that is and how we stick to it. I myself am concerned that it doesn't necessarily take a human rights-based approach as we are moving forward. Could you respond to that from a human rights-based lens in terms of specifically looking at how we move forward in this world in which we find ourselves?

The Chair: You have 15 seconds or less.

Mr. Peter Lundy: Yes. I can touch on that.

Within the strategy itself, there was significant funding for Canada's international assistance, which certainly has a human rights-based approach in its implementation. This is always “in addition to”; it's not just the new funded initiatives but the regular work that Canada's network of missions is doing across the region, where they are very forward-leaning on human rights issues in working through local and international organizations.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathyssen

Colleagues, if we're very disciplined, we can get through a full round of 25 minutes.

Mr. Bezan, you have five minutes.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to our witnesses for being here.

We just learned earlier this month, and there's more information coming out, about former Canadian fighter pilots training fighter pilots in China for the People's Liberation Army air force. How concerned is the Canadian Armed Forces that they have former pilots—the three now named are Paul Umrysh, Craig Sharp and David Monk—all in China working with the People's Liberation Army?

● (1605)

MGen Paul Prévost: We're very concerned. We're very concerned about this. I think our chief of defence spoke publicly about this in an interview. Obviously, this whole issue is under criminal investigation by the RCMP. You've shared the names of the individuals. I can't go any further into where that's going to lead.

Now, as a military organization, we're very concerned—

Mr. James Bezan: How do the National Defence Act, the non-disclosure agreements that I'm assuming these pilots would have signed when they were working for the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Security of Information Act, SOIA, come to bear on them? We hear that Australia has moved ahead with tightening up and increasing the penalties under their own defence act and other security legislation, taking it up to 20 years in prison for those breaches, because there are also Australians who are implicated here as well.

How can Canada and our Five Eyes partners do more to prevent those who are just chasing the buck and not thinking about our national security?

MGen Paul Prévost: We're not only looking at that; we're also acting on it. We're looking at how we're tightening in defence to make sure that when our members leave the organization, they understand that what they've learned—their skills, the information they got—is to remain secret. The skills we gave them and the information that we entrusted them with to defend Canadians stays secret.

We're making sure that we're tightening it down to make sure that they understand that point when they leave. The laws are right now covering that. We're looking at how we're going to tighten that through the SOIA in the future as well.

Mr. James Bezan: Has the Canadian Armed Forces asked or demanded that they cease and desist in their activities and return to Canada?

MGen Paul Prévost: Publicly, we've told them to stop this. Whatever they're doing, we've told them that. The rest of it is now under investigation. As to where that will lead, we'll leave it to the RCMP.

Mr. James Bezan: Okay.

Earlier there were comments around how Canada can do more in co-operation. We talked about the ASEAN nations and how we're now part of ADMM-Plus. Has the Government of Canada taken steps to become more integrated into the quadrilateral security dialogue, given the importance of the role that this organization is now starting to play in the overall security conversations that are taking place, especially with the provocative actions of the PRC?

MGen Greg Smith: I'm not an expert on the quad, but I can say that the Canadian Armed Forces and indeed the IPS dictate ASEAN centrality. That's the organization we're working with.

The fact that we've gotten into ADMM-Plus and some expert working groups is a good step forward, and now, to become the strategic partner, ASEAN is the one we're working with. As I described earlier, it's not NATO, but it is an organization we can work with. We're kind of rising up in the hierarchy. I think it's actually a very good-news story of how we're progressing because of the IPS.

Mr. James Bezan: I can tell you that when this committee was in Europe last month, we did hear from NATO allies that they do see the Pacific region and the Indo-Pacific as part of their overall security concerns, because two NATO members have Pacific coastlines, us and the United States. There is an interest there from a NATO perspective.

How can we more closely incorporate some of that skill set and command and control that we have within NATO to enhance our security presence in the Indo-Pacific region?

MGen Greg Smith: That's an expansive question. The strategic concept of NATO 2030 is what NATO is currently working on. It includes China as a presence in there. We have the United States, Canada and indeed France, with some two million square kilometres of water space or whatever the proper term is for that within the Pacific as well. We have a lot of allies that are very interested in it. Working with them in NATO and working with them in Europe I think helps us work within that region as well, if we need to work together.

The only other thing I would add is that equally it's reaching out to partners—NATO is—including Japan, Korea, Australia and New Zealand. We are building that bigger relationship and that bigger partnership that brings together, to a degree, both NATO and the Indo-Pacific.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bezan.

Mr. Fisher, you have five minutes.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here. As always, thank you for your service to our country.

Major-General Smith, you were talking about pillars. The pillar that I was interested in was the “active and engaged partner” pillar. How did our engagement and our activity within this region change once we released our strategy in November 2022? You used the phrase “broaden and deepen”. I think you said we moved from two warships to three warships.

Perhaps you could just fill us in a little bit on that pillar and how Canada is an active and engaged partner.

● (1610)

MGen Greg Smith: I think each of the five pillars increases our presence there. There's the fact that we're becoming more engaged and that people like me and my colleagues actually have to go into the region and collaborate. There's the fact that we're going to have four different permanent locations in some of the capitals in the region. We'll continue with that. We've increased the number of defence attachés in the region.

It's about being there. It's about being there and being at the meetings so that when they think about security in the region, there's a Canadian in the room. That has helped in all of that. We're doing women, peace and security activities with allies in the region. It has us in the room, has us thinking about it and has us being seen as experts in that region. I think each one of those really helps us and helps that region think about Canada.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you for that. That's very good to hear.

You also said that you're seeking other opportunities with our allies. Can you maybe touch base on what that might look like?

MGen Greg Smith: That's a great question.

We are working all the time with the allies. Indeed, one of my jobs as a person who does military international relations is to go into the region as a salesman, if you will, and ask who wants to work with Canada. Generally speaking, I do a pretty good job, I think. I think the salesmanship is there. There are a lot of people who want to do things. I think, if nothing else, as I talked about earlier, there's that cyber presence. We had some people in the region. We knew that there was a cyber exercise going on. When they heard that Canada was interested, they were willing to buy in as well.

