

Foreign Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [China and the international rules-based system, HC 612](#)

Tuesday 8 Jan 2019

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Members present: Tom Tugendhat (Chair); Ian Austin; Ann Clwyd; Mike Gapes; Stephen Gethins; Ian Murray; Priti Patel; Andrew Rosindell; Mr Bob Seely; Royston Smith.

Questions 92-152

Witnesses

[I](#): Professor Eva Pils, Professor of Law, Dickson Poon School of Law, King's College London, Paul Roseby OBE, CEO and Artistic Director, National Youth Theatre of Great Britain, Professor Steve Tsang, Director, SOAS China Institute, and Professor Sebastian Veg, Professor of Intellectual History and Literature of 20th Century China, School of Advanced Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS), Paris.

[II](#): The Rt Hon. the Lord Patten of Barnes CH.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Professor Eva Pils, Paul Roseby, Professor Steve Tsang and Professor Sebastian Veg.

Chair: Welcome to this afternoon's session of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Happy new year, and thank you for coming. I'll ask Priti Patel to start us off.

Q92 **Priti Patel:** Thank you very much, Chair. I want to begin this afternoon's session by focusing on China's domestic system, and its interaction with foreign policy. First, I want to ask members of the panel their view of how China's political and economic systems have changed under President Xi, in relation to foreign policy serving to meet some of the Government's domestic agenda policies.

Professor Pils: The main trend we have observed in the Chinese domestic system since late 2012 has been a concentration of power in the hands of Xi Jinping. That has necessitated, from the perspective of the Chinese Communist party and President Xi, an intensified attempt to control all aspects of society and the economy, and to repress those parts of civil society in particular that have posed challenges and been critical of the Government. We have seen successive crackdowns on various groups in civil society, particularly advocacy NGOs, human rights lawyers, journalists and so on. That, of course, has affected how the groups and individuals with whom other countries engage are able to communicate outwards.

In terms of foreign policy, I think that changes in the domestic system have led to an increased perceived need to present China as an alternative model to liberal democracies, and to project what is a clearly reconceived claim to China's global role outwards. Among other things, we can see that in the way that the Chinese Government have sought to control the Chinese narrative, including the narrative about their domestic attempt to enhance control, and their tendency domestically to become more repressive.

Paul Roseby: Good afternoon. I look at this from a very cultural, and therefore somewhat anecdotal, point of view. This is the 13th five-year plan. What is interesting is that within the plan—I think it is the third of the five years—they are focusing on innovation and cultural exchange. From the point of view of the National Youth Theatre, which is the organisation that I run and lead, it is a fascinating time.

There used to be the phrase "Made in China" on the back of your outfits or wherever, but now they want also to design in China. What does that mean for cultural institutions—in the UK, particularly? It means that the Chinese want to buy our expertise. That is about not just event culture, but training potential trainees in the future. As part of this five-year plan, we have noticed that as the middle class and wealth grow within China, so does the opportunity for parents to educate their young people vocationally as much as formally.



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More than one organisation has approached us in the past two years not just about advocating, but wanting to purchase our expertise, so that we could potentially train trainees in China and run various courses that would allow young people there to discover the importance and virtue of soft-power skills—something we in this country, and particularly the National Youth Theatre, are obviously very reliant on culturally.

- Q93 **Priti Patel:** To unpack that slightly, we are now presumably seeing much more political play in the soft power space and the cultural space. That will, I guess, broaden horizons and change the way in which our two countries interact.

Paul Roseby: Yes. We have a great asset in this country: we are experts at soft power. It is ironic that in education in the past three years, the arts have become more diminished in the UK, in terms of formal opportunities in schools, while the opportunities have increased in China. They recognise the output and the value of our cultural heritage and cultural expertise—particularly through empowering young people's confidence and voices and through options. That is obviously about language as well. There is a massive shift in interest and curiosity. It is palpable. They love the words "national" and "UK", so when you have an organisation that is national for the UK, they are very interested.

I would say as a warning to people who run similar organisations that that interest should not be confused with a cash cow. China is equally becoming very savvy to some of the invoices that we might wish to give as a result of our expertise. It is becoming harder to do a financial deal in China that might be worth us taking a risk over there culturally, so at the same time, the business element of those cultural deals is becoming harder to fix.

- Q94 **Priti Patel:** Are they prepared to put their money where their mouth is?

Paul Roseby: In words, not as much as they used to. Again, that is anecdotal, but I would say that they are definitely wise to it. For instance, we were approached by a company—Vincent Wang's Van Hang Sailing—which set up vocational sailing training programmes in second-tier cities in China. He wanted to replicate exactly the same model, not for sailing but for the arts—just overnight. You can imagine that those conversations are quite interesting. There is a shortage of soft power skills and of that learning in China. We are very much equipped to improve that gap. We are excited by the opportunity, but the business and financial negotiations around it are quite complicated.

- Q95 **Priti Patel:** Obviously, the United Kingdom is known for culture and all sorts of dimensions and aspects of soft power internationally—plus we have a big Chinese diaspora community in the UK. Are we No. 1 in the eyes of the Chinese, or are there other competitors out there that they are working with?

Paul Roseby: I think that London is the first stop—the UK is the first stop—but it is very easy to get to other parts of Europe. Certainly, some individuals we have dealt with, to whom I have shown our organisation



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and some of our work, have gone on to Paris and Germany to have the same conversations. However, I think our heritage and the fact that we speak English is an asset, compared with France, Germany and other countries in the European Union. That is definitely our cultural asset.

In 2008, we were the first British theatre company to create a play at the NCPA—the national theatre—on Tiananmen Square. We had to produce something rather safe, in our eyes—a Shakespeare play—but in 2008 they had dubbed Shakespeare a modern drama offering. They could only buy the content by seeing it on film. It was something I did with the BBC beforehand, so we had it on film. They weren't taking any creative risks; they saw what they were buying, and they bought it. What they didn't realise is that because of the casting for that production, and because we worked with Chinese young people from the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing, the tones and the consequences of the theme of *The Merchant of Venice*—that was the play—were somewhat enlightening of the politics of 2008. It didn't go unnoticed. It is modern drama, interestingly enough.

Nobody can compete with Shakespeare on a global scale, and we produce Shakespeare. That is the first point of call. Now it is somewhat different. The content is more varied and interesting, particularly around issues to do with the environment. They are very keen on the environment and anything around that. We produced a production called *Flood* in Hong Kong last year. There are interesting and innovative ways of getting around certain technicalities of content. It is a game changer.

- Q96 **Priti Patel:** That is great. Thank you very much. Professor Tsang, how do domestic issues influence and shape China's foreign policy? In particular, would you mind touching on how China acts in global institutions and some of the big multilateral bodies? How do they try to meet their domestic agenda through the way they perform and behave through some of these big global institutions?

Professor Tsang: China is not a normal state like we have in Europe. China is a Leninist party state. The party is at the centre of the political system. The big thing that Xi Jinping has done since he came to power is to put emphasis on revitalising the Leninist nature and institutions in China to make them much more effective in controlling the country and controlling foreign policy. When we look at Chinese foreign policy and the definition of Chinese national interests, the definition has to be by the party. It is the party's interest that is the first and foremost element in the calculation of national interests. The party's interest means the continuation of the party in power—that is the most important consideration. That goes beyond normal national security considerations or economic/ trade relationships.

Xi Jinping also decided since he came to power that China's moment has come. Therefore, the old Deng Xiaoping policy for China to hide its capabilities and lay low no longer applies. China under Xi Jinping is a China that requests and requires the rest of the world to pay China due respect. Foreign policy is therefore constructed in that sense. At the same time, Chinese foreign policy is also driven by a very strong sense of neoclassical



realism; it is about the calculation of interests and the balance of power and what can be done. It is fundamentally instrumentalist.

I think you will look at human rights later on. In terms of the human rights issue, instead of previously being somewhat reticent about human rights, the Chinese Government actually take a proactive approach to engaging with UN institutions on human rights and steering it in a direction that is in support of the party-based, party-centric foreign policy. We have a situation where you will see the Chinese Government having a policy that aims to make the world safe for authoritarianism, because a world safe for authoritarianism is a world where colour revolutions cannot take hold. Colour revolutions are seen by the Communist party—even before Xi Jinping—as fundamentally subversive and threatening to the security of the Communist party of China and, therefore, of China.

- Q97 **Priti Patel:** Can I ask you another related question on the point about the party, the security of the party and the continuation of that? Do you think China therefore presents its own political and economic system as a model for other countries, in particular those involved in China's foreign policy, such as developing countries?

Professor Tsang: I do not see the Chinese Government having a policy that is specifically aimed at exporting the Chinese model and persuading other countries to adopt the Chinese model. What I see is a Chinese Government that are very willing to share their experience of their own particular approach to governance in China and encourage other countries to see that as a viable alternative to other models that are available in the world. It is, in that sense, an alternative model to democratic systems that western countries—the United States in particular—have been advocating.

