

Foreign Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: The UK Government's China Audit, HC 1174

Tuesday 20 January 2026

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 20 January 2026.

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Emily Thornberry (Chair); Fleur Anderson; Alex Ballinger; Aphra Brandreth; Phil Brickell; Richard Foord; Uma Kumaran; Abtisam Mohamed; Sir John Whittingdale.

Questions 1 - 36

Witnesses

I: Her Excellency Mrs Susanne Christine Baumann, Ambassador, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in the United Kingdom.

II: Robert Ward, Japan Chair, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS); Professor Yuichi Hosoya, Professor of International Politics, Keio University, Japan; Professor Guibourg Delamotte, Professor of Political Science, Japanese Studies Department, National Institute of Oriental and African Studies (Inalco).

Examination of witness

Witness: Susanne Baumann.

Q1 Chair: Last year the Foreign Affairs Committee started an inquiry into the UK Government's China audit. However, the Government chose not to publish their audit, which meant that there was nothing for the Committee to scrutinise. Today, we are going to hear about the work of other countries and what they have done to develop a China strategy. We are delighted to have the German ambassador to the UK with us, to talk about Germany's China strategy. Thank you so much for coming. Can I just begin, perhaps, with a general question, Your Excellency? Why did Germany adopt an official China strategy in 2023, and has it been updated since then?

Susanne Baumann: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for having me here today on this very important topic. I feel very honoured to be able to be here.

Why did the German Government decide to have a China strategy in 2023? It had been discussed for a long time whether the German Government needed a China strategy, but at that point in time we felt that it was important to make it very clear where Germany, as a Government, stands on China. Chinese politics—and China in general—has developed over the years, so to adjust our position and to make clear where we stand with regards to China was very important.

The strategic work that went into the China strategy was very important for our analysis. It was also an exercise that not only involved the Foreign Ministry, but all other line Ministries and, of course, the Federal Chancellery. It also brought a lot of coherence to German politics. It set the framework for concrete measures we were taking on the basis of the analytical work done to write the China strategy.

An additional point, which is very important, is that the China strategy gave us a very sound basis for our dialogue with China, but it is also equally important with third countries. One last point is that Germany's China strategy is very much in sync with the EU's economic security strategy. For us, as an EU member country, this coherence of national policy and EU policy is also very important.

Q2 Chair: Did you draw on particular countries' experience, for example possibly the Netherlands? Did you also look at what they were doing, or did you just do the original work yourself and then make sure that it was aligned with EU policy?

Susanne Baumann: The starting point was very much what was in our national interest, and the experience we had over the years with Chinese politics and with changing Chinese behaviour, be it in the field of economics, security or multilateralism. As I have said, we have seen changing Chinese behaviour overall. We thought it was important to reply



HOUSE OF COMMONS

to that in a coherent way. Of course, we did consult with partners. We have these discussions on China on a very regular basis within the European Union, so this link has always been there.

Q3 Alex Ballinger: It is great to hear that you consulted with line Ministries, the European Commission and other countries. Was there much engagement with civil society in Germany, maybe the automotive sector and these parts of the country that are outside the Government structures that have an interest in China?

Susanne Baumann: That was very important for us, so that it was not only a strategy that was written in rooms of the Foreign Ministry. We very much engaged with civil society, with institutions that did research on China. It was also very important for us to consult with the business community. We had a number of roundtables, having them involved; in fact, that was not a single issue. On the basis of the China strategy, we were, as Government, in a much better position to engage with the business community, which is ongoing.

Of course, due to our federal system, it was also very important to have the federal states on board, which were briefed on a very regular basis. For example, when you look to the protection of critical infrastructure, it is within the competence of the federal system, the Bundesländer. For a coherent approach, it was very important for us to have this multi-stakeholder process.

Q4 Aphra Brandreth: I just wondered if you could maybe set out what the main policy areas are that are covered by the German strategy, and perhaps expand on what you have already slightly alluded to, about how you were able to ensure that there was coherence across all of the different Government Departments.

Susanne Baumann: The key point was that we described China in three ways. First of all, we said we consider China to be a partner. We then described the areas where we saw that we would like to have a close partnership with China, which is particularly true for global issues, when you think of the fight against climate change and on global health matters, but also other multilateral areas where we need China on board, where we want to have a dialogue.

