

## Foreign Affairs Committee

### Oral evidence: Autocracies and UK Foreign Policy, HC 1948

Wednesday 5 Jun 2019

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Members present: Tom Tugendhat (Chair); Chris Bryant; Stephen Gethins; Conor McGinn; Ian Murray; Andrew Rosindell; Royston Smith; Catherine West.

Questions 1-34

#### Witnesses

I: Ayeshagul Nur Ibrahim, Uyghur activist, Jihyun Park, North Korean defector, human rights activist and Outreach Director, Connect North Korea, and Aleksey Shmatko, businessman.

II: Annette Bohr, Associate Fellow, Russia and Eurasia Programme, Chatham House, Professor John Heathershaw, Professor of International Relations, University of Exeter, and Dr Oisín Tansey, Reader in Comparative and International Politics, King's College London.

## Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Ayeshagul Nur Ibrahim, Jihyun Park, and Aleksey Shmatko.

Q1 **Chair:** Welcome to this afternoon's session of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Thank you very much for coming. For the record, would you very quickly introduce yourselves?

**Ayeshagul Nur Ibrahim:** Hello everyone. I am Ayeshagul, from the Uyghur community. I came to the UK as a student and became involved in human rights activities to protect Uyghurs' rights.

**Jihyun Park:** Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Jihyun Park. I was born in North Korea and arrived in the UK 10 years ago. I am now a human rights activist and I also run Connect: North Korea in the UK.

**Aleksey Shmatko:** Good afternoon. My name is Aleksey Shmatko. I am a businessman from Russia. I was granted political asylum in the UK in April. I was arrested by the Russian secret service and was tortured in prison.

Q2 **Conor McGinn:** It is a privilege for us to have you here, and you are very welcome. When we in the UK hear about life in autocracies, it is often through the lens of a photographer or the words of a journalist or human rights defender who has been there, and, if not quite in an abstract sense, then certainly in a more general sense. Can you all tell us a bit more about where you are from originally and what led you to leave those places? Was it over a period of years or was it a single, specific incident? What was life like for you there, and why did you choose to or have to leave?

**Ayeshagul Nur Ibrahim:** I am originally from a city called Kashgar, in north-west China. I left China in 2010 and came to the UK as a postgraduate student. During my studies, I published some articles about promoting mutual understanding, equality, gender equality and other equality issues, and how to build a truly harmonious society through understanding and some change in policy, especially in the Uyghur region, which is a bit more multicultural, compared with other cities and places in China.

Through my own experience, I communicated with other nationalities at the university and in student activities there that I engaged in, so I learned and started publishing articles. I did not politically bring up very sensitive issues, but I always gave examples of how the UK worked in this area, and then how we can improve the situation in our region. So I published the articles, and then I translated some original articles from English to Uyghur, and they were published on Uyghur websites back home.



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After a couple of years, before I finished my studies, what happened was that they started arresting the webmasters of these two or three websites. Then in 2014, Professor Ilham Tohti was arrested and later sentenced to life in prison. At that time, I had articles on his website as well.

In 2013, my parents wanted to apply for a passport—not a visa, but a passport, which is just your own identity in your own country. Then my dad was questioned about my activities. I explained to my dad over the phone that I didn't do anything wrong. It is so open. I didn't bring up anything political. I explained what I learned and how they treat people. It is just in the education sector. I didn't bring up many things. Later on, he said, "You have to be very careful about what you are saying." That was the first time.

Later on, I didn't stop. I did original *translation* from English—some news and some speeches—to Uyghur, to let people understand what kind of rights you have and how you improve your life. It was mostly focused on education—about girls' education—and how we build a society, understand each other and respect each other's rights, and then how we are able to offer more opportunities to each other and to resolve some tension between communities. I did that.

I got to know some activists in the UK who promote Uyghur human rights issues, and then I came to London to attend some demonstrations. Then, in 2017, my home landline was cut off. I sent my mother a mother's day gift—just £150, actually, which is not much—but when my brother went to collect the money, he was interrogated for three days. Later on—I am not sure—he lost his job. Since then—2017—I have lost contact with my family. So I know I will be in trouble.

During that time, many students and activists—not activists actually, but just legal students in Turkey and the Middle East, as well as in the US and Canada, so student activists and normal students as well—who did not attend any political activities at all were asked by their families to return to China. Then, as soon as they arrived at the airport, they got arrested, and since then they disappeared. So I saw the future—what is going to happen if I go back. That is the reason I remained in the UK.

**Jihyun Park:** Before I share my story, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the British people and all politicians for giving us this great life in the UK.

**Chair:** Sorry, forgive me—could you speak a bit louder, please? Thank you.

**Jihyun Park:** I had been living in North Korea for almost 29 years, without knowing what human rights are, what freedom is, and what I should do as a human being. The first time I left North Korea, the same thing happened in China, but when I was repatriated to North Korea—the first time, I totally didn't know what human rights are. When I came to the UK, the British people, even though they didn't know me, always offered a



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hand to me—welcome to England. The first time I tasted my freedom was in the UK, so thank you so much to the British people and all politicians.

I was born in North Hamgyong province in North Korea, and when I was a child, we didn't know these outside countries, because we learned only inside North Korea and in families. In the UK, I learned of many cultures. Winston Churchill said that Russia was a riddle inside an enigma, wrapped in a conundrum, and he also said that "socialism is a philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance and the gospel of envy. Its inherent virtue is the equal sharing of misery."

North Korea is the same: it is a complex country that poses significant challenges to peace and the existing world order. The Michael Kirby report into North Korea—the abuse by North Koreans report—is 372 pages. As he put it, "I have been a judge for a very long time and I'm pretty hardened to testimony. But the testimony...brought tears to my eyes on several occasions." I also gave evidence to the United Nations; I shared my stories.

I left North Korea twice. The first time was in 1998. This time was the massive famine in North Korea. People died of starvation; almost 3 million people died of starvation. My uncle died of starvation in front of me, and I saw many dead bodies in the street, in train stations and everywhere. The families separated themselves, and they didn't know where their family members were. So it was the same with me; I also hungered inside North Korea.

Then my father's last wish was saving my younger brother. Me and my younger brother left North Korea, and we abandoned my eldest brother alone in the cold, dying. We didn't know this then, but my brother passed away; we didn't know where he was. So when me and my younger brother left North Korea and we arrived in China, I thought that maybe my life would be different in China, but life was the same. I was human trafficked, then separated from my younger brother. He was sent back to North Korea, so now my younger brother disappeared. I don't know where he is. It is now almost 19 years.