- Q98 **Priti Patel:** Professor Veg, taking in some of the points we have heard, if the approach is about demonstrating what can be done and expertise, how is that validated or demonstrated when we look at China's economic and foreign policy when it comes to big projects such as one belt, one road? That is an economic vision and strategy that is associated with foreign policy. To come back to my last point about developing countries and China's footprint in developing countries in terms of economic and foreign policy, how do you think they are squaring that circle?

Professor Veg: I think I will leave that to Professor Tsang; I do not work on foreign policy, so belt and road is not for me.

Professor Tsang: In terms of the belt and road initiative, much of the original drive for it is based on two things. The first is the economic factor. Investment in infrastructure in China had reached a point of diminishing returns, so it was reasonable for the Chinese Government to export excess capital and excess capacity for infrastructure-building to countries that would then be employing Chinese companies and Chinese workers to carry out the infrastructure construction. That generates economic activity, with income going back to China. That was the main consideration.

The second factor is that Xi Jinping wanted and needed to have a signature foreign policy, and this fitted nicely into it. There may well be



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other benefits to the belt and road initiative, but it would be a push to say that it was a result of a masterplan for global domination. I do not see any evidence for that.

- Q99 **Priti Patel:** But it does have a strategic link back to domestic policy, as well as economic benefits for China, so it is clearly there to meet a domestic objective of the party.

Professor Tsang: Absolutely. It generates economic activity and employment for Chinese workers, and helps the Chinese economy to continue moving forward and expanding when the infrastructure-building in China is no longer quite so cost-effective.

- Q100 **Mr Seely:** Are you therefore saying that the belt and road initiative is good for the world economy because it keeps the Chinese economy growing, and if it keeps the Chinese economy growing then we all see the benefits in some form?

Professor Tsang: That depends on the timeframe you use. In the short term, the belt and road initiative is beneficial to China and beneficial to the recipient countries because they are getting infrastructure that they would not otherwise have. The real issue arises in the medium to long term, when those loans have to be repaid and those countries are unable to repay them. What is going to happen? What about those outstanding loans that have to be either repaid by countries that cannot afford it or written off? What are the implications for the Chinese economy and for the economies of the recipient countries? How will that ripple outwards across the global economy?

- Q101 **Priti Patel:** Can I come back to the way China acts and behaves in international institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank? They are all linked. What are the motivations of the Chinese Government in terms of what they are trying to get out of these institutions? Are they trying to steer them and influence them in terms of policy, benefits back to China or influence within the domestic agenda? What is your perspective on that?

Professor Tsang: I think that the Chinese support for international organisations is purely instrumental. The United Nations system actually works to China's benefit. Therefore, China has every reason to work with the system. China does not behave like Russia and simply create problems in order to make itself count. We have not seen any evidence of the Chinese Government behaving that way in international organisations. But where the international organisation can be used to the benefit of China, the Chinese Government are focused on that. They are quite happy, for example, with the reorganisations of the UNHCR and the Human Rights Council. That is a key change from when China was defensive about human rights. China is now proactively a key player in the Human Rights Council.

Mr Seely: Is it a fair assumption or statement to say that China seeks to bend the rules considerably, where Russia seeks to break them? Or do you think that China is not even bending the rules? I am looking at the



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law of the sea and various examples around the South China sea, and some of the things it does internally.

Professor Tsang: It is a fair comment. The Chinese do not by and large break the rules of the UN; they bend them. But most great powers do the same thing when they can get the UN rules bent in their favour. We all do it.

Q102 **Mr Seely:** More broadly, would that be the same comment on international rules?

Professor Tsang: Yes, but all great powers do that. I am not defending the Chinese Government here, but it is easy to cite examples of other countries in comparable situations behaving fairly similarly to the Chinese Government with what they have done in the South China sea. They can get away with it, and they will. That is the world we still live in.

Q103 **Royston Smith:** Can I talk about economic challenges? How serious is the economic and social inequality in China? How do the Chinese manage divisions between rich and poor, rural and urban, coastal and inland? I think it is probably Professor Pils and Professor Tsang who are the professionals on this question.

Professor Pils: Thank you. I am a human rights expert and my expertise on economic issues is really quite limited. Certainly, I think that any China expert would be aware of the very serious inequalities that exist in Chinese society and the various mass grievances, one could perhaps say, that have posed a problem for the Government for a long time.

Social inequality is caused by, among others things, a system of legal division and legal separation between the urban and the rural population. That is a separation that also affects rural migrants to the cities, where they have in effect a lower legal status and less access to social services, public goods and public services, and are also socially marginalised. Over the past decades, mass grievances have periodically caused social tension and sometimes social unrest. They include issues like land grabs, workers' rights violations and, increasingly, environmental grievances.

All of these are seen as sources of instability, certainly by the Government, but I think that so far what we have observed, as Professor Tsang just mentioned, is that the system is an authoritarian one, whose authoritarianism is actually deepening. It is returning to power concentration and to a more Leninist structure. I would say that so far the system and the party has been well able to control whatever tension or unrest has resulted from these grievances. Of course, that means that it is difficult for us to have any judgment on how internal tension, inequalities and so on might affect China's external relations. For the moment, I have to say that I see no indication that the party does not remain well able to control whatever tensions we have.

Q104 **Royston Smith:** Professor Tsang, I appreciate what you are saying and we can see what has happened so far—that it is all under control. As



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things change economically and socially with inequalities, perhaps, then we do not know what is going to happen in the future. I suppose that is what I trying to get at.

Professor Tsang: I think you are absolutely right. We don't know what is going to happen if and when the poor in China have a problem with the rich. The scale of disparity in China has now reached a point that is probably higher than at any time since 1949. We cannot prove that, because data on Gini coefficient¹ is now classified. Nobody is allowed to produce Gini coefficient² data to show the extent of inequality in China. You draw your own conclusion as to why the Government have to classify data like that. Having said that, I think we must acknowledge that Xi Jinping has a specific policy to try to deal with the scale of inequality; in fact, it is not so much the scale of the inequality as to bring the poor out of poverty. He would specifically even require the richer bits of China to subsidise the poorer bits of China in order to achieve higher targets of poverty reduction. Government is working very hard on that. For all that, the Government is still incredibly worried about the risk of social instability, which is why there is so much input in issues on social credit, social control and social management.

The reality is that, for all we have seen on the expansion of Chinese military power, the Chinese Government spends more on internal security than it does on external defence. That shows the priority of the Government. It also shows that the Government is very much aware of the potential of that problem but, thank goodness, we do not know how serious it is and we don't know if and when it will happen at all.

Professor Pils: To add, in many ways the response of the Government, especially under Xi Jinping, has been increasingly repressive. It has also been repressive of groups in civil society that we are working with on various social issues and grievances. That has now made it harder for us to understand what the issues are and their extent.

Just adding to what Professor Tsang said, the repressive capacities of the system have not been exhausted. It is therefore very difficult, especially in the current situation, to work out exactly how threatening instability is. Instability has been very much operationalised by the system to justify increased repression.

Professor Veg: Let me just make a very quick addition to that with an anecdote. I work on intellectuals in the public sphere. One of the things the Chinese Government is apparently very nervous about is the attention among intellectuals to inequalities. Contrary to what one might think, Marxist groups or Maoist groups are not welcomed when they take active measures to organise protests against inequalities or breaches of labour laws and so on.

¹ Note from witness: should read as '...Gini Coefficient...'

² Note from witness: should read as '...Gini Coefficient...'



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Several students at Beijing University, which is the most well-known university in China, have been disappeared after taking part in Marxist worker groups since the summer. That is definitely something that the Government is paying a lot of attention to.

Q105 Mr Seely: Can I just check something? When you said that they classify data on inequality, how far is that taken? Is normal data—on wage inequality, for example—secret information? At what level is it classified?

Professor Tsang: The Gini coefficient is classified, so we do not officially know if it has now passed 0.5% or not, because the last time it was allowed, which was nearly a decade ago, it was 0.4 something.

Q106 Mr Seely: So, that information is not in the public domain in China. It is known only to Chinese officials and not shared publicly.

Professor Tsang: We do not even know whether officially they have collected it. Nobody is allowed to collect it.

Professor Veg: There have been other Gini coefficients collected, but the Government does crack down on researchers. These surveys are huge; they are very large scale and you cannot just carry them out covertly. The Government does crack down on researchers who decide to collect and undertake large surveys to make up their own Gini coefficients.

Chair: Royston, you wanted to finish.

Royston Smith: Well, I haven't finished; I've got more.

Priti Patel: May I just ask about inequality?

Chair: Briefly, we are running rather late.