We also describe China as a partner in the field of research. Of course, it is also a partner when it comes to a trade relationship. What is then very important for us when it comes to economic issues is also to clearly recognise that, at the same time, China is a competitor. When we enter dialogue with China on trade issues, for example, we also have our asks, which we put very clearly on the table. Those are also described in the China strategy, such as a level playing field when it comes to subsidies, tariffs and other issues you are very well aware of.

The third pillar is that we say China is also a systemic rival. As I have said, these three pillars correspond very well with the economic security



HOUSE OF COMMONS

strategy of the European Union, which uses the three terms, “Partner, protect and promote”. It is very much in correspondence with that.

As I have said, in these three regards the China strategy gives us the possibility to reach out to China, to define how we would like to have our political context framed with China. It gives us all the possibility to protect ourselves, and also to promote the German economy and the European economy, because it is obvious that we have to invest in our own resilience.

Q5 Aphra Brandreth: The UK has chosen not to publish its UK-China audit. I just wondered whether there were any elements in the Germany-China strategy that it had been decided not to share publicly.

Susanne Baumann: No, everything was shared publicly.

Q6 Abtisam Mohamed: From the strategy that you have described, is there any part of it that has not been implemented yet?

Susanne Baumann: Implementation is ongoing. Since we published this strategy in 2023, we had a general election one year ago. The new Government have taken over the China strategy and are continuing to work on its implementation.

Q7 Abtisam Mohamed: Are there any specific Government policies towards China that were initiated or altered after the publication of the strategy?

Susanne Baumann: No.

Q8 Fleur Anderson: Can I ask you about the success of the strategy? What was the reaction by China on the publication of the strategy? Since then, how would you measure its success? Is it possible to say whether it has been successful or not?

Susanne Baumann: Let me first answer your question with regard to the reaction by China. The Chinese Government were not surprised by our China strategy, because, before we publicised it, the high officials made the Chinese Government aware. There was quite a distant reaction, nothing that surprised the German Government.

Of course, in context, since the release of the China strategy, they very much concentrated on our term of “systemic rival”. They are not happy. That is their approach towards us. We have this link between economic relations and security. We see what China is doing as economic coercion. It is something they tell us we are doing now with the China strategy. The reaction was very distant and very predictable; it was nothing that had to alarm us.

Is the China strategy successful? Yes, because it contributed to clear analysis of where we stand on China. Very importantly, it brought coherence to the policies decided by the German Government—by the Bundesländer. As I have already said, it was and still is a very good basis



for our contacts with the business community and with international partners.

Q9 Fleur Anderson: Do you think it has helped businesses and the German public to understand that balance between the opportunities and the challenges?

Susanne Baumann: Yes, of course. There was also a public debate; press reported about the China strategy. It is always good to have this topic in the public domain. When I look to our contacts with the business community, a discussion that was already ongoing got new momentum with regard to our policy that we do not want to decouple from China. In fact, the term we use in the China strategy is that we would like to de-risk, and to have a dialogue with the German business community on how we can de-risk, and how Government can help business to de-risk. The China strategy was a very important step in that/

Q10 Chair: Does China have a strategy towards Germany that is published?

Susanne Baumann: I suppose it does, yes. When I look to its strategic approach to many dossiers, I suppose there is very clear thinking back in Beijing, but we are not publicly aware about Beijing's German strategy.

Chair: So you have not seen it, but you are pretty sure it has one. It does tend to spell these things out.

Q11 Sir John Whittingdale: Can you set out to what extent the German China strategy set out the threats and negatives? Did you explicitly go into the issue of protection of critical national infrastructure, of the threat from China in terms of cyber-activity and espionage, and also the human rights angle about the Uyghur population, about Tibet and other concerns? How did those negatives affect the economic relationship?

Susanne Baumann: The China strategy has very clear language on the threats we see coming from China. It very clearly states our concerns when it comes to human rights issues. Of course, it comes to the conclusion that, because Chinese behaviour has changed over the years and has become much more assertive, the potential for economic coercion is building up. It is very clear that we have to use the right instruments, such as our investment law and our export control regimes. We have to adapt those instruments to the changing Chinese behaviour. That is a dialogue that, at that point of time, we carried out with our business community—and are continuing to carry out—all under the big headline of de-risking.