So I was human trafficked to China, and I was sold for 5,000 Chinese yuan—it is £650. It is not only me: all North Korean females and girls are human trafficked in China, but this world still doesn't know about these human trafficking issues. So I was sold to them, but my life was slavery, because the Chinese families did not accept us, and the Chinese Government did not accept us as refugees. A year after, I had a son, but he was a stateless child; the Chinese never accepted this child, because I was born in North Korea.

Six years after, I was sent back to North Korea. The Chinese Government always send us back, because the Chinese Government said to us, "North Koreans are not refugees. North Koreans are illegal people." They sent us back. So when I was sent back to North Korea, they separated me from my five-year-old son; he was alone in China, and I was sent to prison. I



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was sent to prison and the state re-education camps. My life looked like an animal's. They do not accept us as human in North Korea.

When I lived in North Korea, I learned that North Korea is the great Kim country, and is the happiest country in the world. I believed that, and I always respected the Kim family, but we received hunger. They separated my family, and we pay for that. When we were sent back to North Korea, they did not accept us the same as citizens; they looked at us as criminal people. But we are not criminals. We moved from North Korea. That is our freedom of movement. But North Korea has never accepted those freedoms—free movement, human rights and religions. They do not accept them, and they are always without universal human rights.

I stayed in prison, and I saw many shocking things, because the North Korean Government does not accept a mixed child. Many females are human trafficked in China, and there are some females that are pregnant. They send them back to North Korea, but they do not accept the child. They always have abortions or kill the unborn baby in front of us, but we never say that.

One day, my leg was a problem, because I walked in plain sight without shoes. My leg was infected and had problems—I almost had an amputation. They released me, because they said, "You're not to die inside the camp. Get out and die anywhere." They released me. Then I escaped North Korea again and I met my son. Finally, I arrived in the UK.

When I came to the UK, I did not know any English, or the culture, and I never knew what human rights or freedom was. In 2012, my oldest son asked me, "Mummy—why did you abandon me, and leave me?" When I heard those questions, I cried. Before these questions, I thought that I was in a lot of pain. But when I heard those questions, I looked at other people. There are 23 million people still inside North Korea, but I never talked about my people. That is why I speak out at lots of human rights activities. In the UK and in European countries, I have visited many universities and spoken to the public about North Korea's human rights issues, but the world still does not listen to our protests. They only work with the Government's side. They do not work with the North Korean people.

Sometimes I wonder, because of the universal declaration of human rights, why they do not accept the North Korean people? Why do many politicians not speak about our refugees? *[Interruption.]*

**Chair:** Forgive me—we have to suspend the session so that we can go and vote. We will be back in 15 minutes.

*Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.*

*On resuming—*

**Chair:** Thank you, Ms Park. Had you completed your answer?

**Jihyun Park:** I would like to speak more.



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Q3 **Chair:** There are more questions, so we will come back to you. Could I ask you to answer the same question, Mr Shmatko?

**Aleksey Shmatko:** It is a good question. I can continue in my native language, Russian, and Igor will help me.

Q4 **Chair:** It would be great if you spoke in English. If you need help, absolutely, but could you speak loudly?

**Aleksey Shmatko:** I will continue in my native language and my friend Igor will help to interpret.

*(In translation)* Back in Russia, I was not interested in politics; I was not an activist. I was just a regular businessman. If you do not look into politics, politics will look into you. Once, I received a corrupt offer from an FSB officer to share half of my company with him. As I rejected the offer, I ended up in prison. I spent two months in the FSB prison, during which time I was tortured many times. Another case—called “the network case”—is happening in Penza and Saint Petersburg in Russia. It had a hearing in the UN Committee against Torture. I was tortured by the same investigator who is on that case.

I received political asylum status in the UK in April. While I have been here, I have managed to receive a UK patent in high tech, and I am grateful to the UK for providing my family and me with an opportunity to live here and to not be afraid for my future.

Q5 **Royston Smith:** Thank you, all of you, for your powerful and moving explanations of what it was like for you in your countries and, as importantly, why you left your countries to come here. I am interested in what has happened since you left your countries. Do the states you come from still exert any control or influence over you? If so, how do they do that?

**Ayeshagul Nur Ibrahim:** As I explained earlier, I left the country and then remained in the UK after I completed my studies because, first, they questioned my father. They were interested in my activities. Obviously, there are online “eyes” in and outside China. They track anything against the Government and anything different from the communist ideology there.

I had a review published of some evidence about the student protests in Urumqi against corruption and the authoritarian regime in China. Those were nearly 30 years ago, but even then, people’s living conditions were such that they lacked freedom to express their views, which have always differed from the communist ideology. People are still under surveillance and harassment. They jail people for speaking up against Government rules. People are heavily punished for making even moderate comments about these issues. Sorry, can you repeat the question?

Q6 **Royston Smith:** Sure. What pressure do they put on you? Do they continue to put pressure on you personally?



**Ayeshagul Nur Ibrahim:** It is through my family first. After my dad, they came to my brother. I have another sister living in a different city from Kashgar, so after they cut the home landline, they asked through her for all the details about me—when I came here, how I came here and what I am doing here. I was so surprised, because I want to protect my family, so I did not tell anyone else about this.

First, my sister told me that my mum had said it was better that I did not call home and that I kept my distance from my brothers, because they arrest more male Uyghurs than females and my brothers are young; I am the eldest, so I helped them with their education while I was in China. I thought, "Okay, I will not call them." They told me especially not to call their mobiles, so I thought, "Okay, I will not call them," but then the home landline was cut.

My sister lives away, but she gave me a hint: "Don't call me too often." I said, "Okay." Actually, I do not call them too often. Normally I just say, "Hello. How is the family?" and so on. Then she told me, "You should be cautious about your activities," and I thought, "What's going on?" Then, in a short message, she said, "Stop sending anything. We're all well, so just keep quiet." Then she said, "I went to the police, so you should know." It was just a short, incomplete sentence. Then she said, "They already know where you are. Maybe they will call you." I was surprised, but I already knew they had cut the landline. My sister is a lawyer herself, and I thought about what might happen to her. I was worrying about this, so I cut contact with my sister as well because I wanted to protect my family.