Q107 Priti Patel: My question relates to the Gini coefficient point because China has been a recipient of overseas development assistance for a number of years on a continued basis. I know that has changed recently from the UK perspective, but through organisations such as the World Bank it has still been in receipt of aid.

May I ask, probably Professor Tsang and maybe Professor Pils, to what extent have you seen and do you understand that that assistance is actually doing something to tackle inequality and poverty across China, particularly in some of the rural areas, as we see the rural-urban divide grow?

Professor Tsang: I think what we see is active Government policies to reduce poverty by the kind of standards that are normally used to measure poverty and, therefore, demonstrate how China has actually been lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty.

Q108 Priti Patel: With the help of other people in the world.

Professor Tsang: Yes. That is not the same as addressing inequality. Inequality has actually continued to enlarge further, even though poverty has been reduced even further.



Q109 Royston Smith: If there is no available data on inequality, how are we to know whether 800 million people have been lifted out of poverty or not, other than being told so?

Professor Tsang: Well, the top 10 richest members of the National People's Congress own over \$100 billion-worth, whereas the 10 richest American members of Congress probably own something over \$1 billion. On average earnings in US and China, in the US they are six to seven times higher. In the socialist country of China, the scale of contrast is much bigger than what American capitalism can deliver.

Q110 Stephen Gethins: I am not sure who is best placed to answer this—maybe Professor Tsang. We are talking about economic development, and obviously people need to feel that that is equally spread. I am interested to find out how economic development in, say, the eastern parts that a lot of people from the UK and elsewhere may have visited compares with central and western China. Is that a potential source of instability in the future?

Professor Tsang: Are you talking about regional differences in terms of development?

Stephen Gethins: Yes, the regional variations.

Professor Tsang: What you have in China is substantially bigger than in the UK. I am hesitating because I am not quite sure whether that comparison is an entirely misleading one. We are talking about, by Chinese standards, real poverty in certain parts of China, where people are really dealing with getting enough food—proteins—in, compared with some parts of Shanghai or Beijing, next to which the rich in London look modest. The scale is much, much bigger.

Professor Pils: I agree with that. In terms of understanding how much—to what extent—poverty has been reduced, of course we rely on the degree to which the Government are willing to provide access to information on that, but there is limited information on poverty reduction, as opposed to the levels of inequality. Those are separate issues. Certainly anyone who travels to the poorest regions of rural China—certain western and central areas—would be very much struck by the different levels of development.

I cannot comment particularly, I am afraid, on foreign assistance and its effectiveness. I would say, very cautiously, that with China overall becoming much wealthier and economically powerful, its capacity in principle has of course increased to direct funding, support and so on to poorer regions, but a huge obstacle to the effectiveness of these efforts is also local corruption. I have been marginally involved with some projects—for example, about rural education and so on—and I think that anyone who has had such involvement would be able to point to instances of funding disappearing in the system and not actually reaching recipients.

That does not mean that it does not remain extremely important to remain connected to domestic efforts to reduce poverty and to address



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inequalities and social issues, not least because that connection is also an opportunity to provide some transparency to shine a light on these local issues.

Q111 Ann Clwyd: I want to ask in particular about human rights in China. I am reminded that some years ago I was with an Inter-Parliamentary Union delegation and international conference, and we met the Chinese delegation. One of our members wore a T-shirt which said, "Free Tibet". Obviously, that was provocative. He asked the Chinese, "If I came to China wearing this T-shirt, what would happen to me?" The answer was, "Why would you?"—that is, come to China wearing that T-shirt.

I want to ask about the growing international concern about reports that 1 million or more Uighur Muslims are in re-education camps. Do you find that credible? Do you challenge it or would you agree with that, and why?

Paul Roseby: Generally, you hit on a very strong ethical point. We have an ethics policy within the organisation. Whenever there is an opportunity—I stress it is an opportunity to work in challenging international parts of our globe, challenging because of political human rights issues—I would first and foremost prioritise our international exchange for that reason. I believe you have to be in it to win it and therefore change it, as opposed to point fingers from the outside. Our power is within and our knowledge is within.

The exchange value for young people with young people in those countries is far greater than any protest that can be shouted out the loudest outside those countries. That must be stressed. The value and learning opportunity for young people to work with like-minded individuals, regardless of the policies of government is absolutely life changing on both sides. However, our ethical policy is always challenged and through our governance we will raise these issues.

We have done considerable work in Saudi Arabia. Interestingly enough, ethical questions are asked more because of our work in the Middle East than they are in China, despite exactly the example that you rightly bring up. I think that says a lot about this country's values and assessment of human rights, not China's. Generally, I think Islamophobia is pretty rife and institutionally embedded in this country. I think there is a hands-off approach generally about people's viewpoint on our work in China, compared to our work in Saudi. Again, this is anecdote, but I do not get so much earworm about our work in China as I do in the Middle East.

Q112 Chair: Have you had anybody raising the Uighur question recently?

Paul Roseby: Not directly, but we are not working in China right now. That is not to say that our trustees are not absolutely rounded individuals with the right questions at the right time. It is called cultural diplomacy. We can bandy that phrase around all we like, but it really means something. It is a game changer not just for young people, but for Governments.

You mentioned Tibet. I look at the first project we did, “The Merchant of Venice”, which is about racism and identity. They did not realise until we cast a non-white Shylock, then they got it. I hate to be patronising—“they got it”—but literally, they did get it. You have to be that obvious. We kind of won the argument on opening night at a brilliant theatre at the heart of theatre in China, because of our casting choices.

If we had not done that and if we had chosen ethically not to go there for of all sorts of reasons around Tibet, what a wasted opportunity for those young people and the audiences that enjoyed that.

Q113 **Ann Clwyd:** What about the Uighurs? Would you like to address that directly? Are there a million?

Professor Veg: Thank you for raising the question. I think that would definitely merit a separate hearing of this Committee from experts who are working on Xinjiang. I do not think anyone here would like to challenge those reports; they all seem very credible.

Speaking from the academic perspective, there are reports of professors, university presidents, who have disappeared. One was the former president of Xinjiang University³, who was an emeritus professor in my sister institution, the EPHE in Paris. Several colleagues have raised his case. Those reports have all not been denied; there is no evidence that anything about them is flawed. Until proof of the contrary, I would say that—including the numbers—they are there to be refuted. I would definitely urge you to dig into that specifically.

Professor Tsang: I would be very sure that Professor Pils will have a lot more to say on this. The Chinese Government defined Uigurs as Chinese citizens. They are not being defined as anything else; they are defined as Chinese citizens. When you have an identifiable group of citizens in the country, and something like one-tenth of that identifiable group live in camps, you have an enormous human rights problem.

Ever since the end of Chairman Mao’s era in 1976, probably including the period of hard military crackdown in 1989, we have not seen the scale of human rights abuse that we are seeing today in Xinjiang. If we believe in our values, in our system, even though there is probably not much we can actually do to change the situation in China, it would be wrong for us to remain silent on the subject.

Professor Pils: I would very much second that. While I am not an expert who has done this work⁴ on Xinjiang camps, I am a general China human rights expert.

³ Note from witness: ‘The name of the Uyghur professor (former president of Xinjiang University, who reportedly received a suspended death sentence) I mentioned is Tiyp Tashpolat.’

⁴ Note from witness, should read as: ‘...this empirical...’



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Coming back to the question of the credibility of the reports, the situation has evolved a bit. Initially, there were reports that simply pointed out that these facilities that could hold around about 1 million people were being constructed on the basis of satellite imaging, Government procurement contracts et cetera. It was possible to provide evidence for that. Since then, the Government have acknowledged that there are camps—only, those camps are being characterised as being for vocational training, for something that the authorities characterise as “transformation through education”, or “jiaoyu zhuanhua”.

As a human rights scholar, I am very familiar with that term, having had conversations with various people who have gone through similar processes, albeit not in Xinjiang, that were equally characterised by that term. The grave human rights violations to which Professor Tsang was alluding, almost certainly in my view—indeed, we have increasing evidence of that as well—include not only arbitrary detention of people in these camps but also the use of torture to transform them, to de-extremify them, to use that bureaucratic language. Especially given that we have credible evidence that it happens on this very vast scale, that is extremely concerning.

Q114 Ann Clwyd: What do you think is motivating China’s approach to Xinjiang?

Professor Pils: I think that, in some ways, what we can see is a continuation of what we were already talking about: an effort to strengthen control. The authorities have been very careful to present the repressive campaign in Xinjiang as a response to terrorism.

In some ways, that response started taking shape following the so-called war on terror in countries in the west. It has been intensified and expanded under Xi Jinping, in an apparent effort to assimilate and to achieve a kind of ethnic blending, as some scholars have called it, and to strengthen control of society in Xinjiang. That is apparently in response to some anxiety that there is the potential for unrest in Xinjiang, but it is very difficult to ascertain the degree to which that unrest actually motivated the response.