Q12 Sir John Whittingdale: Going back to Fleur's question, when you set out the risks, the dangers and the unacceptable activities being carried out by China, did the Chinese Government try to argue against that or respond, or did they just ignore that bit of the audit?

Susanne Baumann: We have an ongoing dialogue with the Chinese Government. Of course, what we wrote down in the China strategy was



not new to the Chinese officials and to the Chinese Government, because we raise these issues when Foreign Ministers are meeting, when our Heads of Government are meeting, and when line Ministries are meeting. When we have a dialogue with China, we do use this dialogue, of course, to bring co-operation on certain issues forward, but also to raise our concerns.

- Q13 Sir John Whittingdale:** The Chair and I were just talking about the extent to which the publication of the China strategy has influenced a specific area of German policy or initiative, and whether that has provoked debate publicly about that.

Susanne Baumann: When you look to the measures we have taken since the publication of the China strategy, it very much concentrates on business issues. For example, we looked into our policy around on what conditions a German company could get state credit for its business in a third country. We put the limit to €3 billion. We did not focus this only on China, because we also see the risk with such a big investment in any other country. Of course, some German companies that were doing business in China were affected by this new cap on export credit.

We then looked at investments that Chinese companies are doing in Germany. We set up a mechanism where we have these investments under very close scrutiny. Of course, the security aspect is the biggest one. We look into each Chinese investment, and whether our security interests are concerned by this investment.

- Q14 Sir John Whittingdale:** Have there been any examples where you have said, "That investment is not permissible"?

Susanne Baumann: The telecommunications sector is under very close scrutiny, but also other critical infrastructure such as harbours. It is also investments that are interlinked with our defence industry even indirectly, such as transport systems. That is the first step.

At the same time, at a European level we very closely look at what investment in China means, the outbound investment screening. That is a process that is still ongoing; we have not come to a final decision yet, but this is done in very close co-operation with the European Commission.

Another example when it comes to dependencies is, of course, how we deal with raw earth materials, and how to de-risk and diminish our dependency. One step the German Government have taken was to set up a raw material fund, with €1 billion as a starting point, where the German Government are financing projects where German companies can get raw materials from other countries than China. These are a number of very practical examples where we, as Government, then try to reduce our dependencies.

- Q15 Sir John Whittingdale:** I assume that the Chinese Government are not asking to build a very large embassy in Berlin.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Susanne Baumann: They have a very nice embassy.

- Q16 **Chair:** If I was a small business owner and I was doing something very innovative that might be of potential assistance from a defensive perspective, such as monitoring shipping activity in the sea, and then a Chinese businessman or a private equity company with Chinese backing came and said, "Can I buy your company from you in Germany?", would you need to report that to the German authorities first?

Susanne Baumann: Yes.

- Q17 **Chair:** Is it for all companies that all of it has to be reported? How do you know when it is that you need to report?

Susanne Baumann: There is a necessity to report when the investment is bigger than a certain amount. I do not have the exact numbers, but the process only starts when certain criteria are met.

- Q18 **Chair:** The first filter is the amount of money. What is the next one?

Susanne Baumann: It is whether it is a security concern and whether it is a whole sector that then would be in Chinese hands. It is all these criteria. What is of particular interest is whether it is critical infrastructure. The implementation process is ongoing. A law on critical infrastructure is now with the German Parliament, which brings new tasks for companies that are carrying out critical infrastructure. It is an ongoing process, where we also adjust our legislation because we see that the Chinese strategy is also adapting.

- Q19 **Phil Brickell:** Ambassador, one area that other members of the Committee might be interested to know is what role members of the German Bundestag play in scrutinising the Government around fulfilling commitments that are outlined in the China strategy.

Susanne Baumann: As I have said, in the process of writing this China strategy there was a multi-stakeholder process that also involved the German Bundestag. Interested Members of Parliament were able to enter a dialogue with the Government. That was the process in setting up the China strategy. Of course, on a regular basis the Foreign Affairs Committee and other committees have China on their agenda, and ask Government officials where we stand on our policy on China. One set of questions also concerns the implementation of the strategy. As is true for many other subjects, there is an ongoing dialogue between Members of Parliament and the German Government on our China policy.

- Q20 **Uma Kumaran:** What lessons do you think could be learned from Germany's implementation of the strategy for other countries that are looking to implement or develop a China strategy?