Then I understood that, as an educated person, if I am myself having this pressure, what happens to the ordinary people living there? I am already outside. I am not a political activist or somebody who often speaks against the Chinese Government, so if this is happening to me, what happens to the people living there under that control all the time?

Q7 **Royston Smith:** Has anyone ever contacted you while you have been in this country? Have you ever had any contact from the regime while you have been in this country?

**Ayeshagul Nur Ibrahim:** In this country, no, but through one of my friends in Turkey. In 2017 they were arresting students at the airport. It started in 2016, actually. They said it was better to make contact less and better to keep quiet. I was not very active, but I cannot keep quiet because I am safe here. I had to let other people know about their rights and what kind of equality they should also enjoy. We are all human beings. What I did mainly was translate about, for example, religious freedom, how the different groups treat each other and how there is no discrimination. I dealt with all these issues and just let them know. I did not do anything more than let them learn what other people's lives outside China are like.

At that time, several students were arrested, including some students from the US whom I know in Turkey as well. They normally do editorial work. We help each other translate things, and they disappeared. Nobody



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personally contacted me from this country, but my sister told me that the police inquired about my details, so then I know what might happen to me.

**Jihyun Park:** I was sent back to North Korea. The police visited and asked whether my uncle accepted me in his home, but my uncle did not accept me because he said that I was an enemy in North Korea because of the reasons why I had left North Korea. So family members were not able to assist. I went back to China and then to the UK. Now I am here, but still the North Korean Government control us. I ensure that I undertake activities and speak out about North Korean human rights issues, and they say that I am lying because North Korea has never had human rights issues. But I am a witness and a survivor and I experienced what happened in North Korea. I know the situation, but the Government try to control us. In the UK now there are 670 North Korean refugees. The North Korean embassy in London looks at what we do and sends details to North Korea. They can punish our family members inside North Korea. I am now in a free country, but I am not free because they always look to control our lives.

**Aleksey Shmatko:** *(In translation)* Back in Penza, there were a few cases when my father was kidnapped and persuaded to speak to me, so I stopped publishing compromising information on the FSB from the city—from my native town. They also sent the UK an extradition request for me, which was rejected by the UK High Court last year. There was a so-called black PR campaign in the Russian press that, among other threats, included threats from former GRU and FSB officers to poison me in the UK. It happened before the Skripal case. All those documents were in my case, which was held in the High Court.

**Andrew Rosindell:** Could you tell us what link you feel that autocratic regimes have with the potential for corruption? It seems to me that many regimes exist, not for political purposes but as a cover for corruption, to support themselves and the people that support them. It seems like that is what is happening in many countries. Is that your feeling, or do you have a different perspective on that?

**Aleksey Shmatko:** *(In translation)* I would call the current Russian state a classic fascist state. The main purpose of the regime there is to earn corrupt money. There was information on one case last year in the public domain, that the anti-corruption officer of the Russian police was detained. After a search of his flat, other authorities found \$150 million in cash. Another security officer for a colonel of the financial department of Moscow police was also detained about a month ago. After the search of his apartment, other authorities found a sum equivalent to \$200 million, in cash.

That is not an illustration of the fight against corruption, but an illustration of the fight between different clans in the system. The main reason for Russian corruption is the regime that has not changed for a very long time. The pressure of corrupt authorities on business is very high. Official

statistics use the figure of 200,000 businessmen detained in pre-trial prisons right now.

Q8 **Andrew Rosindell:** Are there any further comments?

**Ayeshagul Nur Ibrahim:** You all know that China is ruled by a one-party Government. Since Xi Jinping took power, he has launched an anti-corruption movement but, sadly, we hear that they want to clarify<sup>1</sup> within the Communist party and officials, but we always hear from the news in China or outside that all the corrupt officials are ministerial level, regional leaders, in the main police bureau and directors of big businesses. As you can see, China has this tradition: it is ruled by central Government, and the provincial leaders send money and then they want to go to another level and then to central Government. It works like that even for ordinary job applications. On the surface, there are rules, but under the table they send huge amounts of cash just to hold an ordinary position. I feel pity for the regime; if they do not crack down on the under-the-table implementation of certain behaviour, corruption will never stop.

Q9 **Andrew Rosindell:** In the absence of democracy, that will continue. In your view, what should the UK do more to help to eradicate these things? There is no easy solution at all, but what approach do you think the British Government should take that we have not already taken to stand up against that kind of state-sanctioned corruption?

**Jihyun Park:** Democratic countries have equality and freedom, but socialist countries have equality and slavery. North Korea is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, but in North Korea, the meaning of "democratic" is totally different, because North Korea controls people, has a total ideology and gives families 10 commandments. Total ideology means it is a slavery ideology, and the 10 commandments are the rules that they demand the people follow in the political system. This country also rises to politics. That is why many activists do not like human rights aid inside North Korea, because human rights aid means helping people—humans—but when you bring aid into North Korea, it is political, because they always need political means and they do not help people.

I would like to say to the UK Government, please accept more North Korean refugees in the UK, and speak out to China, to tell them to stop sending back North Korean refugees. That will help the North Korean people more. That is how we can quickly change the inside of the North Korean political system.

**Aleksey Shmatko:** *(In translation)* Britain should realise that there is a new cold war with Russia. They must also remember the appeasement of Hitler in the late 1930s and not repeat that mistake with Russia nowadays. They will need to increase the pressure of sanctions against Russia, which are currently not very effective. Mr Putin did not feel the consequences of war with Georgia in 2008. As a consequence of the lack of pressure on

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<sup>1</sup> Note from witness: should read as 'purify'



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Russia, Crimea was annexed in 2014. Putin understands only power and any lack of power will be considered as a weakness. The sanctions have to be significant.

- Q10 **Ian Murray:** You have explained to my colleague, Mr Smith, about your experiences here. I just want know if you feel insecure or unsafe, and what support you think the UK should be providing to activists and dissidents from authoritarian states, and whether they are providing enough support.

**Ayeshagul Nur Ibrahim:** For myself, I feel that I am safe here, but I still feel half safe, because I worry about the status of my family and kin. Every minute, I worry about my family, since they cut contact in 2017. I do not know where they are. Today is Eid for Muslims all around the world, but I could not say Eid Mubarak to my family—it goes to that level. I know there are bilateral relationships with China in many fields, so, if it is possible, can the UK protect the rights of the activists and, if possible, can we get any protection for our families back home? That is the first thing.