Professor Tsang: Can I just add that I think the big change that happened with Xi Jinping is a much harder approach? It is also because there was a party secretary in Tibet who implemented more or less the same policy and, apparently, in the judgment of the Chinese Government, successfully pacified Tibet. He was therefore transferred from Tibet to Xinjiang and is pushing the same policy that he had in Tibet with a vengeance. That is where we are.

Q115 Mike Gapes: What I find quite remarkable is that, internationally, there is such limited criticism of the Chinese Government. How many Muslim-led countries, internationally, have publicly criticised or denounced the imprisonment of 1 million people? People talk about what is happening to the Rohingya in Bangladesh, and they talk about Gaza endlessly, but where are the international voices? Is that because other countries take



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the view that it is an internal affair of China's and we are not interested in it? Or is it because of the economic power and the political influence of China in the world, and therefore Governments are not concerned about it?

Professor Tsang: There are two sides to it. There is certainly the element of the Chinese Government's very successful management of the relationship with Islamic countries in terms of a narrative of Chinese friendship. Whether with Arabs or other Muslims, they have been incredibly successful in that narrative, combined with the economic incentive.

You have another important reason, which is that, within those Muslim countries, they are more focused on the "struggle" against the west, in particular the United States. So what happens in Europe and in America is less acceptable than what is happening in China. I think they make a conscious choice to try to not—

Q116 **Chair:** That is interesting, because on jihadi websites today, you are starting to see a very clear condemnation of the Chinese Government's actions on the Uighur populations. You are seeing clearly the imprisonment and torture of Muslims in western China being cited as a reason for jihad. Indeed, there is a real issue here for countries like our own, in that the mass torture and imprisonment—and in some cases possibly even execution—of Muslims in western China is leading to a rise in jihadism that could easily have repercussions for us, not just for China.

Is there any connection, perhaps, between the way that the Chinese Government are using mass surveillance, and then exporting it to countries like—well, I will not list them—those in the Middle East, and therefore buying alliances with repressive dictatorships, and the silence from those repressive dictatorships that happen to be Muslim?

Professor Tsang: I think it goes back to what I said at the beginning: Chinese foreign policy is there to make the world safe for authoritarianism. Therefore, they are making the world safe for the countries that are practising some of the repressions.

Chair: Some of which are Muslim.

Professor Tsang: And some of which are responding in the way that the Chinese Government wanted them to respond. But the basic point that you make is a very true one. China did have a very small terrorist problem before. They will end up with a scale of Islamist terrorism that will make the one that we face dwarf into insignificance. If this policy continues, you will have a large number of Muslim people—Uighurs or sometimes other nationalities—who will turn to jihadism because they have nothing else to do.

Q117 **Chair:** For those of us who are friends of the Chinese people, this is deeply worrying, because this will lead to an escalation of violence within China.



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Professor Tsang: Well, we made the mistake with the global war on terror; that was not the right way to respond to 9/11. The Chinese Government have chosen to make the same mistake as George W Bush made, but on a bigger scale.

Q118 **Mike Gapes:** Can I come in on that? From memory, there were eight or nine Uighurs in Guantanamo Bay who were then transferred by the US, without consulting the British Government when Hillary Clinton was the Secretary of State, to Bermuda. There was a big row about it at that time, presumably because they could not have been ever sent back to China because bad things would have happened to them. Was there really a Uighur terrorist network at that time? They were picked up in Afghanistan or somewhere else and then were in Guantanamo. Was there a serious terrorist threat?

Professor Tsang: Now going back to around the time of 9/11. Before that, we had isolated incidences where some of those terrorists were Uighurs. So we had a few incidents where there were Uighurs who had committed acts in China—Beijing or elsewhere—that by the definition that we would apply we would consider them as terrorist acts. However, there were a handful of them.

Q119 **Mike Gapes:** Certainly not hundreds of thousands or a million people.

Professor Tsang: We are not talking about that. We are now talking about potentially in the thousands of Uighurs who have fought in Syria or elsewhere in the Middle East in the past few years. The situation now is more problematic than it was going back, say, 15 years ago. We have not seen any evidence of an Islamist terrorist movement in China itself—not yet, but it probably will come if the current policy continues.

Q120 **Ann Clwyd:** How do you think a country such as the UK, with our values, should respond to the situation in Xinjiang?

Paul Roseby: Well, we write a play about it and then we can't stage it there, but maybe one day we can. We write a play about it and we stage it here. I would love to take "The Reluctant Fundamentalist", which we have produced over the past two or three years—an original novel by Mohsin Hamid—and take it to Pakistan, China, the Far East and the Middle East. It would be amazing to do that. One day, I hope we can.

We can only do that if we continue to work with them now. You can't jumpstart the greatest intentions and hope that in the end it will work out. We have to be on the ground to change and influence people's minds now. I can't deny a young person's opportunity to work in that country with all its complexities. I struggle personally when I work in these difficult places because of my own beliefs and my own sexual persuasion.

The persecution of LGBT communities in the Middle East and China is well documented. That doesn't mean to say that I can't work there, travel there, exchange knowledge, best practice there. I tend to take a very pragmatic view on it. I think that is the answer; that is the way we can solve. I stress cultural diplomacy is one of the keys to changing viewpoints



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within such a complex nation. It is vast and not everybody thinks the same way. I know it is hard to swallow, but that is how I stand.

Professor Pils: It would be extremely important to continue raising the issue. I agree with Professor Tsang that, in some ways, the ability in any western country, including the UK, to influence China on this issue is very limited but at least we need to ask for investigation. It would be appropriate to seek the appointment of international observers who would be able to go to Xinjiang and to seek the creation of a UN-based mechanism for an inquiry into human rights violations in Xinjiang.

It is also very important, as Professor Veg said, to continue raising the issue in the parliamentary process. Beyond that, it is very difficult to come up with effective responses to this apparently mass human rights violation, but that does not mean that we should stop raising the issue.

Q121 **Ann Clwyd:** What if China threatens to respond to human rights criticism with pushback in other areas, such as trade?

Professor Pils: As a human rights scholar, I hope that commitment to human rights is not part of a trade-off; I don't think it is optional. It may be tempting to think that there will be penalising responses to human rights criticism, but I think that that threat may well be empty.

Professor Tsang: I agree that it is an open question as to how the Chinese Government will respond. Nobody on this panel has suggested that we simply go out and condemn the Chinese Government; that is not the way to go about this, either. What we have been advocating and suggesting is that we should be encouraging the Government to inquire into the status of human rights in Xinjiang. If the Chinese Government are willing to allow outside observers to go into Xinjiang, we will have much better ways of understanding the status of the situation and will be able to engage in much more effective ways with the Chinese.

With the way the global economy is going, on the question whether the Chinese Government will simply be using trade as a way to respond to our interest in the welfare of Chinese citizens, I think it's a wild assumption. They will be just as interested in protecting their economic stability and therefore the capacity of the Communist party to stay in power as we are in protecting our economy so that our citizens will have a good life.

Professor Pils: Additionally, I would suggest that any response is likely to be more effective if it is multilateral or, for example, as I suggested, UN-based. I think that it is very important that the problem is seen as one that is offensive to, more broadly speaking, European values as well. Solidarity among European countries in raising the issue can be to some extent effective. It has been somewhat effective at least, for example, in prompting a response from the Chinese Government in trying to defend what it is doing—as opposed to completely denying the existence of the camps with the highly incredible statement that the Government has created vocational training centres for about a million Uighurs and Kazakhs.



Q122 Ann Clwyd: Mr Roseby, given what you have said about the importance of cultural exchanges, are you not worried that they might give more legitimacy to human rights abuses in China?

Paul Roseby: I think we would look at this according to a case-by-case scenario, depending on where we had been invited to and where we were going to work. It's all linked to social deprivation and the lack of equality.

One of the interesting things that I have noted in relation to this conversation is that we have never been approached with regard to our social outreach programme, our community programme, which is a sure way of safeguarding against utter poverty and inequality. There is no money in it in China; they do not see it as a profit-making exercise. Culturally, from where we stand, it is all about profit making first and foremost. A national agency, an interim agency, would make money, as part of the agency in the deal, in making our work more robust and more present in China.

If we were to have a conversation, maybe through the Foreign Office, where we would be deemed more valuable in cultural exercises regarding social equality and all that entails, I think we would look at that according to a case-by-case scenario and I think we would be very interested in that. Art is political—of course it is; I'm not going to deny that—so we would face that challenge. I cannot give you a yes/no answer.