That's just one small example of our being in the region and doing things because we're there.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Can you bring our committee up to date on what's going on with Operation Neon? We've had our Auroras and our warships *Vancouver*, *Winnipeg*, *Ottawa* and *Regina* there. Can one of you bring us up to speed on Operation Neon?

MGen Greg Smith: I'll start, and then my colleague will be the guy who can tell you about specifics.

We remain committed to Operation Neon and to monitoring sanctions against North Korea, obviously. We've been doing it episodically and historically. We'll be doing it again. It's a big part of our being in the region and contributing to security in the region.

I'll stop there and throw it over to my colleague, who can talk about specifics.

MGen Paul Prévost: Mr. Chair, I'll add to the Neon piece, but before that I will respond to the previous question, if you'll allow me.

We've often talked about how we're going from two ships to three ships. It might not seem like a lot, but the difference is that with two ships we are there episodically, for six months in a year; with three ships we're there all the time. That means there's always a Canadian ship in the region, which is always in a different port, working with partners from different nations—with a new partner pretty much every week—in multilateral exercises. That's a concrete example of how this presence increases. It's now a persistent presence.

In terms of Operation Neon, we're there right now with *Vancouver*, and for the next few weeks we will be doing work in enforcing the UN Security Council resolution. The Operation Neon piece is the second-biggest aspect of what we do. We've so far talked about the strategy, which is what we call Operation Horizon, which is capacity building and partnerships. Operation Neon is really about a mission, a mandate to monitor the sanctions against North Korea's illicit transfers.

Mr. Darren Fisher: How has the threat environment in that region changed or evolved since Operation Neon came into play in 2019?

MGen Paul Prévost: I wouldn't say the threat environment has changed; the threat in that region slowly changes. We've talked about the capacity China has gained over there. Our interactions with China have changed around that mission, both at sea and in the air, but mainly in the air. I would say it's not a military escalation threat, but rather about safety and what we call “unprofessional conduct” while we perform the mission. We are on a legitimate mission from the UN. We are enforcing a UN resolution. We're in international waters. We're legitimately in that place to do that mission. For some reason, China doesn't like it, and we see some unprofessional intercepts from time to time.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fisher.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Lundy, we are talking about the West's perception of the Indo-Pacific, but I would like to know how the Indo-Pacific sees the West, in your opinion, particularly as regards the war in Ukraine.

At the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue summit in June, Indonesia's minister of defence, Prabowo Subianto, was very complacent toward Russian and put forward peace proposals that were quite strange. Further, we know that China did not attend the G20 summit, but does meet with Putin.

Is something happening in the Indo-Pacific region, some change or shift as regards the situation in Ukraine?

● (1615)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Lundy: You are correct in the observation that the views and actions of the region are complex and certainly diverse. I can't comment on their particular policy choices. However, from the Canadian perspective, I can say that we have been unrelenting in making our case on what's happened in Ukraine, on the importance of the rule of law and on the important role the international community plays in helping others make their decisions on Ukraine. That's been a key element of Canadian diplomacy since the situation in Ukraine started. It hasn't stopped and it won't stop.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Based on the answers you have received, was there more openness initially and less now, or is it the opposite? Has the tone in the Indo-Pacific region changed with respect to Ukraine?

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Lundy: It's hard to assess what impact advocacy has on others, but I can say that persistence is important in the advocacy game. We keep making our point. We keep trying to make sure, to important multilateral bodies like the G20 and to the UN General Assembly this week in New York, that others will clearly understand our perspective on Ukraine. It is our hope they will make different policy decisions.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Normandin.

Ms. Mathyssen, you have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Thank you.

We've spoken about cybersecurity. Certainly, when we were in Taiwan—I was so glad to be part of that trip—we heard a great deal about the incredible amounts of education that go on just to ensure that people on the ground understand about misinformation and disinformation and the harm that they do. They've put a lot into that because of the huge scale of cyber-attacks they receive. I think the quote was that it's a million per day.

However, we've seen some scary things happen here in Canada in terms of our own social media impacts, the power of social media giants, and how that can impact Canadians and their own personal safety. This week there was a news report about Meta adopting an internal policy to remove on Canadian Facebook some posts that mentioned what had happened to Mr. Nijjar.

What is the military doing on that front, as it relates to the Indo-Pacific and our advancement of how we are protecting our own people, and taking that into account when we're dealing with these giants?

The Chair: This is kind of wandering a little bit far, but you have sophisticated witnesses, so—

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: It's my time and it's my question, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes.

Go ahead.

MGen Paul Prévost: Mr. Chair, if you'll allow, I have a quick answer to this one.

This is a place where we're concerned. Like all Canadians, our soldiers, sailors, airwomen and airmen are prone to everything that's on social media. Our chief of defence has asked us to look into this. How do we inoculate our people against misinformation? It's out there. We're working with DRDC and many others on how to do that. It starts with education at all levels and developing critical judgment by people of what to believe and not.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Those are the broad questions for a study, but within the armed forces itself, are there programs specifically in terms of that education?

MGen Paul Prévost: There are no programs for now. This is something we're looking at in terms of how we're going to educate people. We have a good education program in which we develop critical thinking with our members. How do we now develop programs to talk specifically about how you inoculate your population about misinformation specifically? That's what we're starting to look into.

The Chair: We'll have to leave it there.

We have Mr. Kelly for five minutes, and then I need to know who the next Liberal is.

● (1620)

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Thank you.

I'll put this to you, General Smith. Can you comment on the importance of subsurface domain awareness in the Indo-Pacific region, which includes the approaches to the Canadian Arctic?

MGen Greg Smith: Mr. Chair, as I understand it, the question is about the awareness of subsurface domain. I'll take that from an Indo-Pacific strategy perspective. Having the presence there is obviously tremendously important. With three frigates, we're going to know more what's going on. That being said, the Pacific is a massive area.

Mr. Pat Kelly: We're talking about threat analysis in this study, so in terms of the absence of domain awareness, or maintaining and ensuring domain awareness, how important is that? Are there threats within our capability? Are there subsurface threats that make domain awareness important?