Susanne Baumann: What is very important is that a country—in our case, Germany—very clearly defines its dependencies on China, and very clearly defines the areas where we would like to reduce or where we have to reduce these dependencies—the de-risking, as I have said. It is true



for nearly all western economies that these dependencies are in existence. Perhaps it varies from sector to sector, but the general analysis is the same all over the place, because it was so important for us to bring our China strategy in accordance with the European economic security strategy. It is very important to share this analysis, but also to have a discussion on how to respond and what instruments we need. A single European country cannot respond to the Chinese threat on its own; we need co-ordination, co-operation, and very similar instruments.

Chair: Thank you so much for the clear way that you have given your evidence. You have given us a great deal to think about. I am sorry about running you around the building, as we had earlier on, but we look forward to seeing you again. We are going to be in Berlin soon; we are all looking forward to it very much. Thank you very much for your time today, Your Excellency.

Susanne Baumann: Thank you very much. I am sure that during your visit China will be very high on the agenda.

Chair: Yes, I suspect it will be.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Robert Ward, Yuichi Hosoya and Guibourg Delamotte.

Chair: In our second panel we have three experts to talk about Japanese strategy towards China. Would you mind introducing yourselves? Perhaps I can begin with Mr Ward, who is in the room.

Robert Ward: Thank you. It is a great privilege to be here to discuss this important subject. My name is Robert Ward; I am the Japan chair and director of geoeconomics and strategy at the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Professor Delamotte: I am Guibourg Delamotte. I am a professor of political science—Japanese politics and international security—at the National Institute of Oriental Studies in Paris.

Professor Hosoya: I am Yuichi Hosoya. I am a professor of international politics, teaching international politics and international history at Keio University, Tokyo. I am also a research director at the Institute of Geoeconomics, a think-tank in Tokyo. I was a former member of the Prime Minister's advisory panels on security and defence.

Q21 **Chair:** It is a pleasure to have you all. Thank you all very much for giving evidence before us. Professor Delamotte, why has Japan not published an official China strategy?

Professor Delamotte: I am not sure I would advise you to publish an official strategy. To publish an official strategy spells out what you are about to do. It also labels China as needing a strategy, so as being a



threat. Japan has adopted an approach that is much more subtle, pan-governmental and intergovernmental, which covers all the areas of its diplomatic action and angles them all towards counterbalancing China. It is much broader than a China strategy. It is more like a national strategy; it is meant to counterbalance and address all the challenges that China poses, but without appearing antagonistic. Japan had very good reasons not to adopt a China strategy, per se.

Q22 **Chair:** Do you agree with that, Professor Hosoya?

Professor Hosoya: Yes, I agree. Japan has been maintaining the strategy of ambiguity, because clarity or clarification often brings tensions between Japan and China, particularly in its relationship with Taiwan. That is why it is good for the Japanese Government to maintain the strategy of ambiguity, based on the many difficult, complicated issues.

Q23 **Chair:** But there are times, surely, when there is no ambiguity. I am particularly thinking of the islands in the China seas, where Japan's response to what China has been doing there is really very clear, and makes it clear that China is seen as a threat there. Is that not right?

Professor Hosoya: Japan has never recognised or regarded China as a threat. China has many different faces. China has been Japan's biggest trading partner, and Japan has been providing the largest amount of ODA to China. That means that Chinese economic development has been to Japan's benefit. In that way, Japan has been maintaining its mutually beneficial relationship based upon common strategic interests, but at the same time, as it implies, there are certainly several security concerns. Striking the balance between the two necessities has been the core of Japan's strategy towards China.

Robert Ward: I agree with my good friends Guibourg and Yuichi on the way that Japan calibrates its strategy. Japan and China are very close economically. They are very close geographically. This is a really important point to remember. This perhaps leads to the difference between European strategy towards China and Japan's strategy. That geographical proximity is a really important thing to bear in mind. Japan does have a China strategy but, as Guibourg said, it is not written out as such. It is calibrated and wrapped up within Japan's broader thinking about its grand strategy, so its theory of security.

There are two examples of this, which I am sure that Guibourg and Yuichi will also elaborate on. One is the free and open Indo-Pacific concept, known as FOIP in Japan. This is an organising framework, if you like, for diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific, started under the late Shinzo Abe in 2016 and continued to today.