Q123 Mr Seely: Can I ask a quick question? I understand what you are saying, Paul, and probably to engage with people is realistically the only answer. But, just out of curiosity, would you feel as comfortable making that argument if you were dealing with a neo-fascist one-party state, rather than a Marxist-Leninist one-party state? If you had been to a country that was murdering people on the grounds of race rather than class, although ethnic diversity does come in to it—

Paul Roseby: And ethnic cleansing, of course.

Mr Seely: —or had done so historically, would you be saying, "Yes, don't worry, it's fine"? Sorry, that is not a great analogy—I take that back. I mean one-party states—

Paul Roseby: No, I think it is a fair provocation. You are asking me in the moment to respond to something that, of course, I would feel a huge abhorrence to. I meet some pretty difficult, challenging people in this country, with viewpoints that are pretty extreme, and we still have to engage with them around a table in a very civilised way.

I would like to take that civilised ethos outside the UK and advocate it in all its manners, and that includes cultural exchange first and foremost. The priority in any of this is safeguarding the wellbeing of young people—despite our being the National Youth Theatre of Great Britain, it is not always about safeguarding just UK citizens, but international citizens. If we are putting our young people at risk at any point, then we just do not do it. That is first and foremost absolutely the priority, always.



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Do not underestimate the power of influence and change through peer-on-peer learning with young people. That impact will not be recognised on day one or within 10 years, but it might be in 20 or 25 years, in an entire generation. To deny that opportunity for change in its embryonic stages, I think, is wrong.

Q124 Mr Seely: The next question we wanted to ask is about the potential for the UK to work more effectively with China on cultural exchanges, but I think you have more or less answered that question. Is there anything you want to add to it? The follow-up element is whether you are worried that cultural co-operation with China could give legitimacy to human rights abuses. We have basically spent the last 10 minutes talking about that, so before we move on to question 9, does anyone have anything further to say on those two points?

Paul Roseby: I don't think so.

Q125 Mr Seely: What is the best way to draw a line between normal attempts at influence that are part of any country's foreign policy and what might be seen, in a way that is quite difficult to define, as an unacceptable level of interference? In China's relationships with the UK, Australia, Canada or New Zealand, where there are blurred lines between acceptable and unacceptable influence, what are those lines? What is acceptable and what is unacceptable, and how does one counteract those more unacceptable forms of influence? Could we start with you, Professor Tsang, if you have anything to say?

Professor Tsang: It is a very difficult question to answer, because some of the activities we do not necessarily know, and if we do not know for sure what is happening, it is difficult to define whether it is acceptable or not. We have to work on the basis of those we actually know. Trying to plant and/or buy off elected representatives is off. That should not be tolerated. Employing people to break into the homes of academics who are critical of China is not acceptable. Using visas as a weapon to silence journalists' or academics' comments on any country should not be an acceptable practice. There is a list of the kind of activities that are fairly clearly not acceptable in terms of our basic values.

Other activities are in a grey area, such as buying up Chinese-language media and using them as an extension of the Chinese Government or Chinese Communist party's propaganda machinery. These are commercial operations; if somebody wants to buy up a newspaper and use it for their purposes, I would find it difficult to draw a line and say, "We simply cannot allow that to happen." There are some areas that we may find extremely unpleasant and in some ways objectionable, but that we probably cannot really say are simply not acceptable, but some, as I have outlined, clearly are. Others may have other examples of what would be clearly unacceptable.

Professor Veg: I think a lot of it is about developing clear guidelines and thoughts about how our system is often conducive to this kind of interference. Just to give you an example, WeChat, which is China's



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messaging app, similar to WhatsApp, is being greatly encouraged. It is an all-round app that allows you to pay, do all sorts of administrative procedures and see your doctor, etc. In many western countries, we have been trying to increase the possibility of Chinese tourists using WeChat to pay and to consume, etc. We should think about whether it is a good thing to have an app that is actively censoring news and information, and to encourage people to use it when they come to our countries in order to live their daily lives.

Q126 Mr Seely: Are you saying that we should stop Chinese people from using WeChat because it would be good for them—because their Government then could not monitor their expenditure or movements, or what they do in this country?

Professor Veg: I am hesitant to apply this strict reciprocity. That is what the Chinese Government do with Facebook, Google and many other things—apps, enterprises and western businesses—but I would be hesitant to go that far. I think we should ensure that apps that can operate in European countries conform to freedom of expression standards.

Professor Pils: On this larger problem, I think that we have to recognise that it is not only citizens of this country, but Chinese citizens coming here, who are affected by repression that can be unacceptable. There are many examples of that, including in the field that I work in, academia. There are a lot of attempts, increasingly, under Xi Jinping, essentially to control and restrict what visitors to this country can say.

Q127 Mr Seely: To this country?

Professor Pils: Yes, and to control their ability to exit China to come here. That corresponds to what Professor Tsang spoke of, and it is unacceptable, although our ability to address it may be limited.

I would add to the larger, complex question that we have just discussed the problem of inducements, and the problems of potential complicity with repression, including cross-border repression, that this raises. That is a very complex issue, but an example of responding to a perceived commercial need, which is highly problematic, was given a while ago by Cambridge University Press, when it temporarily made a decision to censor its database of journals made available online in China in response to censorship requests.

Q128 Mr Seely: When was that?

Professor Tsang: Last summer.

Professor Pils: There are many examples of problems in the field of academia. Institutions exchange agreements concluded with Chinese funding, perhaps institutionalised in the so-called Confucius Institutes, but also in other contexts. One of our concerns is the rules for academic censorship in China being exported here. Thinking about how we could respond to this problem, one minimum suggestion would be to ask for greater transparency.

Chair: Can I stop you there? We are running very short on time. Andrew, do you want to focus very quickly on Hong Kong with Professor Veg? We have about 5 minutes.

Q129 **Andrew Rosindell:** This is quite a crucial question. There was a lot of hope in 1997, when Hong Kong ceased to be a British colony and became part of China, though with autonomy. However, since then it seems to me that things have gone adrift. Could you tell us to what extent the commitments under the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law have been upheld? Has China truly stuck to that pledge, or has there been a watering down of that commitment given 22 years ago?

Professor Veg: That is an important question, and I am sure that Professor Tsang will add to this. The difficulty of the question is that the assurances enshrined in the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law are very weak. I would not say that China has openly breached the text of the Joint Declaration or the Basic Law, but it has, as you say, watered down, tried to circumvent and tried to change the meaning of various commitments.

One important example from the last couple of years is of the autonomy of the Hong Kong judiciary. We have seen several examples of that, such as in the fall of 2017, when the National People's Congress gave an interpretation of the Basic Law. The mechanism to do that exists in the Basic Law, but it was only the second time since the handover that this interpretation was not solicited by a Hong Kong court, and it was the first time that such an interpretation was issued at the same time as an ongoing trial.

Basically, something that was conceived as a supreme court mechanism is stepping in to preclude the outcome of a court case that is ongoing at a lower level. That is something that we can safely say is not within the spirit of the Basic Law, although it is not against the letter of the Basic Law.

Q130 **Andrew Rosindell:** So has China's interpretation of the Joint Declaration subtly altered over the years?

Professor Veg: This is part of what we were talking about earlier. In a 2014 white paper on "one country, two systems" produced by the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office of the State Council, a concept of comprehensive jurisdiction appeared. The concept did not exist before in any text relating to the relationship between the central Government and the Hong Kong SAR. The concept has been used since by most state leaders, including Xi Jinping in his speeches, and it has given rise to various incremental changes in the way that the Hong Kong Government operates.

Another example is the banning of a political party under an ordinance that was previously used against triads. Another instance is the change in the way that the public order ordinances—the various laws related to public order—are enforced and adjudicated. This concept has trickled down, and I would say it is also related to the general change in political philosophy at the centre.



Q131 **Mike Gapes:** Briefly, there is a proposal for much greater integration of Hong Kong economically—the Greater Bay Area concept—with Macau and parts of southern China. What will be the implications of that for other issues apart from economics, such as political freedom, human rights and “one country, two systems”?

Professor Tsang: The economic integration of Hong Kong into the Pearl river delta will essentially make Hong Kong more like the rest of the Pearl river delta. The justification for Hong Kong remaining a special administrative region will be less and less. Is this something that Hong Kong actually really wants? Does Hong Kong have a choice in the matter? It does not look like the people in Hong Kong feel that they have much of a choice.

Today, more of Hong Kong’s population—particularly the younger generations—are looking to emigrate from Hong Kong than at any time except for the period of the Beijing massacre of 1989; 1989 to 1997 was the peak of people in Hong Kong wanting to emigrate. They stopped looking for emigration after 1997. In a sense, this was reflected, in the early stage of the Chinese takeover, by the fact that they largely stood by the terms of the Joint Declaration. People in Hong Kong are now voting with their feet, and showing that they are not seeing the same situation being sustained.