MGen Paul Prévost: It's a great question.

It's a problem everywhere. We need to understand it in the Indo-Pacific, we need to understand it in the Arctic and we need to understand it in the approaches to North America. Part of the NORAD modernization, because the NORAD mission also has maritime domain awareness, is to look at how we increase subsurface and maritime domain awareness.

We're making investments in there. I don't have the specific data, because I wasn't expecting that question, but a portion of the $40 billion that was announced for NORAD modernization is for subsurface domain awareness around North America.

Mr. Pat Kelly: To what extent does Canada's exclusion from AUKUS impact our ability to maintain domain awareness?

MGen Greg Smith: Chair, let me start on that.

I'll just reiterate, of course, that AUKUS is about nuclear submarines. We're not into nuclear submarines—

Mr. Pat Kelly: No, no. You said, I believe in the opening statement—and we've heard testimony today—that it's about more than just a particular model of submarine. It's about cyber and it's about undersea capabilities in general. The AUKUS is about more than just a particular submarine. Is that correct?

MGen Greg Smith: Yes, Chair, absolutely.

Nuclear submarines are pillar one. Pillar two is the high technology. I can probably say it better in English about AI, machine learning, hypersonic defence. Those are the types of technologies that are being looked at in there. Canada has things to contribute, and we're working with allies about that.

Mr. Pat Kelly: The question remains: To what extent does our exclusion from this group impact our ability to benefit from it and to secure our own Arctic approaches, our own shores, and to be a meaningful ally within the Five Eyes, which increasingly looks like three eyes?

MGen Greg Smith: Chair, I'm here to talk about IPS, and I think that's a good example of how we are being valuable to allies. We are very valued in the region, as both partners and allies, and yes, on AUKUS, we're not in pillar one. We're looking at how we can contribute to pillar two, but everything I just described in IPS is about working with regional partners, and we're wanted in the region. We're valued in the region and we're contributing in the region.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Perhaps you had something to add, General Prévost? It looked like you were....

MGen Paul Prévost: No, but I think that in the question I've heard some of the answers. AUKUS is three of our Five Eyes partners, and there's tremendous co-operation among the Five Eyes partners and in intelligence at all levels and at the highest level of classification.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Is there an appetite for an invitation for Canada to join AUKUS, then, so that we may benefit from the sharing among these partners?

MGen Greg Smith: Mr. Chair, we're working on it. We're talking to our allies, obviously, and the U.S. and Australia particularly. The way I like to say it is that we have something to contribute. When we look at Canada's economy and the technology we have here, we see that we have something to contribute and we're working with our allies on that.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Okay.

Going back to the chair's questions earlier, could you give us, maybe in the time you have left—probably about half a minute—some of the specific threats posed by adversarial regimes in this theatre that we do need to address: subsurface, surface, in the air and in cyber?

MGen Paul Prévost: In 15 seconds or less, Mr. Chair, I think it's all domains. China is well advanced over there. The A2/AD that we call “anti-access/area denial” around Taiwan goes from space all the way to subsurface. It's a robust system.

The Chair: The question keeps coming up and coming up, and I'm not speaking on behalf of the committee, but certainly on my behalf, I'd be interested in your undertaking to give us the non-classified understanding of what the capabilities of China are so that we can understand in a broader sort of way the actual threat itself. Is that fair?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. That's—

● (1625)

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: That's a good question.

The Chair: Mr. Collins, you have the last five minutes. Welcome to the committee.

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thanks for having me here today.

I've read a lot about China's long-term military modernization plans. How are we dealing with that with the our resources that we have at our disposal? Also, then, how are our partners assisting with that as well?

MGen Greg Smith: Mr. Chair, I can of course speak better to Canada. That's what the Indo-Pacific strategy is about. China is tremendously capable. My colleague has talked about some of that, and what we're doing, to my mind, is deterrence. We're showing that the rules-based international order matters and that you have to follow those rules.

The fact that we've done a Taiwan Strait transit recently is reinforcing that it is an international waterway in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. That's an example of our reinforcing the rules-based international order and of deterring China by showing that those are the rules we follow. This is how countries interact.

Mr. Chad Collins: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Can I ask about the strategy? How fluid is it? How will it change over time? How do you respond to issues as they arise over a period of time? I'm assuming that it is a fluid strategy. How do we gauge the success of that strategy? What check-in points do you use to determine when it's time to change course?

Mr. Peter Lundy: Chair, I can start, if that's agreeable.

The strategy is in fact fluid. As I mentioned earlier, it has a 10-year horizon, but it also has a kind of midpoint at five years, where we will do a full evaluation of the strategy and make the necessary adjustments.

There's also a robust governance structure in place that goes all the way from director level within the bureaucracy to the deputy minister level. The second committee meeting at the deputy minister level will take place next week. Those are opportunities to assess the implementation on the ground of the strategy and where we're at—are we meeting the necessary performance milestones?—and then to recalibrate and make those adjustments. That's the detailed implementation level.

At various points in time, certainly, ministers would want to weigh in on the trajectory of the strategy once they understand how it is being implemented on the ground, and there are those opportunities as well.

MGen Greg Smith: Chair, if I could just jump in from a defence perspective, it's a fully funded strategy. We're actually doing things and then we're basing on that and we're measuring: Are we achieving the right results? Then we can adjust off that.

Basically, we report to Global Affairs, which has that secretariat, but from a defence perspective, we're measuring equally how we're doing and changing if needed.

MGen Paul Prévost: Chair, I'll just add a piece on the fluidity piece.

Operationally, actions on the ground will vary from year to year based on our priorities and the partners we need to engage with, but I think the strategy is also about creating relationships, and relationships take time. We have selected partners. We will select partners. We can't just jump.... What we're trying to do is have a permanent presence and have long-standing relationships with people. It's fluid tactically and operationally, but in terms of a strategy, it's trying to establish long-term relationships.

Mr. Chad Collins: What role does AI play in the strategy in terms of a defence perspective? I talked about modernization earlier. How does that play a role in the creation and the implementation of the strategy, and also, from a defence perspective, what might we be concerned about with those other players in the region that are using AI to create problems?