Secondly, I feel that there are a huge number of stateless Uyghurs remaining in Turkey. These people do not know where they stand, because Turkey's relationship with China is up and down. They also came from other countries because of pressure. There is a huge number of people living there without any legal status. Is there any possibility the UK can help these fellow Uyghurs to come to the UK and have a safe life? That is the second issue that I am concerned about, in terms of the Uyghur community here.

China can make laws or regulations instantly. Whoever is in power can say that is the law. There is a ban on Uyghur language and culture, and every aspect of Uyghur life is under control under 24-hour surveillance. Is there any possibility for the UK Government to support the Uyghur community here, to help them preserve their culture and language? I would appreciate if the UK Government and politicians could offer any kind of help for this community of vulnerable people living here.

**Jihyun Park:** For myself, I am very proud to be a refugee. I have arrived in the UK as a refugee. At first, I did not know the meaning of “refugee”, but being a refugee gives us many opportunities and also challenges, including hope and freedom. I know that my activist work is risky in the UK, but I continue to do that work, because many brilliant people visit us.

I would like to stay in the UK. There are now 670 North Korean refugees here, but some have still not got their refugee visas, so they always worry about their life in the UK. They have already experienced being sent back to North Korea when they lived in China. They have bad dreams every day, and they worry about their life in the UK. Please accept these refugees and give them the same opportunities that I had.

Secondly, in China there are—we do not know the exact number—around 20,000 stateless children. They were born in China to North Korean



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mothers. The world do not know about these children. Please do something about them, because children are our future.

Thirdly, as I mentioned, I ask the UK Government to please speak to China, to stop repatriations. North Koreans are still being repatriated to North Korea, but no one speaks about this issue. They always separate it. Please speak about this issue. We are the survivors, and the witnesses always speak out. The Government must not be silent, and should speak with us.

**Aleksey Shmatko:** *(In translation)* The current politics and the current behaviour of Britain in regard to Russian political activists are not effective. The reason for that is that political activists living in Russia are regarded by Russian people as marginal. After massive Putin propaganda, any person who is connected to western Europe, the UK or the US is considered a traitor to the motherland. Britain can conceive the co-operation with another group of people, namely the businessmen who suffered from the corrupt activities of Russian authorities. I have submitted the report of the federal security service of Russia, which gives the figure that 85% of businessmen have suffered in one way or another from the authorities. The people who are organised, who have money and funds and do not agree with the regime can make changes from the inside, but there is no politics in the classic sense in Russia.

Q11 **Catherine West:** You have mentioned sanctions. What other levels of influence can the UK Government use to bring about an improvement in the situation for people who have suffered politically as a result of regimes?

**Aleksey Shmatko:** *(In translation)* You should include more people in the sanctions lists, namely relatives, business partners and other associates. Britain and Europe should stop buying oil and gas from Russia. There is a need for further, more detailed investigation of the financial assets that Russian oligarchs and other Putin associates are hiding in Europe and the UK.

**Ayeshagul Nur Ibrahim:** As you all may notice, it is not actually a human rights issue, but an issue of nearly 3 million people for us, the Uyghur community. According to China's census there are 12 million people living in the region, which consists of one sixth of the total population of China, the largest region. But China is not a country ruled by its law—its own law they do not respect. From 2017 to now it has already been more than two years and we are still at the level of speaking up, as Governments have done. Yes, we are very thankful for the UK and allies in other Governments in the European Union. They all speak up at the relevant UN meetings about China to stop the mistreatment of Uyghurs, but sadly it is still going on.

It is good to share technology—certain types, the best of what we have here, or in America or other countries—with China, because you have the bilateral relationship, and not only economically. It is also other sectors as well; technology, is an example. I read the news about the British high-



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tech companies that play a very big part in Chinese surveillance technology, so in this and other areas—in the educational sector as well—China and the UK have a very good level of co-operation, training highly skilled staff who study here. People learn skills and go back to work in China. In other fields as well, you have a business trade agreement. All these meetings involve some type of agreement and shared interest, so would you agree with me that in the UK, you have to limit—stop—co-operating with China on these technologies’ transfer and other support you are giving to China? Stop the abuse, because it is not about hundreds of people, myself or certain groups. Over two million—up to three million—people’s lives are under threat.

We have professors, we have heads of schools—as far as I know, nearly 400 people—who are the leaders of our community. They were working for China in universities, hospital, and journalists, editors, lawyers—all walks of life. They are the core people who studied abroad, outside China, and then went back to China—most of them, not all—and they took certain positions working for the Government, in the interests of the Chinese nation. But then these academics were sadly sent to Chinese concentration camps, which China still denies. It is re-education, where people learn Chinese, learn Mandarin and other skills to get a job. Actually, they are not doing a job. They are doing the best job, to educate people to contribute to their society, but they are not recognising their contribution.

We are talking about a country like this, so if the UK Government work with China and talk about trade or other issues on the table, could you please also think about stopping providing certain types of assistance, especially surveillance technology such as facial recognition? The UK has Thermo Fisher technology; it is based in America, but we have that company here as well, supporting DNA sequence and other blood tests—all types of this high technology with high efficiency, which is available here. They are sharing its use, supplying the Chinese Government with a tool to monitor people. I am sad to say that, but this is really disheartening. We should stop this type of co-operation if we really want to promote human rights, democracy and democratic values all over the world.

**Q12 Catherine West:** There is some work going on as a subsection of this Committee at the Committees on Arms Export Controls, which are looking at UK companies and the surveillance elements of those companies. That work is still some way off being printed up, but there is interest from this Committee in that particular line of inquiry.

I wanted just quickly to ask you another question about solidarity from other Muslim-majority countries, because some of the discrimination based on religion. I wanted to ask whether the community feels a sense of solidarity from other countries that the UK could work with. Are there other Muslim countries raising this with China, or do you think this is missing?

**Ayeshagul Nur Ibrahim:** This is a good question, which we feel very upset about. We do not have a right to ask them to give any protection,



but there are more than 50 countries in the OIC—the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. They had a meeting in Turkey recently. Only Turkey spoke up for Uyghur interests, at a certain level, but under the table things are still going on. They are not sending them back to China, but there are people held in Turkey and staying in Turkey under Turkish control for no reason. I can't say it is a jail, but a certain type of issue is still going on in Turkey. I suspect that it is a kind of remote control by China. We are really thankful that at least Turkey spoke up against the Chinese mistreatment of the Uyghurs, but it is not enough. We feel strongly about that.