Q132 **Chair:** May I draw things to a close? I ask anybody who has anything else to add to write in, because we are right out of time.

Professor Veg: May I say just one sentence? This is something that is within in the power of some of you. I would urge you to try to declassify and publish all the archives that are related to the handover negotiations. I know that the UK Government have done a lot. I have seen many of these archives, and it is great to see that the limit has been moved to 20 years. None the less, many documents are still classified and redacted. I think the Hong Kong people are owed exact information about who asked for what, who received what promise, and who said what at that time.

Q133 **Chair:** Thank you very much. There are other questions that we may write to you about, if it is all right with you. Professors three and Mr Roseby, thank you very much for your time. We are very grateful.

Examination of witness

Witness: The Rt Hon. the Lord Patten of Barnes CH.

Q134 **Chair:** Lord Patten, thank you very much for joining this afternoon’s session of the Foreign Affairs Committee. I will start with a simple question on the declassification of archives that we have just heard about. Would you be supportive?

Lord Patten: I agree with that.

Chair: Excellent.



Lord Patten: Some have been declassified, but I think they are talking principally about the ones which, like those about other former dependent territories or colonies, are kept separately from Kew. I can think of no good reason why we should continue to classify those.

Q135 **Priti Patel:** Good afternoon. I want to build on our previous evidence session and concentrate on the Joint Declaration. How would you characterise the current status of Hong Kong compared to what was agreed at the time between the UK and China during the Joint Declaration and Basic Law? Where do you see the major departures?

Lord Patten: Perhaps I can just put it in context. "One country, two systems", which was the rubric under which the Joint Declaration was negotiated, was in many respects a brilliant concept that dealt with real problems on the Chinese side and the British side. On both sides, there were political and moral embarrassments.

On the Chinese side, they were dealing with a territory that had been ripped or stolen from them by colonial powers in the 19th century—unequal treaties, and all that. Secondly, there was a huge embarrassment for them, because more than half the population of Hong Kong were people who were refugees from Communism in China—people who had swum and clambered over razor wire to get away from the cultural revolution, the great leap forward and Communism to find a better life in this colonial oppression, so there was an embarrassment for them about that.

It was embarrassing for us, first, because of the history, which I have mentioned, and secondly, because every other colony or territory, as we used to call it, for which we were responsible, we would prepare—sometimes under duress—for independence. We would parachute in copies of Jennings's "The British Constitution". We would introduce democratic institutions—and sometimes they worked; sometimes they did not. Countries were becoming independent. That was never going to be possible in Hong Kong, which was morally difficult for us.

The Chinese used to press us, certainly back in the '70s, not to introduce democracy in Hong Kong, because they thought that if we did, people in Hong Kong would start to think that they were going to be like Singapore or another Asian country. I think Zhou Enlai sent messages to that effect, as did others, to Harold Macmillan and other political leaders.

It was a difficult backdrop, and in many respects, "one country, two systems" was a brilliant way, proposed by Deng Xiaoping, of dealing with that. I think "one country, two systems" and adherence to the Joint Declaration worked pretty well for the first 10 or 15 years after we left. It wasn't perfect. The Chinese rowed back on commitments they had made on democratic development—specifically the commitment that people in Hong Kong should be able to decide the arrangements themselves. There were one or two interventions, one of which was mentioned by the professor earlier, in Hong Kong's affairs.



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There were lots of criticisms you could make, but by and large, Hong Kong still had a great sense of citizenship and still had a good balance between economic and political freedom. There were no questions about the rule of law, freedom of speech and so on. It was still probably one of the freest cities in Asia.

I think, as Professor Tsang was saying earlier, that changed pretty decisively with Xi Jinping. Just as he rowed back from Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms, with consequences we can now see in relation to state-owned enterprises and the private sector; just as he cracked down on dissidents and in Xinjiang, which you were talking about just now; just as he cracked down on human rights lawyers; just as the party, having stepped back from controlling everything, went back into trying to control every aspect of Government or other sorts of life.

Just as that happened in mainland China, so in Hong Kong. The United Front became more active, the Joint Liaison Office became more active and there was a general tightening of control over all those aspects of Hong Kong's system that go beyond. "One country, two systems" is not just about capitalism. It is about the rule of law, free speech—all the freedoms we associate with pluralism. That has happened to a considerable extent over the past half a dozen years. For example, at the Geneva Human Rights Commission meetings in November, five or six countries specifically raised human rights in Hong Kong, quite separately from human rights in China; I think that is the first time that has happened.

People—toadies or useful idiots, to use a Marxist expression—who tell you that nothing has changed in Hong Kong cannot be listening to what anybody in Hong Kong is saying, or talking to people. I think it was Steve Tsang at the end who pointed out that in the latest poll, 51% of young people in Hong Kong talked about whether they could emigrate. That is a terrible criticism of what has happened.

I think things went pretty well on the whole for a bit. It is extraordinary that it has taken an autocratic Chinese Government in Beijing to produce an independence movement in Hong Kong. With the colonial oppressor, there was no independence movement. With the colonial oppressor, when I was Governor, I think the largest anti-Government protest we had was a few hundred people. It is worrying what has happened in the past few years.

Following on from something that the Chairman said earlier, whenever you produce criticisms, the Chinese ambassador will say, "This is anti-Chinese. You are attacking the Chinese people." Nobody is attacking the Chinese people. If we are sane, we all want a prosperous, stable China playing a major role in global affairs. What we are critical of is the behaviour of a Chinese communist regime and a Chinese communist dictatorship, which is what it is now. I don't think it is unreasonable for us occasionally to assert our own values in responding to that.

Q136 **Chair:** Would you agree that those values are shared, quite obviously, by



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very many Chinese people?

Lord Patten: It was interesting to talk to these young guys and women—everybody seems young to me now—who led the democracy demonstrations in 2014. Some of you will have met them as well. A Chinese official and a couple of businessmen said to me, “They are so radical. They are so difficult.” I said, “You should meet some of the students at Oxford.” It was absurd, because they are extraordinarily moderate. Without being used as puppets by us, they have actually come to realise themselves the relationship between economic and political freedom.

I am not responsible for the political views of people who were born after I left Hong Kong. The British are not responsible. The CIA is not responsible for the fact that those young people have a real and profound sense of citizenship, which is very Chinese and very patriotic, but believe in the rule of law, letting people get on with their own lives, having freedom of academic research, having freedom of speech, having freedom of assembly, and the freedom to hold a Government to account. It is a great tribute to the ideas that they espouse that those ideas have grown again 20-odd years after we left Hong Kong.

Q137 **Priti Patel:** Are you at all surprised that since the handover we have been seeing, for a significant period of time, the trend of centralisation and command and control—the spill-over effect from the mainland?

Lord Patten: Yes, I am, because like a lot of other liberal democrats—liberal with a small l—who believe in pluralism, I always assumed that, as China became more prosperous and as technology developed in China, it would gradually ease up; that it was impossible to keep an iron grip on politics while economies changed.

I have not entirely abandoned hope of that. I have never believed that there is a sort of mechanistic relationship between per capita GNP and the development of democracy. Some people have argued that, such as academics looking at South Korea, Taiwan and so on, and I have never believed it, but I do think—it was a Marxist view after all—that economics has political consequences. I still think it is happening in China.

I am no expert in this, but it is extraordinary that we are starting to hear stories about the politburo being obliged to do self-criticism—it does not even happen in the Cabinet in this country—and going back to these Maoist devices, which perhaps suggests that the dictatorship is not working quite as well as everybody supposed. We all know that if you make yourself the boss of everything, you have to take the blame if anything goes wrong.

Q138 **Chair:** Is there not an element of having, in some ways, old men with high technology facing off young people with ideas?

Lord Patten: That is a very good way of putting it.

Chair: And we do not know which side will win.

Lord Patten: I just hope that the old men and technology in China know more about technology than the old man here does, because I find the Dominic Cummings of this world pretty baffling.

Q139 **Chair:** You have highlighted various ways in which things have changed. What could and what should we do about it, with others and on our own?

Lord Patten: What we should do about it is take the Joint Declaration seriously. There was an occasion the other day when the Chief Executive of Hong Kong—to be frank, I am not sure how much she runs Hong Kong today—after a group of MPs had said something about recent events in Hong Kong, declared, as people regularly do and as the ambassador here, God help us, does very regularly, “It is none of your business. This is interference in our affairs.” But the Joint Declaration is an international treaty lodged, at China’s request, at the United Nations.

There is a serious point that we should make again and again: if you cannot believe that the Chinese will keep their word on the Joint Declaration and that particular treaty, why should you believe that they will keep their word on other things? When I was a Commissioner I worked with Pascal Lamy on negotiating Chinese accession to the WTO, and I know the extent to which they have slipped away or resiled from many of the commitments they made on the WTO. It would be a very bad sign if they were to think that the Joint Declaration was simply how they interpreted it, not how most people interpret expressions such as “the rule of law”, which is not “rule by law”.