MGen Paul Prévost: I'd say that probably the only aspect we're concerned about is the last question, the last point you raised about how other potential adversaries are using AI. It's something we're watching.

We don't have an aspect of AI in our strategy. There are a lot of roads in front of us on how we work with AI, but in terms of potential adversaries using AI, we are concerned about it.

The Chair: You have about 45 seconds.

Mr. Chad Collins: Very quickly, then, there was a reference earlier to a human rights-based approach. Can I ask how the IPS takes into account the expansion of Canada's trade network? Does that come into play at any point in time in terms of the decisions we make as part of that strategy?

● (1630)

Mr. Peter Lundy: I'm sorry. Just so I can understand the question, Chair, it's about the trade dimension...?

Mr. Chad Collins: Yes. We have trade partners in the region. We have those relationships that are obviously important to Canada's economy. How does that play a role in the IPS?

Mr. Peter Lundy: One of the strategic objectives is to improve trade, investment and supply chain resilience. In fact, it's one of the most robust and dynamic parts of the strategy.

We have an agenda of team Canada trade missions to the region. The Prime Minister recently announced five more during his time there, I think, in addition to support for Canadian exporters through programs like CanExport, for which we're seeing very high levels of interest from the Canadian private sector.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Collins. That brings our first hour to an end.

I want to thank our witnesses for their presence here. It's always good to see you here as opposed to on a television screen.

With that, we'll suspend and go to our next hour.

Thank you.

● (1630)

_____(Pause)_____

● (1630)

The Chair: Colleagues, time is the enemy. We should get started again.

For our second hour, we have the representative of Taiwan. We appreciate your presence here, sir, along with your colleagues. You have five minutes in which to make your initial presentation. I'll leave you to introduce your colleagues.

With that, thank you.

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng (Representative, Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Canada): Chairman McKay and members of the Standing Committee on National Defence, good afternoon.

I would like to start by thanking you for the invitation to appear before this committee. I appreciate every opportunity to share my views from Taiwanese perspectives.

The topic today is the situation in the Indo-Pacific. As I dived into this topic and tried to sort out my findings, I encountered the difficulty of focusing only on the Indo-Pacific. The more I looked into it, the more I was convinced that no region in the world is exempt from the geopolitical complexities we face today. What is happening in the Indo-Pacific is unavoidably related to what is taking place in other parts of the world and vice versa, notably in Ukraine, central Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

To many of us, the most unnerving geopolitical risks today are to be found in either the Russia-Ukraine war, the U.S.-China rivalry or the North Korean aggression and tension in the Taiwan Strait. Perhaps the war in Ukraine looms larger and more imminent than the other potential conflicts. However, as we have witnessed, Russia, China and North Korea are gradually moving to cuddle up more closely with each other, forming a cohesive alliance to help buttress their regimes and swat what they perceive as external pressures. We must realize that our struggle goes beyond the Indo-Pacific.

In between Russia and China, there has always been more of a mutually supportive economic and diplomatic relationship, not to mention hard-core military co-operation. However, as the Russian invasion of Ukraine has gradually faced uphill battles, the Russia-Chinese relationship seems to have strengthened into a stealthy, semi-military alliance which North Korea was recently invited to join as part of a trilateral bloc.

One dictator is hard enough to predict; imagine three.

Antony Blinken, the U.S. Secretary of State, gave a major speech at the School of Advanced International Studies, SAIS, at Johns Hopkins University last week. He said:

> What we're experiencing now is more than a test of the post-Cold War order. It's the end of it.... There is a growing recognition that several of the core assumptions that shaped our...post-Cold War era no longer hold....
>
> Decades of relative geopolitical stability have given way to an intensifying competition with authoritarian powers, revisionist powers.

Media quickly picked up the gist of Mr. Blinken's speech: The post-Cold War era is over. A new one is forming.

The proposal from Mr. Blinken is to adopt a new concept of "diplomatic variable geometry" to cope with the challenges of the incoming era. I do not fully grasp the meaning of the concept yet, but I'm sure that as we forge ahead, the rivalries between democracies and autocracies will only magnify as time goes on.

To conclude, I would like to point out that at the beginning of this year, we might still have thought that the most serious geopolitical uncertainties came from the Ukraine theatre, the U.S.-China confrontation, the Korean peninsula and the Taiwan Strait, as I mentioned earlier. However, as we look forward from now, the somewhat unexpected rapid downturn of the Chinese economy and its spillover effect may well overshadow other regional concerns. Potentially, China's economic failure could be the biggest geopolitical risk in the years ahead.

What we have seen in the Chinese economic difficulties may be only fermenting. If China's economy continues to deteriorate, and with nothing to hold it back, the consequences will most likely not stop at its economy but will be a combination of social, economic and political emergencies. There will likely be a systemic crisis and overall transformation affecting every aspect of China and spilling over to regions beyond.

In short, there is a huge uncertainty hovering over China.

● (1635)

For Taiwan, much is at stake in terms of our close trade relations.

I'm ready to respond to your questions.

Let me stop here. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Representative Tseng.

The first six minutes go to Mrs. Gallant.

● (1640)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you.

Excellency, on Monday, 103 PLA aircraft and nine PLA naval warships were detected around Taiwan, the most since the 91 that flew over in April. At what point is a formal invasion of Taiwan declared?

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: Well, that incursion of Chinese warplanes intruding into our ADIZ has become a very usual practice that we see on almost a daily basis. As we are approaching the presidential election, you are going to see more of that, because this is part of the Chinese grey zone tactics to affect the sentiment in Taiwan in terms of which political party to support.

I want to point out that the purpose of this military exercise, including the incursion into our ADIZ by the warplanes, is really to frame an insecure image of Taiwan, as the narrative in Taiwan today is war versus peace. There are different presidential candidates arguing for different scenarios, but this kind of military exercise in our ADIZ will be a way to aid and abet those narratives that are pointing to a scenario that is likely to have a war between the two sides. Of course, that may be intimidating some of the voters in Taiwan to vote for the candidates in favour of peace. As a matter of fact, this is part of cognitive warfare, so I want to urge you to pay attention to that possibility as well.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Taiwan is exposed to political election interference as well.