We are under so much control in China. We are very moderate Muslims; I myself don't have a huge connection or education in the religion. I feel as if I am an ordinary Muslim who practises the Islamic faith in a normal way—by praying and fasting, for example—but in China, that is illegal. In the Chinese constitution it is written that you are free to practise your religion.

An interesting example is that when I was in contact with my sister, who had just turned 17, she said, "Don't send any pictures of yourself in a hijab." That's another thing; what's going on there? When I was growing up, my mum would wear a traditional headscarf, which is not a hijab. She even took off that little scarf—my sister sent me the picture. When I saw it I thought, "Oh, what happened?" I was joking, saying, "What happened to my mum? Why are you sending pictures without her headscarf?" My sister told me, "Do not send your pictures with a hijab. That's it." I understood. That was two years ago, but now even this headscarf causes an issue. It is enough as a Uyghur to send a picture with headscarf; they can blackmail Uyghurs as extremists.

I don't believe Islamic countries hear this news. They have huge agreements, worth billions of dollars of business. Many countries are not speaking up. Instead, they are helping China and praising what China is doing to the Muslim community. It is really hard, but we are sending some delegations from Turkey, as I understand it.

**Chair:** I'm sorry, but we have to move on. We will have a brief private session for our witnesses wish to raise anything they wish to in private.

*The Committee sat in private.*

## Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dr Oisín Tansey, Annette Bohr and Professor John Heathershaw.

Q13 **Chair:** Good afternoon, and welcome back to this afternoon's session of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Can I ask you very briefly to introduce yourselves?

**Professor Heathershaw:** My name is John Heathershaw. I am a professor of international relations at the University of Exeter. I work on various global aspects of authoritarianism, particularly in the post-Soviet, central Asian states.

**Dr Tansey:** I am Oisín Tansey. I work in the Department of War Studies at King's College London.

**Annette Bohr:** My name is Annette Bohr. I am an associate fellow of the Russia and Eurasia programme at Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

Q14 **Chair:** Fantastic. Thank you very much. In your opinion, how do autocratic states challenge the rules-based international system? Perhaps Professor Heathershaw would like to address that.

**Professor Heathershaw:** I would just like to make some opening comments. First, most autocracies are kleptocracies; that is important to recognise. They fuse both power and wealth, and their political elites serve as gatekeepers to their economies and as rent seekers.

Authoritarianism is increasing, certainly in central Asia. Four of the five central Asian republics, on a global rankings basis, are considered more authoritarian today than they were when they were republics of the Soviet Union.

Authoritarianism is not confined to the central Asian states or to any states themselves domestically; it takes place in the manner that you heard about in the first session with regard to political exiles. There are 60 cases of central Asian exiles who have been subject to various forms of transnational repression, which we have recorded on the central Asian political exiles database we hold at the University of Exeter. Most of those have occurred in recent years, with an increase particularly from Tajikistan.

It is also the case that money laundering is central to authoritarian regimes, as long as we understand them to be not simply states but coalitions of political elites who are there also to enrich themselves. This is where the UK's economy and society becomes entangled with authoritarian regimes and the persons who are part of them.

The threats faced by the UK are those of that everyday variety, rather than the exceptional threats that we associate with traditional security threats. They involve laundered money entering the UK, such as into the UK property sector, through shell companies where beneficial ownership is hidden. There are one or two notable cases of that, such as Timur Kulibayev, the son-in-law of the former President of Kazakhstan, purchasing property from the Duke of York, for instance.

Autocratic elites insert themselves in the UK through reputation laundering, recruiting reputation management and seeking to clean up their reputations. Internationally, they are eroding the international liberal order, weakening anti-money laundering rules, where the compliance with beneficial ownerships and "know your customer" checks are weakened by the incentive offered to financial service and company service providers to facilitate these flows of money. That puts UK companies, which are subject to the anti-bribery Act, at a comparative disadvantage.

Autocratic elites are unreliable security partners for the UK and western states, in terms of fighting against terrorism. There are other things that I could mention.

- Q15 **Chair:** Thank you very much. I do not know whether you have seen the report today, but a Swiss federal police officer has been reported in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* as having been arrested for corruption. He was in charge of investigating Russian corruption in Switzerland, and he has been arrested for accepting bribes from Russia. Is this the sort of challenge to the international rules-based system that you would see as normal for autocracies? This time, it happens to be Russia, but it could have been others.

**Dr Tansey:** We have seen quite a few authoritarian countries engaging in this kind of potentially politically motivated detention. We have seen it with the Chinese head of Interpol. We have seen China arresting Canadian diplomats in response—

- Q16 **Chair:** Sorry, I am not suggesting that the Swiss Government is politically motivated in arresting the officer. I am suggesting that the Russian Government is corrupting a Swiss police officer.

**Dr Tansey:** We have seen evidence of that with the recent case in Austria. There is evidence that authoritarian countries are using money, and using illicit flows of money, to try and corrupt politicians and to have outreach programmes, as was exposed in the Mueller report as well. That is part of what is now, as you say, a normalised campaign of several authoritarian countries using the resources that they have—the wealth that they have—to try to reach out and secure compliant allies in democratic countries who are going to work on their behalf, who are going to further their interests, and they are doing that through the use of inducements and bribes in order to ensure that there are people working for them, directly or indirectly, or working towards their own interests, in democratic countries. There is certainly an aspect where authoritarian countries are challenging the prevailing rules-based international order.

There are also a number of other challenges that they pose in terms of breaching rules of sovereignty, which we have seen with China in the South China Sea and in terms of Russia's annexation of Crimea. As I mentioned, we also see that example of the politically motivated detentions in their own territories of, sometimes, western officials and actors who are going about their business. So we see a range of different challenges to the rules-based international order.

- Q17 **Chris Bryant:** Can I just ask about Interpol? Interpol would seem to be part of the international rules-based order, but it seems to be systematically abused by autocracies. Is that a fair judgment? What can we do to change that?

**Dr Tansey:** Certainly the red notice system has been used politically.

- Q18 **Chris Bryant:** As I understand it, there is a red notice and a diffusion notice, and theoretically there is a different amount of work that Interpol

does before it acts on one, but not a great deal.