Understandably, there has always been quite a substantial concentration on accountability, on democratic institutions, and that is of course important. However, in his magisterial history of the institutions of government—a book that a lot of us will have had to read at university—Sammy Finer has a chapter on the one community he can point to that he described as a liberal society that is not democratic, which was Hong Kong. I always used to say, “Well, sooner or later it will be democratic, but it is certainly liberal and open and pluralist. It has freedom of speech and all the other freedoms that we talk about.” The worry in Hong Kong is the extent to which those freedoms are gradually being whittled away.

Q140 **Chair:** Can I move on? Forgive me, Lord Patten, but we are running short of time. Would you say that this serves as a warning to those who may be doing deals under the belt and road initiative? Would you say that this is something that other countries should see as a warning, because international law is—how can I put it—not entirely binding?

Lord Patten: Yes, I would. I agree with quite a lot of what President Trump has said, in his own inimitable way, about trade, but the way he has gone about it has turned him into the gift that goes on giving as far as a lot of Chinese political rhetoric is concerned. I do think—and this relates to something you were talking about earlier; it relates to Hong Kong, but it relates to other things as well—that we should be working with Australia, New Zealand and Canada. All of those countries have done a lot of serious academic and governmental work on interference, and the difference

between interference and influence. We should be doing a lot of work with them on such issues, and of course with the Americans.

Q141 **Chair:** Of course, those countries that you mentioned also send judges to the Court of Final Appeal in Hong Kong, and therefore share with us not just a responsibility for, but a connection to the way justice is applied in Hong Kong. Therefore, should justice not be appropriately applied there, our own systems could be tarnished by an impression that we are turning a blind eye to injustice.

Lord Patten: That is true, but I have to say that it would be very difficult to sustain a criticism of the way that judges have behaved in Hong Kong.

Q142 **Chair:** That is not the same thing.

Lord Patten: I agree. I have a lot of criticisms of the way the Justice Department behaves, which I think is a transition mechanism for the United Front or for Beijing, but the way judges have behaved has been, on the whole, pretty admirable. One or two judges have raised anxieties about it, including Mr Justice Bokhary, who was a member of the Court of Final Appeal, and Robert Tang, who was a very senior judge. Both of them have raised worries, but by and large the judges have behaved pretty well, although there has been a lot of pressure on them. The Hong Kong judiciary is very lucky to have been led by Andrew Li for several years, and now by Geoffrey Ma, both of whom are admirable and decent men packed full of judicial integrity.

However, the point was raised earlier about Beijing going beyond what we had assumed was the right of interpretation of law to actually, in the case of whether or not people can stand for election, appearing to design laws. That has been a worry, and the main problem for judges now is that because the Justice Department and the Executive have been going back to resurrect colonial ordinances that by and large we had got rid of by 1997 in order to deal with public demonstrations, it has put the judiciary in an extremely difficult position. If your idea of trying to bind a community together after 2014 and deal sensibly with pressures for independence is the sort of vengeful pursuit—still—of people who led those astonishingly peaceful demonstrations, then you are likely to be in trouble and you give judges a very difficult time.

Q143 **Mr Seely:** Is this the point at which—this is not because Lord Patten has mentioned it—we should ask the influence and interference question? The question was about the drawing of a line between the kinds of influence that every country tries to have and the more malign versions of influence that certain authoritarian states—Russia, for instance, and China—are trying to use as well. Previous speakers have talked about illegality, a sort of coercive influence that is legal, but also about other forms of influence as well. Working with others—Australia, Canada and New Zealand—how would you confront these semi-ethical, semi-legal forms of influence in a country?

Lord Patten: First there is a question of definition. You quite rightly distinguish between influence and interest. Very often it is one of those



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issues like pornography: difficult to define but you know it when you see it, if you are unlucky enough to see it. The British Council seeks influence, but nobody is going to think that the British Council is doing the same job as MI6. There are distinctions. At the university I know best, we have a huge range of collaborative programmes with China, commercially and with bits of the Chinese Government. We have a big research centre at Suzhou—we don't have a campus in China but we have a research centre in Suzhou. We have quite a few Chinese benefactors. Now we have a huge number of Chinese alumni because we have got over 1,300 Chinese postgraduate and undergraduate students at Oxford—more than most universities—and about 240 academic staff. This is a subject that we are really live to.

There are two things that I think are most important. The first is transparency, so that you make clear where you are getting any money from. This is going to become a bigger issue. I don't want to drag in subjects that I understand are slightly controversial, such as what happens after Brexit, if Brexit happens, because universities and the research field is under a lot of pressure financially, but I think we need to look at that.

I also think that, without in any way suggesting that universities should get agreement from Government about what research to do or what research collaboration to allow, it would be very helpful if there was more agreement within Government about what is acceptable, and if there were a point of contact in Government to which all universities can turn. I read the papers and I read about views on Huawei. I am no expert on 5G or these issues, but if the Government have anxieties about a company, it should be possible for a university, if it is being offered research collaboration with that company, to ask somewhere in Government what is happening.

The more we talk about this, as the Australians and New Zealanders and Canadians and Americans are doing, and the more we are grown-up about it, first, the more likely we are to get things right and to pick up things such as intellectual property theft and the problems of security. When I was in northern California a few months ago, I was told that there were two sorts of companies: those that are being hacked by China and those that know they are being hacked by China. We will only deal with these issues if we are not craven in thinking that if you ever raise these issues, the Chinese will get angry with you and you won't be able to do as much business with China and so on. It is absolute nonsense.

Q144 Mr Seely: Are you worried about the levels of soft coercion on some Chinese academics or students in the West?

Lord Patten: It would be astonishing if it didn't happen. What you actually find—and I think the previous panel would have said this—is that a lot of people will tell you stories and then say, "Don't mention it to anybody." So it is not just in the hard sciences that these issues come up; it is also in the humanities. If you are asked to be part of a humanities programme with a group of other British and Chinese universities, for



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example, and you discover that some issues are clearly going to be out of bounds, or you discover that the whole thing is being run not by another academic in the humanities but by a Chinese engineer who happens to be rather senior in the Communist party—I am talking about a real case—and if you discover that you are being shut out of some meetings that only the Chinese are going to, then you have got a right to be suspicious.

The Confucius Institute and its activities raise some issues, bearing in mind that, by and large, it is an offshoot of the propaganda department of the Communist party. If the Confucius Institute is working on a university campus as a contributor to Chinese language instruction, to understanding about the spectacular Chinese civilisation, that is fine. If it is trying to shape the curriculum, or shape students' attitudes to Tibet, or Xinjiang, or free speech, or other issues like that, it is not acceptable.

Q145 Mr Seely: So that is for us to monitor in this country; we allow the Confucius Institute to work here but we lay down very clear guidelines about what it is allowed to do.

Lord Patten: It is very important for the Russell Group of universities and for Universities UK to take these issues openly and very seriously—I am sure that they do. I repeat—I have always been in trouble for arguing this case, but I still argue it with passion—that it is simply craven to say that you can't raise this or that issue with China because it will annoy them and you won't do as much business. What is the evidence for that? After David Cameron had invited the Dalai Lama to the UK and got his knuckles rapped by the Chinese, over the next two years British exports to China went up. Take the case of Norway. After the case of Liu Xiaobo, who got the Nobel peace prize, the Chinese said, "No more imports from Norway." That was very serious for Norwegian salmon. What you find is that Vietnamese imports of Norwegian salmon leap and imports of salmon from Vietnam to China leap. In the two years after Liu Xiaobo got the Nobel peace prize, exports to Asia from Norway, and to China from Norway, actually went up.

When I was in Hong Kong we used to be endlessly told by a few businessmen and others that because I was having arguments with the Chinese about, frankly, extremely limited measures to try to bed down democracy and fair elections—not total democracy—that would be bad for British business. In the five years before I was Governor, our exports to China as a proportion of OECD exports went down. While I was Governor, our proportion of exports to China in the OECD went up, and it did so faster than anybody else's. The Chinese do business on the same basis as everybody else. It encourages them to behave badly if you give the impression that you will be very nervous about the damage to you economically if you take them on in relation to political issues, where they are trying to interfere in our value system, after always denouncing us for trying to interfere in theirs.

Chair: Lord Patten, forgive me; we are very short of time.

Q146 Andrew Rosindell: Lord Patten, it seems to me that you are arguing for



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a much bolder approach by Britain and the global community in dealing with China. If I could quickly refer back to Hong Kong, you will be aware that this Committee was actually banned from going into Hong Kong for a previous inquiry in 2014. The question is, do you think that the United Kingdom should do a lot more to hold China to account for its actions in Hong Kong, and how effective do you think Britain can be in taking these issues forward, if we show a much bolder approach?