How credible does Taipei think the threats are by President Xi to launch continuous nuclear attacks on Japan until it surrenders unconditionally should Japan intervene in Beijing's invasion of Taiwan? How seriously is Taipei taking that threat?

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: As a matter of fact, China is speeding up its nuclear arsenal. Right now, the estimation is that China possesses about 350 nuclear warheads, nuclear bombs, which is not enough to present deterrence for the other powers to hold back with their retaliation, but China is speeding up its build-up of its nuclear arsenal.

What is worrisome here is the fact that Mr. Putin's reference to nuclear weapons in Ukraine seems to be having some effect on more forceful assistance from the western camp to Ukraine. Maybe Mr. Xi Jinping would see something that he can take advantage of with nuclear power. As a matter of fact, in his 20th Communist Party Congress, which took place in October of last year, he specifically mentioned a building up of nuclear-powered strategic weapons for China to be able to use in wartime, so I think that this is something very alarming to us.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: How does the combined military might of the People's Republic of China and its allies measure up against that of Taiwan, the U.S. and all the allies of Taiwan?

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: Well, China doesn't have too many allies, does it? Actually, most of the Chinese allies are the so-called ROC countries that are in difficulty or in trouble in different ways.

The only allies I've mentioned that are able to pose some kind of threat are North Korea and Russia, and they are getting closer to each other recently. This is really something that we should watch more. The North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un, was in Russia only a week ago, and now they are already talking about Mr. Putin going to visit China next month.

The report is that Mr. Kim is also visiting China in October. The purpose is to participate in the so-called belt and road initiative summit. This is the third time for this summit to take place in China. Most likely, the three heads of the countries in the summit would have a summit meeting. The meeting of these three countries—North Korea, Russia and China—would be very worrisome.

● (1645)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Recently, the government of Taipei offered the Government of Canada assistance in combatting PRC propaganda and political interference.

To your knowledge, has our government taken advantage of and acted upon that offer from Taipei?

The Chair: Please answer very briefly.

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: No, we haven't had a response from the Canadian side yet.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Gallant.

Mr. Fisher, you have six minutes.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Gentlemen, thank you very much for joining us today at the national defence committee.

We're seeing the rise of misinformation. We're seeing the rise of disinformation as a tool that certain states use to achieve their strategic goals, their strategic objectives. How is Taiwan being impacted by this trend, and what steps is it taking to combat this misinformation and disinformation?

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: No matter if it's misinformation or disinformation, it's all part of their grey-zone tactics. It is also a part of their cognitive warfare. The purpose is, really, to penetrate our society and plant the seed for disharmony. Sometimes it's very effective, especially in election times. This is when you need to choose someone. It can be used as a strategy for affecting Taiwan's presidential election.

Taiwan has been facing this kind of situation for years. Our society has become much more mature in recent years and knows how to deal with this. To be honest, I don't think Chinese cognitive warfare is reaping the benefit that it expected to get.

Mr. Darren Fisher: What can Canada and Taiwan do to support each other in this domain?

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: In recent months, after the pandemic was over, we've already had three parliamentary delegations from Canada visit Taiwan. I think every one of them had programs in their itinerary for visiting officials or visiting our NGOs. That is really very active, very much in the centre of our fight against disinformation. Those kinds of communications, those kinds of visits, would be very conducive to our co-operation.

Mr. Darren Fisher: There's a lot of discussion within the group of allies, particularly the U.S., around de-risking the supply chain, particularly with China.

With respect to natural resources, critical minerals and advanced manufacturing, can you give us any insight on where Canada and Taiwan can deepen our industrial and economic relationship?

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: This supply chain issue is something that we regard as very important now. There are dialogues going on between officials of our two countries. We think that Canada is very fortunate to have a very important place to take in terms of the global supply chain.

Specifically, I want to point out your critical minerals. This is very important. We have dialogues going on, but right now they are not mature yet. There are different objectives in this, because it is not trade that you are talking about; you are actually looking for investment in Canada to develop the critical minerals. Perhaps we are not ready for investment yet. We are talking more about trade.

● (1650)

Mr. Darren Fisher: During your remarks, for which we only we allowed you five minutes—I would have loved to have heard a bit more—you talked about geopolitical stability and you talked about the Cold War being over and a new one dawning. Can you expand on that?

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: People are still talking about our being in the post-Cold War era, as if after the end of the Cold War there is a special period that we can designate in international relations with some characteristics attached to that. Mr. Antony Blinken says that no, that era is over.

We don't know what the new era is that is coming, but obviously it is very different from what we have been living in during the post-Cold War era. It will be much more complicated. It wouldn't be a Cold War era, because it's pretty much black and white. Now it is not the post-Cold War era, because there are a lot of interactions. The risk of the de-linking of the supply chain is part of this era, the new era that is going to come. That was actually very pervasive in the post-Cold War era. It is a new time that we are going to encounter.

The Chair: I will take the last 45 seconds.

If we are in a post-Cold War era, which I agree with, and the one China policy was made in the Cold War era, do you think there should be a change in the one China policy?

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Be careful what you say to that.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: There's no fixed definition for the one China policy. We need to talk in more detail about what direction we are going to go in terms of revising the one China policy. The current one China policy is certainly not something that we welcome seeing in Taiwan.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Normandin, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here, gentlemen. We really appreciate it.

I would like to hear your thoughts on statements made in the United States recently. The director of the CIA said that President Xi has given the order to be ready to invade Taiwan by 2027. At the same time, the Pentagon said that a military invasion or blockade of Taiwan would be unlikely to succeed, especially a blockade since it would give the allies time to gather the necessary forces to support Taiwan.

Do you agree with the Pentagon's assessment that an invasion of Taiwan would not be successful?

[*English*]

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: Thank you very much for the question.

The reason the CIA or the Pentagon would name the year 2027 as the year that China is possibly going to invade Taiwan is that this is actually what was said by China. The year was used by China as a landmark year because it will be the 100th anniversary of the PLA in China. They want to make 2027 the year for full modernization of military power, meaning that by 2027, they will be able to fight a war with first-rate armies. It will not necessarily be only a regional war, but a global war. This is the Chinese objective.