The other example is the national security strategy, the one that was promulgated in 2022, which changes Japan's strategic focus to the south-western region, which obviously is right next to Taiwan, contains



HOUSE OF COMMONS

the Senkaku Islands, and is now a region of great geopolitical tension. Japan is, of course, reluctant to name China directly. That is right, but it obviously has a very long experience of thinking about China and what China means for Japan.

Q24 **Chair:** What are the main features of FOIP?

Robert Ward: FOIP is the free and open Indo-Pacific concept. FOIP has a number of pillars. The important thing to note about this concept is that it is open to China as well. One of the aspects of Japanese thinking that European countries can learn from is this need to engage, but also to draw lines. Japan is trying to bind China into the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific, and FOIP is one way of doing this.

FOIP has a number of pillars. One is the rule of law. This is its framework. One is the pursuit of economic prosperity. That is connectivity. The other one is commitment to peace and stability. This is basically a shorthand for a rules-based order, keeping the sea lanes of communication in the region open and so on. Japan is trying to engage China, but put down these red lines that China must behave within the rules-based order. Of course, given China's size and influence within the region, this is obviously not as easy as it looks, but this is how Japan is thinking about it.

Q25 **Richard Foord:** Mr Ward, how does Japan balance the prosperity agenda with the national security agenda? How does it balance its trade and investments with national security?

Robert Ward: Japan's thinking on China has moved. You can put it into two broad buckets. One is 1972, when Japanese-Chinese relations normalised, until the early 2000s, particularly 2010, when there was a big disagreement between Japan and China over the Senkaku Islands. Obviously that was the year that China overtook Japan to be the No. 2 economy in the world as well. That era was basically economics first, investment, the primacy of growth and so on.

From 2010, but particularly from 2012, when Shinzo Abe came back to power, the economics-first agenda was replaced with what I would call engagement through engagement and deterrence, and, within that, risk mitigation. Of course, given the primacy of economic relations with China for Japan, that engagement element is really important, but that is coming under stress, partly because of the importance of economic security, partly because of Sino-US tensions as well.

The important change there is this emphasis on deterrence. Japan is strengthening its own military capabilities, its own deterrence and defence security capabilities. This is, of course, also an important part of Japan keeping the US on board as well, given the unpredictabilities that we see at the moment.

Q26 **Richard Foord:** Turning to you, Professor Delamotte, how successful has Japan been at diversifying its supply chains and its investments? I am



HOUSE OF COMMONS

thinking about this both from the state point of view, but also from the point of view of Japanese companies that also have to think about diversifying supply chains and investments.

Professor Delamotte: The supply chains for Japan are integrated into south-east Asia and China. That is as far as production goes. It is very much integrated in the whole of south-east Asia and China. In order to strengthen regional supply chains, Japan has encouraged free trade agreements. That is of late, actually, because Japan was not a strong promoter of free trade agreements to begin with. It very much sees the CPTPP—this very broad treaty to which the UK is now a party, as well as another one called RCEP, of which China is actually a party—as serving that purpose of strengthening supply chains.

One area that is really crucial, which Robert was mentioning, is economic security. In that respect, it is not supply chains in general. One aspect of those is particularly problematic: critical minerals and rare earth minerals. Rare earth minerals are not really rare—that is quite a well-known fact by now—but they are difficult to extract and they pollute highly, in order to be used in manufacturing processes. China knows to what extent Japan still relies on China for supplying those, and therefore it uses rare earth whenever it wants to pressurise Japan. It did that in 2010 for the first time, and again at the moment.

Japan actually has managed to reduce its reliance on China for rare earth quite a bit. At one point before 2010, or around 2010, the dependence rate was higher than 90%, and then it went down. It is now down to 70%, I believe, which is still quite high, but it has signed partnerships with Australia and India¹. It is also trying to find some very deep into the ocean. The latest experiment was 6,000 metres deep, I believe. It is also setting up plants for recycling. There is one example of that in France. Japan hopes to reduce its reliance on rare earth through those measures.

[Sir John Whittingdale took the Chair]

Q27 **Richard Foord:** Professor Hosoya, I wonder if you have anything to add on the subject of how successful Japan has been at diversifying its investments and its supply chains.