**Professor Heathershaw:** I can speak to that. Some reforms of Interpol have begun to go through over the last two to three years. Certainly, you are right—in the red notice system, there are diffusions where draft red notices or proposals can go on to databases and essentially be logrolled across the police database systems across Interpol member states. Then they get acted upon regardless of whether further checks have been done. The reforms were supposed to ensure that the checks would be done more thoroughly in advance, but we still see cases where unregistered refugees are being held up at airports, which they should not be, according to Interpol processes, but they are, because of the requests of authoritarian states.

The reforms are also supposed to facilitate refugees and individuals who have been incorrectly subject to red notices to challenge that and get that removed more easily. It was taking years for persons to have those red notices against them removed. Yes, there has been a practice of abusing Interpol, and pressure on Interpol as a secretariat to push through with those reforms is important.

**Annette Bohr:** If we talk about the line of questioning in the last session with regard to what the UK can do about these authoritarian regimes, many of the responses tended to focus on, and the conversation gets bogged down in, discussions of sanctions. Whatever the merit of sanctions might be, I think it is a more productive and effective way forward to broaden the discussion and shift our focus on to kleptocracy and western complicity in that phenomenon. That is what John was mentioning.

To break that down into its most basic elements, state leaders, generally from poor countries, loot millions from the national treasuries and, as a rule, store it in rich countries. This money goes into assets that are protected by western property laws. That is a crucial point. Research has shown that US and UK shell companies are less likely to comply with the guidelines of the intergovernmental Financial Action Task Force to determine company ownership than tax havens outside of the OECD. That is a crucial point.

In the days of the Soviet Union, there was this very clear hermetic divide. You didn't have Soviet companies listing on the London Stock Exchange. Now we have a situation where we are dealing with countries such as Russia that are deeply integrated into our financial system. In the case of China, they are deeply integrated into everything. This is a completely different scenario. Up to 50% of Russian wealth is kept offshore.

Let me briefly discuss the country that is the focus of my research, Turkmenistan, which is one of the most repressive systems in the world. In fact, the new news media rankings put it below North Korea. It is now at the very bottom. I did not know you could go any lower, but they have managed it—it is quite a feat.



In Turkmenistan, which has the world's fourth largest gas reserves, the amount of export revenues—much less the amount of those revenues that are diverted to off-budget accounts—remains a closely guarded secret. This is a country where up to 75% of revenues have been off-budget and kept in Deutsche Bank and other German accounts. These economic indicators are generally unavailable or inconsistent with international standards, so we have to rely on data from foreign sources: export revenues reported by partner trading countries such as China, or reports of moneys held abroad that are owed to Turkmenistan. In particular, current data from the Bank for International Settlements indicates that just under \$23 billion has accumulated in accounts in German banks that is owed to counterparties in Turkmenistan, although there is no information concerning the identity of the account holders.

We could also usefully talk about Uzbekistan; I will not do it, but that is something we should come to. What we should be doing, in a nutshell, is making it harder for kleptocrats to launder proceeds in major financial centres and stash billions of dollars in accounts and offshore vehicles abroad. How do we do that? We have to bolster the relatively new concept that host countries have a duty to block or seize illicit funds. We need to establish national beneficial ownership registries to create a searchable global registry of companies. We need to bear responsibility for ascertaining the true identity of purchasers and the legality of the funds in the real estate market. For example, reporting high-value sales of real estate should be mandatory rather than subject to self-regulation.

**Q19 Stephen Gethins:** This is something that this Committee covered in a recent report on Moscow's gold. Do you think there is a particular role for the UK here? I ask because, obviously, as the Foreign Affairs Committee, we oversee the work of the FCO.

**Annette Bohr:** I do think so. Let me give one example to show what that role is. Uzbekistan has been in the news since the death of the long-reigning dictator Islam Karimov. The reforms are very impressive, but they have a very long way to go. The mayor of Tashkent has engineered this whole new business empire, where local businessmen operate through opaque offshore vehicles from the UK and elsewhere that do not have to declare beneficial owners. One of those is Corso Solutions LP, which was registered in Edinburgh in May 2017. Here we have a situation where the mayor, who is very close to the President, has private interests in major luxury development projects that he is able to hide through the use of UK and other limited partnerships. We know this from research that has been done. As the privatisation process accelerates, the lack of oversight increases the risk that shadowy deals will continue to determine losers and winners under even this new regime, which is one of the few that have seen increases in democratisation in the past year.<sup>2</sup>

**Q20 Stephen Gethins:** The point you raise about limited partnerships is really

<sup>2</sup> Additional information from witness: The Strange Connections of Tashkent City's 'British Investor' on Open Democracy: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/strange-connections-of-tashkent-city-s-british-investor>



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important. We will obviously get a transcript of that, but if there is anything you would like to give the Committee in writing for us to include on that particular point, it would be helpful.

**Annette Bohr:** Yes.

- Q21 **Ian Murray:** This is probably a broad question, but with some specifics. Is it right for the UK Government to try to influence the way that authoritarian states treat their own citizens? If so, how effective are the democracy-promoting programmes the FCO currently has, and what more should it be doing?

**Professor Heathershaw:** That is a very good question. We should not assume that we have the right to speak out about the citizens of other countries. However, given that we live in a world with high levels of co-operation, where money is moving, as students, researchers and various other activists are moving, I think there is a set of global norms and standards that we can expect.

Where the UK is acting, and where UK higher education institutions, for example, are entering partnerships with institutions from authoritarian states, we must insist that academic freedom is upheld. This is an example close to home for us, as academics. Where academics in authoritarian states entering into partnerships are at risk because of those partnerships, or are put at risk or end up in prison, or people are working with the UK Government or British NGOs, it is particularly important, specifically in those cases, to speak out.

It is also important to speak out regarding those who are not connected, because although achieving large-scale institutional reform for the protection of human rights, free media, et cetera is very difficult in autocracies, it is possible to work on specific cases. Even the harshest of autocracies do not think of themselves in that way; they want to maintain a global reputation, and want to be seen as one of the good guys, if you like. There is therefore some value in speaking out directly on specific cases to expose and shame treatment, where we see cases of torture, for example. There are many cases where it is really in the UK's interest to do that, to ensure that we have better ways to co-operate on security and business with such countries.