An objective is one thing. Whether they are really able to reach that kind of status is another.

For Taiwan, what I can share with you is that there is very close co-operation between the militaries of Taiwan and the United States. We have co-operation not only with the military forces, but on the other side of the military community. For example, we have intelligence co-operation as well.

Decision-makers in Taiwan don't have the luxury of assuming that China is not going to invade Taiwan, but we don't look at any specific year for doing that. As a matter of fact, we think we need to speed up as much as possible, so there are all kinds of military reforms ongoing in Taiwan now. There's also a reform program for our reserve system. We're not looking at any specific years for a possible war to happen.

Our hope is to keep peace. We don't want war to prove that China has made the wrong calculation. The way we build up our strength is peace through strength. We don't want war, but we are preparing for it.

● (1655)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

More specifically, the Pentagon's analysis is that an economic blockade of Taiwan would give Taiwan's allies time to prepare assistance and prevent a military invasion of the country. Do you agree with that analysis?

[*English*]

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: I think you are referring to a military exercise right after the visit of then U.S. House speaker Nancy Pelosi. It happened in August of last year. Yes, that military exercise was the biggest to date. The Chinese military exercise at that time was also different from other exercises they have conducted. The naval blockade was perhaps the most alarming at that time, because it was new.

However, in the time of a real war, a military blockade of Taiwan is perhaps not the most effective.... I've heard this from different sources. A blockade would give allies time to come and help Taiwan. If China's purpose is really to have a very quick war before the international community can come to Taiwan's rescue, a naval blockade is not going to work. Again, that is a technical part of military warfare.

As I said, in Taiwan we are hoping to get more international support. We call the diplomacy we have in Taiwan a preventive diplomacy. We want the whole world to come and let the Chinese know that whatever kind of invasion they have in mind, it will be just too costly for them to bear. We don't want a war to happen.

The Chair: Ms. Mathyssen, you have six minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Part of your discussion about China's rapidly increasing nuclear capabilities and stockpiles made my heart race a bit faster, but then you supplemented that with comments about peace through strength and how that is your strength. That's what you hope for. Do you still believe there's room within all of that to have conversations around nuclear non-proliferation?

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: For Taiwan, when we look at this, we know how the Chinese leaders, Chinese academia or military generals discuss the prospect of unification. Let me elaborate.

The Chinese vision of unification with Taiwan is a picture of a stronger China, a China that they call the rejuvenation of a great power. If and when they know that this unification is going to be at their great expense, they won't be ready to do that, and all the more if we let them know that indeed it's going to be very costly for them.

For Chinese leaders, unification is a way to make China greater, not weaker. Right now the whole world is telling Chinese leaders that if they use force against Taiwan, they are not going to get a stronger China after unification, so that is not what they are pursuing.

You've heard a lot about what we say in Taiwan, why we have confidence. This is one thing we are confident about. Of course, you can argue that a dictator may think about things in an irrational way. If that is the case, it's difficult to carry on a very reasonable discussion, but I am telling you that right now we don't see an invasion from China as an imminent threat.

● (1700)

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: You mentioned the increase of PRC aircraft in your airspace and how that has its impacts.

In terms of cognitive warfare, when we visited there, we talked about social media, cyber-attacks and so on. It was mentioned that there were a million a day. Have those also increased? Do you have numbers on that?

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: Yes. As a matter of fact, we have real-time military activities to report the military activities in the Taiwan Strait. They only started in September 2020. Before that, we didn't see much activity from the Chinese military, including the air force, but after that, we decided we should make it public because China likes to have covert actions. They are more accustomed to not doing things under the attention of the world. When we decided to make it public, the pressure was on them.

Whenever there is a military exercise or incursions of warplanes or warships, we make it public in Taiwan. You can read that. There is a website for our Ministry of National Defense. You can see it every day.

Their intention for now, as I said, is to affect our presidential election, but there is also one intention that has a much longer-term effect. They want to change the status quo. They want to change the status quo of the median line in the Taiwan Strait. This is how we come to very much appreciate Canada as well. You send your naval ships and warships to transit the Taiwan Strait.

China does not see the Taiwan Strait as international water, but through your naval transit in the Taiwan Strait, you are defying what Beijing claims, which is that the Taiwan Strait is not international water, so that is very important to us.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Is that my time?

The Chair: You have just 15 seconds.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: I'll save it for next time, sir.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for meeting again with us, Ambassador. It's always good to see you.

With lessons learned from the war in Ukraine and Russia's invasion, I know that Taiwan is taking this to heart and looking at what needs to happen for Taiwan to deal with Chinese aggression from Beijing. We were very impressed with the indigenous military equipment that Taiwan has already been able to build. You mentioned last session about the fighter jets that you guys were able to test and get into production in 500 days. We saw your capabilities with air defence, as well as with missile systems. You have your own homebuilt warships.

Looking at the daily reports that come in and geopolitical updates in the region, when you hear about 55 PLA aircraft flying around Taiwan, and then on top of that, Beijing sends multiple naval ships into your economic zone, what are you doing to counter the subsurface threat? We always talk about air and we talk about on the water, but I'm sure with the proliferation of submarines that China has been building over the last decade, you guys haven't forgotten about that either.

● (1705)

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: I am not a military officer, so I can offer you the knowledge only to the best of my ability. We are developing our own submarine forces. As was reported, the first one will be completed next year. For the first batch of submarines, we have a contract for eight. That's going to be a very important part of our self-defence.

For now we are working with our allies—the U.S. and Japan more than anyone else—on surveillance of undersea activities. We know that the Taiwan Strait, the East China Sea and the Yellow Sea are not deep enough for submarine activities. This is why China will not cave in on its activities in the South China Sea: The South China Sea is deep enough to hide the submarines it built in Hainan province.

If they have only one submarine base, it's easy to monitor. You know how to do it. They need another alternative. They think the eastern side of Taiwan is most ideal. The eastern coast of Taiwan is very close to a very deep seabed in the Pacific, so we don't take it lightly when they say that they have ambitions for Taiwan.