Professor Hosoya: As Robert mentioned, it is correct to say that 2010 was a turning point, because China began to weaponise its economic interdependence relationship with Japan. Previously, whenever there was tension between the two countries, particularly political tensions, it seemed that the Chinese Government had been carefully trying to avoid damaging its economic relationship with Japan. Since 2010, the Chinese Government began to weaponise its economic relationship with Japan. That is why, little by little, Japan needed to adapt to the new situation. This is the new phase.

¹ The witness wished to provide the following additional information after the session: adding Vietnam to this list of countries.



As mentioned by Professor Delamotte, it is correct to say that Japan has been successfully diversifying its economic relationship with China, particularly by enlarging its economic relationship with ASEAN, India and east African countries as well. Based upon that, as Robert mentioned, Japan has been promoting the free and open Indo-Pacific strategy by focusing more upon south Asian countries as well as east African countries, where the population and economic growth are quite vivid in coming years.

Q28 Richard Foord: I wonder if we could now look at the example of climate change. I do not know who is best placed to answer this, but the British Government have pointed to the area of climate change as an example of where we need co-operation between the UK and China. Do you regard this, from the Japanese experience, as an area of straightforward co-operation, or do you also see risks to economic security in this area?

Robert Ward: On the economic security aspect, there is concern in Japan about the dominance that China has in green technology. One expert that I was speaking to the other day said that, in his view, China's dominance of solar, wind turbines and so on was potentially as much of a shock to Japan and the world as the first oil shock was in the 1970s. There is concern in Japan about China's dominance.

There is also concern in Japan about the leakage of some of Japan's green technology to China, partly because of porous economic security regulations. Although there is recognition in Japan, given the size of the challenge of climate change, there is also concern about China's strategic dominance in the area. Of course, from that, it is not that far to Japan's concerns about Chinese EVs and so on threatening its own strategically important automotive sector.

Professor Delamotte: It is hard to anticipate from where we stand, because we would like to think that, in the logic of free trade, China provides the lowest-cost technologies, and therefore we rely on China. The problem is, if the whole grid is then controlled by technologies that have been supplied by China, the technologies could just as well be turned off if China needed. Think of wind turbines, for instance. If they are provided by China, how do we know what elements China might be able to control afterwards?

As much as Donald Trump is difficult to talk to and deal with—I believe, if I were in your position—during his first mandate he probably had a point in addressing the issue of Huawei and 5G technologies. We can think of it in the same way. Is it safe to trust a network and new technologies to a country that we cannot really trust? I do not think so.

Q29 Phil Brickell: Professor Hosoya, have Prime Minister Takaichi's statements on the Taiwan contingency altered Japan-China relations?

Professor Hosoya: A majority of Japanese experts basically mentioned that Prime Minister Takaichi has not changed Japan's previous position.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

The point is that Prime Minister Takaichi clarified a larger extent of Japanese policy towards China. As I mentioned at the beginning of my statement, Japan's tradition has been maintaining a kind of strategic ambiguity without clarifying its position, particularly upon Taiwan, because there are some contradictions in Japan's relationship with China in that regard. In that way, Prime Minister Takaichi has maintained Japan's previous position, but in answering questions in the National Diet in Japan, Prime Minister Takaichi perhaps clarified a little bit more than previous Japanese Prime Ministers have done before.

Q30 Phil Brickell: Taking that a little bit further, I read in my briefing here that in November the Chinese Government announced a ban on all Japanese seafood products and restricted the exchange of cultural products, including freezing licences for Japanese films and cancelling concerts by Japanese musicians. In January, China announced an immediate ban on exporting dual-use goods, software and technology to Japan. What impact is that having on the cultural and economic relationship between the two countries?

Professor Hosoya: First of all, the Japanese economic security policy has been developed since 2010. It means that Japan is much more resilient in many fields. In that way, unlike in 2010, the Japanese Government and the Japanese people are much more confident in maintaining a larger area of the current Japanese policy without radically changing the Japanese position.

In addition to this, at the same time Japan really has to maintain a quite careful statement, as well as a careful policy, in its relationship with Taiwan, because Taiwan becomes much more sensitive than before. It means that China becomes much more ambitious in its relationship with Taiwan. Responding to these changes, Japan and other countries need to be more careful in choosing words without abusing China.

Q31 Phil Brickell: You talk about Japan's relationship with Taiwan and Japan's relationship with China. Of course, Prime Minister Takaichi has called a snap early general election to take place on 8 February. How prominently do you think the relations with China and with Taiwan are going to feature in that general election campaign over the next few weeks?