**Dr Tansey:** I would absolutely agree with that, in terms of having a foreign policy that is not just interest based, but value based, where you call out significant repression. There is a role for trying to promote human rights and democracy in settings where they are under threat, and seriously under threat. I do not think there is any question but that it should be part of the foreign policy toolkit in that sense.

There is also evidence that democracy promotion can work, both in terms of empowering civil society and human rights defenders, where they exist and are operating, and also, at times, in constraining authoritarian Governments in other ways. The toolkits for those are very different. The FCO has the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and the Magna Carta fund. It is doing things to support and empower from the bottom up.



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There is evidence that that kind of democracy promotion works, that it should be embraced and expanded, and that funding should be devoted to those activities. There is also room for a stronger role in seeking to constrain authoritarian rulers, and seeking to, at times, re-shift the balance between the value-based foreign policy and the interest-based foreign policy, and put some of the more interest-based foreign policy to one side, and to stand up to authoritarian countries.

I noted in a recent report from this Committee the suggestion that, if the time came now, it would not be a good time to hail the golden age of relations with China. I think that is absolutely right, especially when we see what is happening in Xinjiang. We had some powerful testimony earlier that the UK should be standing up, as John said, to try to name and shame, and to constrain these authoritarian actors in ways that might be slightly painful for the UK in economic terms, but are frankly the right thing to do.

**Annette Bohr:** While I agree for the most part with my fellow panellists, there are a few caveats to be added. Most of the peoples in these post-Soviet countries tend to regard democracy as an empty ideological framework. Also, democracy promotion can engender suspicion on the part of regimes. In so far as it is blame and shame, it can be effective, but we need to come to terms with the idea that in many of these countries our diplomatic, economic and defence incentives have been minimal.

Moreover, in part owing to protracted wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, we have lost credibility in their eyes, and the promotion of democracy is often seen as a double standard. A very important point to make is that even in Russia there is the complicity in kleptocracy that I mentioned before, among someone like Navalny, the Russian oppositionist who mentioned this when he was here. We have lost credibility in terms of our soft power by virtue of our complicity in kleptocracy.

Q22 **Catherine West:** We know that the networks that civil society groups provide are a good bulwark against the worst excesses of those autocracies. What would be your recommendations for the UK Government in terms of any action that can be taken to promote civil society groups in, let us say, Russia or China, given that we have spoken about them both today?

**Professor Heathershaw:** It is important to try to maintain a small space for civil society where political parties cannot operate. We can think of cases of autocracies, and the ones that you mention are good examples, where there is not real political competition of any kind, but there are some NGOs and social movements that have space. Sometimes they are able to engage locally, with local authorities, or do things like speak above the head of a local figure to a regional figure who may step in on their behalf. That is the kind of micro-politics and a small fragment of where the overall command and control of an authoritarian regime breaks down.

I do think that is important, and that is partly about UK aid and partly about the things we were just mentioning, where a journalist or a civil



society activist is detained speaking out on behalf of that person, particularly if they have been a previous beneficiary of DFID or other UK funding. It is about choosing those examples selectively and appropriately, and acting to keep that space for civil society groups, which can be very small. One thing we have seen in central Asia, over the last 10 to 15 years really, is that when those states, largely western but not exclusively, that have supported democracy have stepped back and indicated that they are no longer as interested in supporting that opposition party or that NGO or that issue area, the Government will come in and close those things down, and that space will disappear. So there is certainly a role there for maintaining that.

- Q23 **Catherine West:** Obviously there are groups like the British Council, and the budget for the British Council has been cut back quite a lot. Do you think there is a role for that and the BBC World Service and so on?

**Annette Bohr:** Our soft power is everything, given the lack of leverage that I pointed to earlier. We must keep human rights at the forefront, absolutely, and that works, as John mentioned, in terms of blame and shame. In terms of actual leverage, it is really our soft power. It is working with these people to promote people-to-people linkages, joint education and cultural projects—that is where we have the upper hand. Embassies, for example, can facilitate the issuance of visas and scholarships for specialists, particularly in the fields of public health and education, who are intending to study and train here.

**Dr Tansey:** Also, I think there is a role here for reaching out to the diaspora, which in a way the Committee has done today. Sometimes, engaging directly and visibly with those civil society groups can be quite risky for them. Certainly in Russia and China, recent laws have restricted the scope for foreign funding of NGO activities. There is a risk that it has become more logistically difficult, but it can also potentially put people in danger. If there is outreach and engagement with the diaspora community, however, that can then, through a process of diffusion—they have connections back home—signal that there is a supportive environment here, which can have a knock-on effect domestically.

**Professor Heathershaw:** If I may add briefly on the question of international academic co-operation, I noticed the Chair's correspondence with Janet Beer, the head of Universities UK. Her response, for many UK academics, would be in some ways dissatisfying—the notion that, as she put it, you need to “sensitively balance...academic freedom with...international academic collaboration”. We do not balance those things; the balance metaphor does not work here. Academic freedom is an absolute value and it is a condition of the collaborations that we engage in. In terms of the standards we use to assess things such as research collaboration through the Global Challenges Research Fund, the protections of students and staff from autocracies on UK campuses, and the transparency and accountability about funding from those autocracies or the political elites from those autocracies, those are absolute standards that must be maintained, rather than balanced.



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**Q24 Chair:** I am glad you say that. How then do you view it when a university is often threatened with the withdrawal of either students or funding for a programme, and that funding or those students are then sent to another university? Would it not be better if the universities concerned agreed that, should that threat be made, nobody would accept those students and that funding? Effectively, all the newly accepting university is doing is enabling an autocratic regime to exert leverage over a UK or indeed other academic institution.

**Professor Heathershaw:** Yes, I see no reason why that could not be done nationally, if university bodies such as Universities UK sought to share that information between themselves to ensure that that does not occur. We know where this is occurring; it would be perhaps occurring through some of the main state scholarship and funding programmes from autocracies—I could name them now—and where there is that threat, there should be collaboration. But universities typically operate in this respect as highly market-based actors, feeling that they are competing over a scarce resource, and I agree that should not be.

**Q25 Chair:** Have you seen the letter written by the University of California Berkeley—sorry, it was University of California, which has various campuses, but I think it was drafted by somebody in Berkeley—on exactly this point? If that letter were to act as a template for universities in the United Kingdom, it would be enormously strengthening, and if that letter were also to act as a template for Commonwealth universities broadly, such as in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States and us—that's a loose definition of Commonwealth, but you see what I mean—it would also prevent those whose domestic legitimacy is often based on their ability to get their children into prestigious universities around the world. Being unable to do so would therefore devalue them at home.