Mr. James Bezan: The threat is actually not in the Taiwan Strait. You need to protect the Pacific side.

You mentioned the assistance you've been able to get in co-operation with the United States and Japan. I understand that just in these past few days, Japan didn't provide a defence attaché but did provide a military adviser—a retired officer from the Japanese navy, I believe. Can Canada be doing more, in working with Taiwan, to deepen military co-operation and the relationship between our two defence forces?

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: We'd certainly welcome more co-operation between our militaries. An enhanced military-to-military relationship is always very positive for us, especially as we are like-minded partners. We also take into account the fact that Canada is also trying to speed up in building up its own naval forces. The fact is, according to your IPS—your Indo-Pacific strategy—you have already added one more warship in East Asia, in the Indo-Pacific area. That there are three ships transiting the passage in the Indo-Pacific area is very meaningful for us. We appreciate that very much.

There is something more that we can do, because, as I said—

● (1710)

The Chair: The more is going to have to be left for another question. Thank you. Maybe we should get you back for the procurement study.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Ms. O'Connell, you have five minutes.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: You mentioned that China doesn't have allies except those, I think, built out of necessity. I want you to talk about that.

You also mentioned the rejuvenation of a great power. Correct me if I'm wrong, but part of that strategy is to invest in certain developing nations to build that necessity into a future use or allyship.

Given that fact and China's economic situation, do you see the extension of those tentacles into other nations and countries in regions like Africa, South America, etc., slowing down? If so, do you see an opportunity for countries like Canada to help some of these nations develop so they don't become so reliant on China's investments?

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: Thank you for giving me this opportunity to elaborate on what I said earlier. What I meant is that if you have a vote in the UN system, of course you are going to see China getting a lot of votes. That's not what I meant by “allies”. These are countries that are aspiring to get assistance from China, especially through investments in “one belt, one road”, the belt and road initiative. They are looking to China for help, but they are not going to help in return, in terms of geopolitical confrontation. I think I'm actually answering the questions from that aspect.

China has Xi Jinping. Mr. Xi wants China to become rejuvenated, a great power, by the year 2049. He said that at the 19th National Congress, because again, 2049 will be the 100-year anniversary of the establishment of the PRC. These landmark years mean something for the Chinese Communist Party, but a week is a very long time in politics. If you are saying there's something you want to achieve in 2049 or 2027, it is all a political slogan.

We are watching what is happening on a daily basis. As I said in my opening remarks, the fact is that China is having economic difficulties in a way that was not expected by China itself and was not expected by the world. The world somehow has become very accustomed to China's being like a locomotive, a driving force of global economic growth, but that is not going to happen. You are going to read this more and more from the international media. The international media sometimes take a rosy view of China because they themselves have huge investments in China. They are hoping China can be revived, but it is not happening, as we can see from the current data.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Part of my question on that is that we see some of the economic challenges Argentina has with IMF repayments, but China is stepping in to backstop some of those loans and is also purchasing media and military bases there. I find that very interesting. I appreciate your additional comments on that.

My next question is in regard to cyber. You also spoke about election interference. We are talking quite a lot in this country about election interference from China. You talked about how you have a mature population that has become aware of these tactics. Although this isn't a new situation for Canada, I think it's certainly more on the radar for Canadian citizens now.

Based on your experience, could you give us any advice on how to ensure the population becomes aware of the tactics of foreign interference?

● (1715)

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: In Taiwan, when we talk about cyber-attacks, we are referring specifically to attacks on critical infrastructure or on the government's online home page as a way to steal information from important databases and things like that. Again, these are part of China's grey zone tactics.

The other part is disinformation. One very concrete part, actually, is cyber-attacks—“concrete” in the sense that you can count the number of attacks and—

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're going to have to leave it there. I apologize, but insincerely.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: It would be delightful if we could actually get the Minister of Digital Affairs here. I think all of us who went on that trip were very impressed by how Taiwan handles cognitive warfare and cyber-attacks.

Madame Normandin, you have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

As we heard earlier, Taiwan is solely responsible for the production of its military capabilities. I gather it is nearly impossible to acquire defence systems on the international market.

There are two parts to my question. First, I would like to know why it appears to be so difficult to make acquisitions on the international market. Secondly, is this expected to change in the future? Would it be helpful for Canada to offer Taiwan more assistance in the production of military materiel?

[*English*]

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: Excuse me; what did you say? Did you ask if it is difficult to go into the international market?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I am referring to the possibility of acquiring defence systems on the international market.

[*English*]

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: We have a very unique international status. The U.S. and, to a lesser extent, Japan are actually the only countries that have a security commitment to Taiwan.

The U.S. has a law called the Taiwan Relations Act, in which there is a very clear stipulation that peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait are taken with grave concern. Also, in the same part of the Taiwan Relations Act, the U.S. will provide self-defence weaponry to Taiwan. As time goes on, we'll get more of that kind of support from the United States, proportionate to the threat we face from mainland China.

It used to be possible within the international market, but now, because of intimidation from mainland China, any country willing to deal with Taiwan in arms sales will face retaliation from and be penalized by the PRC. This is why. Otherwise, we would be happy to approach and to reach out to you. You have many advanced weaponry systems we would be very interested in.

The Chair: Ms. Mathyssen, you have two and half minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: When we visited, there was a great deal of excitement about the report by the Special Committee on the Canada-People's Republic of China Relationship. That was presented often during our trip.

The official response from the Government of Canada has been provided. Could you provide your response to their response, if you felt anything was missing? How did you feel about it?

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: In responding to the 18 recommendations proposed by the report by the special committee on the Canada-PRC relationship, the federal government has responded by agreeing, agreeing in principle or partially agreeing. Those are the three types of responses from the federal government to 14 of the 18 recommendations, but to four of the 18 recommendations, the federal government responded by "taking note" of them. These are recommendations 2, 4, 12 and 13.

From Taiwan's perspective, I would say we hoped that all 18 recommendations would be agreed upon or at least agreed upon in principle.