Professor Hosoya: After becoming Prime Minister, Prime Minister Takaichi has been extremely careful in choosing words, as seen in her 24 October statement in the National Diet. Just one week before she met with President Xi, Prime Minister Takaichi said, "With China an important neighbouring country for Japan, it is necessary to establish a constructive and a stable bilateral relationship. At the same time, it is also a fact that there are security concerns between our two countries, including those related to economic security. We will promote a mutually beneficial relationship, based on common strategic interests, through continued candid dialogue between the leaders of Japan and China".



HOUSE OF COMMONS

It is clear that Prime Minister Takaichi was willing to collaborate more deeply with China without politicising the issue. Japan's intention is clear: to stabilise the relationship and to develop constructive dialogues with Chinese leaders. At the same time, the Japanese people now notice that China becomes much more assertive than before. That is why the majority of Japanese people now support Prime Minister Takaichi's stance on China in this regard.

Q32 Phil Brickell: Professor Delamotte, I do not know if you had any reflections on what Professor Hosoya has said about the relationship.

Professor Delamotte: Yes, absolutely. It was a very interesting statement in the Diet on 7 November. As you noted, the latest dual-use export ban only dates back to five days ago², I believe. It took China more than two months to reach that point, which is really where it starts hurting Japan. That is quite interesting, because in my view China's reaction was quite slow.

I believe the reason why it started reacting is because the Japanese Opposition used the issue. In the Diet, Prime Minister Takaichi did not try to appear as a hardliner against China at all. As Hosoya-sensei was saying, she appears as a hardliner³, but really she has been extremely cautious in the language she has used. She has actually showed great willingness to work with China, which is very sensible. You get elected on a hard line and then you move to the centre.

In the Diet, what she was trying to do was just answer the question as honestly as she could to the Opposition, which pressed her on and on and on. In the end, she expressed a personal opinion, which is directly an interpretation of the law. It was such a hypothetical that it should not have been an issue at all. The Opposition then pretended they were surprised by the fact that Taiwan could trigger any kind of reaction on the part of Japan, so that was unfortunate.

If you could draw some kind of lesson there, I would suggest that, on such serious issues as China and national security, you need to be able to have open conversations together that will not be politicised, if possible. You also need closed-door meetings, which I hope you do have, rather than completely open meetings. In this instance, in any case, any closed-door meeting would have made no difference, because the Opposition knew exactly what they were doing and what they were headed for. They got what they wanted, which is a shame.

Q33 Phil Brickell: Mr Ward, is there something to be learned from the point that Professor Delamotte was making about not over-politicising the debate and having a serious conversation about national security behind

² The witness wished to provide the following clarification after the session: the latest dual-use export ban only dates back to 8 January.

³ The witness wished to make the following alteration after the session: she is "portrayed" as a hardliner.



closed doors?

Robert Ward: Yes. That fits with the points we were making at the start of this about Japan not wanting to call China out directly. That said, the security threats to Japan from what is going on in the region are really quite intense.

On Yuichi's comments on Prime Minister Takaichi's Taiwan comments in Parliament, one of the things that has not been mentioned yet, which throws light on just how serious the threat is, is China's narrative towards Japan and towards the Prime Minister after she said that. One of the things that I look at quite closely is the tensions around the Senkaku Islands. They have remained elevated. They have become elevated since Xi Jinping rose to power in 2012-13, and they remain very intensely so.

The other point, which again we have not mentioned but is important, is China's efforts to destabilise Okinawa. There is a lot of disinformation going on in Okinawa, trying to undermine the status of Okinawa. One of the interesting things about the way China has reacted to this is that China has, if you like, expanded the theatre beyond just Taiwan. After the Prime Minister made her comment, you see intensification of the Okinawa activity and the Senkaku activity, and of course broader military activity around Taiwan as well.

Q34 **Fleur Anderson:** As a Committee, we are also conducting an inquiry into disinformation and misinformation. I do not know which one of you would be able to answer this, but is there evidence of China using disinformation and misinformation to the general public using social media or other aspects of communication in Japan? Is that part of the threats that you have been referring to?