Lord Patten: I think it is astonishing to rattle on about the golden age of China economic relations when it would not allow your Committee to go to Hong Kong, even though you have every right to do so. You don't have to apply for visas. They have behaved terribly badly about that, and more recently about people like Victor Mallet and Benedict Rogers. We have to make a fuss about it. We have to summon the Chinese ambassador. We have to say, "We're not going to allow this or that delegation from the Communist party's international committee to come and see us." We have to do it with others. When, for example, the Chinese said to the Norwegians, "We are not going to buy anything from you because you've given the Nobel prize to Liu Xiaobo," the immediate response from Europe and from America should have been, "This is outrageous, you can't do that. We are a member of the WTO and that is not how the WTO operates."

We are really pathetic about this. It makes it easy for the Chinese—who are by no means fools—to pick us off one at a time. If we had worked with others on these issues over the years, we would not be arguing now about issues such as intellectual property theft in the WTO, and we would not now be arguing about the fact that there are such different rules for the way we invest in China to the way China invests here. Some people think that I am a crazed radical lunatic for saying all this, but I actually think that it makes sense to stand up for yourself in international affairs. Foreign policy is not about being nice to foreigners, particularly when the foreigners are being rather beastly to you.

Q147 **Chair:** Lord Patten, is it fair to say that the Chinese economy is now very internationalised, and that therefore the Chinese Government are gambling highly with their own future by seeking to undermine things like the World Trade Organisation?

Lord Patten: Yes it is. If I wanted to put a bit more pressure on China I would be appointing more judges to the WTO. It is an important organisation for us. One example of the Chinese internationalising their own problems and producing problems down the road for us is the whole belt and road initiative. It is a way of exporting debt and surplus capacity. Of course it will have some beneficial effects, but they are now an important part of the global economy. We want them to continue to be an important part of the global economy. We want more people to learn Chinese, and we want more people to learn about and understand China. We want China to play an important role in the UN and international organisations.



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I am not trying to revisit the whole Thucydides strategy of Sparta versus Athens and all that rubbish. I am not trying to isolate China. I am just saying that we should treat China in the same way that we treat any other country, though they are bigger than most and have a large amount of economic impact. Given the size of their economy, it is interesting that they have such a small political footprint. It says a great deal about the Chinese system.

Q148 Ian Murray: I just wanted to continue on this theme for one short moment on the basis that we have the Joint Declaration, so we have historical and future responsibilities with regards to Hong Kong. How far should the UK as a Government push some of these issues in Hong Kong? How far should we go on issues such as the pro-independence movement, and the barring of pro-independence MPs?

Lord Patten: I have always made a distinction between the independence movement and the democratic movement. When I went to Hong Kong late in 2016, I made a speech criticising the democratic movement⁵ for a number of reasons, to the surprise of the United Front. I said, "This is not on, it's not going to happen. It just plays into the hands of the hardliners and the Communist party and I can't possibly support it." Joshua Wong, among others, said to me, "Would you come and say this to students?" I spoke to 700 or 800 students in the main hall of the university and they gave me a polite but quite tough time, but I put the case to them. I go back the following year and I say to them, "Who has come from the Government to talk to you about why it's a bad idea to talk about independence?" They said, "Nobody." So I did it again. If you try to shut people out of any dialogue then you make little progress in changing their views. These are kids—sorry, that's patronising. These are young people who want to retain a sense of Hong Kong Chinese citizenship, and it is because of the way they have been handled that this has morphed into an argument for independence, which is not going to happen.

Q149 Ian Murray: But is it our responsibility? It's the UK's—

Lord Patten: It is our responsibility to say when a distinguished journalist is shut out of Hong Kong because he chaired a meeting of the Foreign Correspondents' Club at which a representative of the democracy movement was speaking⁶, before it was illegal to make those speeches. When something like that happens, we should make a fuss about it. We should make a fuss about the importance of people being able to speak their minds, even when they say things that one doesn't like.

We have to stick by our own values, but also we have to recognise that we have our own rules. During the fuss about some elected legislators making a farce out of their swearing in as legislators, I was asked about it and I

⁵ Note from witness, should read as: 'I made a speech criticising the independence movement...'

⁶ Note from witness, should read as: '...he chaired a meeting of the Foreign Correspondents' Club at which a representative of the independence movement was speaking...'



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said, "Well, you couldn't do it in the House of Commons, so why am I supposed to support it in Hong Kong?" I think it could have been dealt with better and more sensibly, and I certainly don't think there was any justification for the regime in Beijing intervening and trying to establish new rules for democracy. But I don't think you can be expected, just because you sympathise with people, to commend activity when you think it is foolish.

Q150 Mike Gapes: It is good to see you again, Lord Patten. I have a very quick question on the position of UK Government policy towards Taiwan. Are there any lessons that we should draw from Beijing's treatment of Hong Kong for our future position with regard to Taiwan—

Lord Patten: I think there are lessons—sorry.

Mike Gapes: I will be brief. We know that, internationally, the Chinese Government is trying to delegitimise Taiwan. It is doing that in all kinds of international organisations, even to the extent of the international English language testing system recently changing the designation on its website from "Taiwan" to "Taiwan, China", which clearly has caused some concern to Taiwanese students. Is there anything we can do about those kinds of issues?

Lord Patten: I was in Beijing in 1989, just before Tiananmen, for the annual meeting of the Asian Development Bank, which a number of the Members here will know all about, and the big issue then was the seating of Taiwan for the first time. I think it had to be seated as Taiwan/Taipei—I can't remember the exact formula. But we have had this argument for years, and I think that by and large we have to continue to discourage the Chinese from being threatening to Taiwan and point out to them that there is not, in human history, an example of a democracy agreeing to become part of a tyranny without being obliged to do it. I am sure that if China changes, Taiwan will change.

On the other hand, I think we have to discourage the Taiwanese, very gently and quietly, from poking sticks in Beijing's eye too frequently. I have never done that myself. I think Taiwan is a rumbustious democracy and looks after itself pretty well, but I don't think that it makes very much sense to encourage it to make too much of a fuss with China about occasional embarrassments, like names. What is happening at the moment, as you know, is that all sorts of companies that work in China—hotels and airlines—are being pressed to change the designations of where they work and where they are landing planes and so on, just in order to satisfy this absurd Chinese view.

Q151 Andrew Rosindell: Lord Patten, do you think, in view of the fact that Taiwan is a democracy and an important trading partner for the UK, that maybe we—the United Kingdom—should soften our approach to shutting the door on Taiwan, in terms of giving them the kind of treatment and respect they deserve? Isn't that an appropriate response to China's treatment of Hong Kong? Isn't that something we should pursue as the United Kingdom?



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Lord Patten: I think we should behave sensibly with Taiwan and not be bullied into doing things which simply meet China's propaganda agenda. May I give an example? I find it easier to give examples than to talk in the abstract. When I was, heaven forfend, a European Commissioner, we opened an office in Taipei when Taiwan became a member of the World Trade Organisation, and the Chinese were furious about it.

I told them beforehand what we were doing. I said we are not opening an embassy, but because you have accepted them becoming a member of the WTO, we have to behave with them as a member of the WTO just like everybody else. There was a certain amount of huffing and puffing and stamping of feet and eventually it went away. So you behave sensibly. You do not allow yourself to be bullied or pushed into things which are unreasonable.

Q152 **Andrew Rosindell:** To give an example, our own Cabinet Office refused to allow any Taiwanese representative to attend Lady Thatcher's funeral, even though she had close connections with Taiwan. Is it not time that we started to treat Taiwan with a bit more respect when it comes to occasions such as that, and in a diplomatic way?

Lord Patten: I think in a diplomatic way. What you do is you tell China beforehand what you are going to do and then you do it. There are other examples. Quite early in my time as chancellor at Oxford University, the Buddhist Society in Oxford invited the Dalai Lama to come and speak. Within 48 hours I had the then Chinese ambassador, who was rather more amiable than this one—sorry, I should not say that, but it is true—on the phone saying, "This is a disgraceful insult to the People's Republic of China," and so on. I said, "But this is a university, they are students. They invite whoever they want." She said, "Well, what do we do about it?" I said, "Well, I am sure your Chinese students will do what any students will do if they do not like the Dalai Lama."

So the Dalai Lama came, there were two big meetings, it all went very well and there was a group of mainland Chinese students outside, a few of them holding banners saying, "Go home, splitist". It was a perfectly normal university occasion. You just have to have the guts to push these things. I do not think we should be forced into doing things that are uncouth or outside our value system just because we are worried about an angry phone call from Ambassador Liu.

Chair: Lord Patten, we have to call it time, because we are about to vote. Thank you very much indeed.