As for the federal government's concern, we think it could be addressed in the elaboration, by adding a condition or a proviso, but this is not the way the government response was written. I say this in the spirit of friendship. I don't intend to criticize anyone in the administration.

For example, we are talking about principles. Recommendation number two, for example, was actually about how the future of Taiwan must be decided by the people of Taiwan only. The response is, "We take note of this position." I believe that when the special committee on the Canada-PRC relationship laid out this recommendation, it had deliberated enough internally. Given the concern from Taiwan as well as from the special committee, I think this is a matter of principle, a principle that reflects the fundamental values and the fundamental spirit of democracy. That is most important.

The worry from the administration that Taiwan may use this recommendation to change its policy and to change the status quo, I think, is a little far-fetched. It is not our current policy, and this is not going to happen.

● (1720)

The Chair: Mr. Kelly, you have five minutes.

Mr. Pat Kelly: I'd allow you to continue if you'd like. That was a good question, and I think your testimony is quite important.

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: To the other recommendations that have been taken with some kind of reservation by the federal government, they can address the issues in a way that would leave more flexibility for us to work them out.

For example, recommendation 12 urges the government to strongly consider having the Minister of International Trade, Madam Mary Ng, visit Taiwan to sign the FIPA—the Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement. The response from the government is that to be consistent with established practice, the FIPA is to be signed by the heads of the Canadian trade office in Taipei and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Canada, who would be me and my counterpart in Taipei, Mr. Jim Nickel.

I believe this is too semantic a way of answering this question. If you have a Minister of International Trade visiting Taiwan, she doesn't have to be there to sign this. She's welcome to visit at any time, because the purpose is to promote international trade between us. This kind of response from the federal government, to me, is a little too legalistic.

We can work it out. We can work out ways. I hope that further communications can be carried out between officials on our two sides so we can address the misunderstandings. I say all this in the spirit of friendship.

● (1725)

Mr. Pat Kelly: I will move back to cyber-threats and the countering of state-generated misinformation and disinformation, which we know the PRC engages in.

We know you've been dealing with this, perhaps with much more knowledge and more intensity than we have in Canada. Is there anything more you can tell us about how Taiwan is able to deal so quickly with instances of attacks from the PRC?

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: It's not fair to make comparisons between Taiwan and Canada, because you probably encountered that only for the 2019 and 2021 elections. For most of the time you would think it was peacetime.

For Taiwan, we are facing this on a daily basis. It only gets more serious when the national election comes. Naturally, we are more experienced and have developed a kind of resistance. We are more resilient in facing China's cyber-attacks or disinformation campaigns. We have our systems for how to respond to the cyber-attacks. We have code red, code yellow and—

Mr. Pat Kelly: In the final moments of Ms. Gallant's questions—I just want to make sure I have this clear—she asked if there had been an offer to work with the Canadian government and whether that had been accepted. You said no, that there's been no response or that the offer was rejected. What has happened? What's the status of Taiwan's being able to work with Canada to help us with this growing problem?

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: Because this proposal comes from my foreign minister, the response will be from his counterpart, or from GAC at least. We are not talking about that kind of co-operation. I would say that co-operation is already going on in a different way. During their visit to Taiwan, parliamentary members talked to our people who were on hand and were doing this kind of protection against cyber-attacks or disinformation. We learn from each other.

We are strong. The members who have visited Taiwan know that very well. We are not talking only about protecting our society through government policies; there is actually a general mobilization by our civil society. NGOs play a very important role. They help our people to be better educated. There is a social awareness among our people: They know we need to learn how to discern disinformation from true news, the true story.

The Chair: I will have to finish that off. You are not wrong about the very sophisticated way that Taiwan responds to cyber-attacks. It would be of benefit to this committee to have direct testimony on that, but that's not what we're talking about today.

With that, we're going to have Ms. Lalonde finish it off. You have five minutes, please.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): I first want to say thank you. Thank you for coming today. This is my first week in this committee. What I'm hearing about are hope, resilience and, I would say, desire to enhance the friendship between both of our countries.

I believe, based on all my notes, that at one point you mentioned misinformation. You reflected on how you've been more transparent. You've been educating the people of Taiwan about everything that is being shared that's misinforming your people. Can you elaborate for us on how this decision has helped your country?

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: I think that for democracies, transparency is sometimes regarded as our weakness, because authoritarian regimes simply use our transparency to penetrate our society. However, when transparency is used in the right way, together with effective public communication, transparency can be our strength. This is how we perceive it in Taiwan.

We talk about fighting disinformation. We pretty much adhere to the principles of democracy, which are very important, such as having freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Even if we know there is disinformation, we don't forbid people from speaking up.

Actually, what we are doing is always in response to fake news or disinformation, but that's okay: The more we do that, the more our people will know. We have several different kinds of apps telling our people how to discern. These are voluntary: The people who volunteer to do this want to be of service to the country, to our society.

Again, transparency is our strength.

● (1730)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to close by hearing, from your perspective, what your greatest concern is and how Canada, especially this committee, can help.

Dr. Harry Ho-Jen Tseng: Our greatest concern is about like-minded countries. The camp of democracies should work more closely with each other.

Right now we see that the trend is very healthy. We are really building up that kind of solidarity among like-minded partners, but I wouldn't take lightly what our enemies or potential enemies are doing in trying to dismantle the teamwork we have among like-minded communities. That's our concern, bu we think that democracy will prevail.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I like to believe that too, sir.

Chair, I will end with that.

The Chair: That is an excellent note on which to end.

Representative Tseng, I appreciate your coming before the committee and sharing your thoughts. I would like to continue this conversation, particularly with respect to cyberwarfare and cognitive warfare. It's our observation that Taiwan is extremely sophisticated in this area and that Canada has a lot to learn from how it's handled.

You've informed us greatly on this Indo-Pacific threat analysis. You are on the front lines of this threat, and you stand in the breach for all of us. Thank you, and thank you to your country for your work.

With that, colleagues, on Tuesday we resume our procurement study. On Thursday Minister Blair and colleagues will be here.

With that, we are adjourned.