Robert Ward: Yes. If you look at Okinawa and if you look at some of the social media that you can see around trying to cast doubt on Okinawa's legal status, on Japan's sovereignty, there is a lot of influence, and presumably bots as well that are doing that work too. With Okinawa, the purpose is to seed discord within society. In Okinawa there is quite a lot of antipathy in some quarters towards the US troop presence there. Tokyo is obviously a long way away.

All of that presumably works in China's favour, but of course there is quite a big Chinese community inside Japan. There is a big contingent of Chinese students at Japanese universities and so on. The whole of the information that comes from China into Japan gives cause for concern.

Q35 **Chair:** We began with Professor Hosoya talking about a deliberate ambiguity. Professor Delamotte, you talked about behind closed doors and not having a very vocal public debate. In this country, as you are probably aware, very strong concerns have been expressed in Parliament and elsewhere about Chinese espionage activities and human rights issues. I understand that those are concerns equally shared in Japan, but they are perhaps not articulated in the same way. Is that a fair



statement? Do these issues feature as strongly in Japan's debates as they do here, or are they just not spoken of in the same way?

Robert Ward: I think you could characterise Japan's approach as cautious, diplomatic and indirect. It advocates for universal values, but it prefers to deal with human rights concerns and so on within multilateral frameworks, co-ordinating with G7, for example, and co-ordinating with the relevant UN bodies and so on. Given that economic interdependence and the need to work with China, my sense is that Tokyo prefers a more discreet approach, but it also obviously wants to give its views about the universal values that it supports.

Q36 **Chair:** If I may just turn to the other two, your evidence, as I understand it, despite some suggestions elsewhere, is that essentially Prime Minister Takaichi is pursuing precisely the same approach, but her attitude towards China is very much still as Mr Ward has just described.

Professor Hosoya: I agree with what Robert already mentioned. Both the Japanese and UK Governments are sharing an important approach to China. In the last several years, the Japanese and UK Governments have actually shared a lot of important information regarding China and Taiwan. It is essential that both Japan and the UK have different advantages in gathering information or disinformation that Chinese *[Inaudible]* has perhaps been bringing to our countries. In that way, both within the framework of the G7 and within the framework of the bilateral collaboration, it is essential to deepen those collaborations in the field of disinformation, to tackle this problem. Japan and NATO have also been collaborating in this area as well. It has been really quite effective so far.

Professor Delamotte: Essentially, Prime Minister Takaichi will remain on the same line, although she is a bit cornered now with that Taiwan declaration and the situation. I think what will happen is that it will depend on how relations between China and the US evolve, to some extent. If some tension were to arise between China and the US, China would no doubt back down and try to make up with Japan very fast.

As it is, if she has greater legitimacy and a better majority in the Diet, which she is hoping to get in the lower House with the coming elections, we might see a bit more of her China policy. She keeps going, in the sense that she has the same diplomatic line so far with respect to FOIP and the Indo-Pacific. That is very good, because that targets the Global South, developing countries, as well as security issues around groupings such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue initiated with the US, India and Australia. That is to do with capacity building. That is co-operation between like-minded countries,

Also, she has been advocating greater defence spending. The US likes that. That is quite favourable in terms of partnerships with countries such as the UK. She will keep going. These were the lines that were really led by her predecessor—actually, a few predecessors back—Shinzo Abe. She is very much along those lines, because they are good guidelines, really.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

They are strong guidelines, and I think she will stick to them. She will not depart massively from there.

The fact that you have been very vocal on human rights and critical of China, particularly during the Hong Kong crisis, has really drawn the UK to Japan's attention and really helped a great deal, I believe, in building the strong Japan-UK links we now see. These are things you can keep. That works rather well with Japan, because these are precisely the things that Japan does not feel quite so free to speak openly about. Indeed, given the tensions that Robert was mentioning, there are some issues that it prefers to keep a little bit low-key.

In terms of hearing that a country such as the UK remains aligned on the United States, has similar partners as it does, such as Australia and Canada, and that it is strong and vocal on China when it needs to be, these are really the elements that have drawn Japan towards the UK. You might want to contrast that with France's situation, which has been much more ambivalent.⁴

Chair: May I thank the three of you very much for giving us your knowledge and your time? We Will continue to monitor what is happening with the relation with China, so if you have further thoughts, please do not hesitate to let us know. In the meantime, thank you very much.

⁴ The witness wished to provide the following clarification after the session: that "France has been ambivalent vis-à-vis China."