**Professor Heathershaw:** Just on the same principle that, if we are speaking out about a person who has detained a dissident, we may do so with fellow states in the European Union or the United States and act collaboratively, and in this area it is most effective to do that, I would agree.

**Q26 Royston Smith:** May I ask about technology? We all hear lots of things about how technology is used to control society in autocracies. What experience or information do you have that you can share with us about how these regimes use technology to control society?

**Dr Tansey:** There is a range of strategies that they can use in terms of simply monitoring, using CCTV technology. China is now heading toward 200 million or 300 million CCTV cameras, and linking that CCTV technology to a huge database of activity so that, through facial recognition and even gait recognition—how people walk—they can identify people. They can link that through other data collection infrastructure they have about almost minute behaviour that citizens are engaging in, such as whether they have paid a fine or been late with a repayment, and use that to leverage what is known as a social credit system for rewards and



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punishments—"If you do not pay your fine, you cannot take out a loan or you cannot travel or buy a train ticket," and such things.

Where this is being pioneered the most is in Xinjiang, which we have talked about, where Uyghurs are now required to carry an ID card and have to use it to buy basic products. There is then a mass database of citizens and multiple types of behaviour that they engage in, which leads to a broad profile of each individual that can be used to punish, harass or intimidate them. Generally, the technology is facilitating a very oppressive surveillance state. Xinjiang is the real epitome of that at the moment.

**Annette Bohr:** Despite an unprecedented economic crisis in Turkmenistan, it is using its export revenues to purchase technology from China, in particular—very sophisticated technology, to monitor even keystrokes on computers of selected citizens. The use of VPNs is now prosecuted very intensely in Turkmenistan, for example, and that is one reason why it has fallen to last place in the media rankings.

- Q27 **Chris Bryant:** I was very briefly in Chile in the 1980s under Pinochet, and I remember taking part in a church service commemorating the death of a young boy who had had petrol poured over him and been set fire to. My immediate instinct would have been that if anything had happened to anybody in the demonstration, you would have got in an ambulance and you would have expected to be treated, but I remember everybody I was working with saying, "You can't trust the ambulance service, you can't trust the doctors, you can't trust anybody, because they're part of the regime." I have no idea whether that was right or wrong, and I was then thrown out of the country, but my question is, how much self-editing does a regime manage to force on people? Do you see what I mean? Do you understand the question I'm asking?

**Annette Bohr:** It varies from regime to regime, obviously, so it depends which one you are referring to. Self-censorship and generally following the statements of the president, of the autocrat—particularly if it is a personalist regime—is very much the name of the game. You go according to his statements.

- Q28 **Chris Bryant:** So the health service itself might not be a free agent, or doctors might feel—

**Professor Heathershaw:** Not at all. It is important to recognise that autocracy is not a crude sense of the totalitarian state necessarily; it works in more subtle ways. It is about controlling space, where people feel able to go, and it is about controlling public discourse, what people feel able to say—they are self-censoring and themselves acting to do these things less.

For example, in Tajikistan, we know that the family members of political oppositionists who were arrested had medical treatment withheld—just in that manner—but some more who maybe did not have it directly withheld felt that they should not go to access it because they were no longer entitled to it. The control of the elite, of the state system, and the way it withholds certain rights from people—even if you yourself are merely a



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child or a family member of someone who has been targeted—is how you exercise power. You do so by threats, the use of force and the threat of force against the family members.

We heard earlier, sadly, how those who have escaped still feel that threat to their family members back home. It will be about health, employment or study opportunities, and their very liberty—

Q29 **Chris Bryant:** Housing?

**Professor Heathershaw:** Yes, housing, absolutely.

Q30 **Chris Bryant:** To take an example from a movie, “The Lives of Others”, which I think is generally reckoned to be a pretty accurate presentation of what it was like in the former East Germany, that model of listening to everything, controlling everything, everyone reporting on everyone and informing on their neighbours and friends, and all the rest of it, is still a reality in a significant number of countries in the world—in a modern version, as it were.

**Annette Bohr:** It is difficult to look at these countries as a monolith, because the variation is so very great.

Q31 **Chair:** But the challenge of technology now means that you don’t have the distortion of the informant; you can listen directly. Actually, we are testing a form of totalitarianism through technology that has never been tried before.

**Professor Heathershaw:** That element of technology and a sense of the globalisation of that also mean that it is not just in authoritarian states. We know anecdotally—there is also some evidence for this, to return to the university example—that populations of students in autocracies face surveillance among their group. So within a cohort of students who are funded there will be those who are reporting directly to the security services. That is not then a free and open environment. Anecdotally, universities here know of cases of individuals who are then called back home, having been—

Q32 **Chris Bryant:** To be clear, you mean that, for instance, in a group of 50 Chinese students at St Andrew’s University, two or three, or four or five of them may be induced to provide information about others and what they are saying, and those other people would end up being summoned back to China.

**Professor Heathershaw:** Absolutely.

**Annette Bohr:** Oh yes. But it also works the other way. Technology is creating small crevices in the censorship role, and increasing the possibilities for co-ordinating collective protests. So technology also has its uses in these autocratic—

Q33 **Chair:** It is interesting that autocracies formerly needed to get a huge amount of buy-in. In “The Lives of Others” example, the Stasi needed perhaps not one in 10 of the East German population but a large number



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of informants to maintain control, but that level of control can now—through technology—be done with a much smaller number of informants and much more accurately, on the grounds that the gossip is direct rather than filtered through various whispers.

**Dr Tansey:** That links into what you were talking about earlier, self-censorship. If there are CCTV cameras on every corner, they don't necessarily have to be on—you might not know if they are on or if someone will actually track you down—it is the fact that they are there, the knowledge of that. They create a latent fear in society.

Q34 **Chair:** This is the Huawei technology, the voice and face recognition being deployed in Xinjiang.

**Dr Tansey:** Exactly.

**Chair:** I am afraid that we will have to leave it there. It has been absolutely fascinating, and I am hugely grateful for your time.

**Chris Bryant:** We got a lot very quickly!

**Chair:** We did. Thank you very much indeed.