

WEBVTT

00:00:03.120 --> 00:00:09.460

<v SPEAKER_1>Hello again, and welcome to Global Exchange, part of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute's Podcast Network.

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<v SPEAKER_1>I'm your host Colin Robertson.

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<v SPEAKER_1>On this episode, recorded on December 10th, we talk about China, Taiwan and Canada, with Julia Bentley and Phil Calvert, both former Canadian ambassadors in Asia.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Julia Bentley is a former Canadian diplomat who served in both Beijing and Taipei.

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<v SPEAKER_1>She is affiliated with the University of Toronto, York, and National Taiwan University, and is a distinguished fellow at the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Canadian Global Affairs Institute fellow Phil Calvert is a former Canadian diplomat and senior fellow at the University of Alberta and associate at the University of Victoria Center for Asia Pacific Initiatives.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Welcome back, Phil, and welcome, Julia.

00:00:53.400 --> 00:00:54.600

<v SPEAKER_2>Thanks, Colin.

00:00:54.600 --> 00:00:59.420

<v SPEAKER_3>Thanks for the warm introduction, Colin, and the invitation to the Global Exchange Podcast.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Phil and I have known each other since we worked at the Canadian Embassy a long time ago with Guy Saint-Jacques, and it's always a treat to chat with him.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Yeah.

00:01:07.260 --> 00:01:09.200

<v SPEAKER_1>Well, it's certainly a treat being with Phil again.

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<v SPEAKER_1>He and I were co-ed a delegation to Taipei, I guess, what, five years ago before COVID.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It was just before COVID.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It was, yeah.

00:01:17.320 --> 00:01:19.720

<v SPEAKER_2>So it was 2019.

00:01:19.760 --> 00:01:20.020

<v SPEAKER_1>Yeah.

00:01:20.280 --> 00:01:21.460

<v SPEAKER_1>And we had a splendid time.

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<v SPEAKER_1>It was a great team.

00:01:24.180 --> 00:01:26.140

<v SPEAKER_2>Five and a half years ago.

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<v SPEAKER_2>That was good.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Phil did the heavy lifting.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Yeah.

00:01:30.440 --> 00:01:30.900

<v SPEAKER_1>All right.

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<v SPEAKER_1>For listeners, against the backdrop of what Mr.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Carney describes as a quote, rupture in geopolitics, we enter a new age of what he calls variable geometry.

00:01:41.480 --> 00:01:47.020

<v SPEAKER_1>With the Trump-led United States, Canada is entering a period of major foreign policy reevaluation.

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<v SPEAKER_1>The Carney government promises a foreign policy review, a

national security strategy, and both national industrial and defense industrial policies.

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<v SPEAKER_1>The reviews are underway, but it is clear that for Mr.

00:01:59.640 --> 00:02:11.360

<v SPEAKER_1>Carney's recent Asian trip, that the Indo-Pacific must play a big role in our efforts to diversify trade and double our exports to the rest of the world within a decade.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Prime Minister Carney has already signaled through his meeting with Xi Jinping at APEC in Korea that we would like to re-engage with the People's Republic of China.

00:02:20.400 --> 00:02:20.680

<v SPEAKER_1>Mr.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Carney has already met with Premier Li when he was at the United Nations General Assembly, and in the meantime, Foreign Minister Anita Ngan has met with her Chinese counterpart.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Julia Bentley has written a very useful paper, Reimagining China Studies, Taiwan as a platform for engaging with the Sinosphere that we will link to in the program notes.

00:02:43.540 --> 00:02:54.600

<v SPEAKER_1>Julie argues that Taiwan is well connected to regional research and policy networks that embrace Asian perspectives on China, Taiwan, and the Indo-Pacific.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Given waning access to mainland China, Taiwan is a useful vantage point for those eager to sharpen their Chinese competencies.

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<v SPEAKER_1>It also offers a counterpoint to the like-minded policy networks, which North Americans and Five Eyes experts are more likely to be connected to.

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<v SPEAKER_1>So let's begin.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Julia, why did you decide to undertake this project on engaging with the Sinosphere?

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<v SPEAKER_3>Thanks Colin.

00:03:21.880 --> 00:03:31.880

<v SPEAKER_3>Let me start by saying that I used the term Sinosphere to refer to the Chinese-speaking world, so primarily Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the People's Republic of China, or PRC.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And I'm interested in the question of China competencies and engaging with the Sinosphere, because I spent 15 years in China and Taiwan, including before I became a diplomat.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So I've watched with interest how, in fact, Canadian interest and international interest in China has waxed and waned since I first studied Chinese at University at a time when that was considered esoteric.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So living in China or Taiwan, mastering Chinese, and understanding the perspectives of the Sinosphere, or the people in the Chinese-speaking world, can be transformative in terms of recognizing why the government of the People's Republic of China behaves the way it does, the nature of relations across the Taiwan Straits, and the influence of China and Taiwan regionally and globally.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Canada has a sustained need for people with China competencies who understand the Sinosphere from both sides of the Taiwan Strait, and who are familiar with Asian regional perspectives on China and Taiwan.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So given the rise in geopolitical competition and the state of Canada-China relations, some Canadians are wary of going to the PRC for academic purposes or to conduct research or develop expertise.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So my premise, to answer your question, is that Taiwan can serve as a valuable platform for those pursuing competencies, China competencies and Asian studies, as well as international relations and global affairs more broadly.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And tapping into Taiwan's expertise can provide insights on the Sinosphere, cross-border relations and regional issues in Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific more broadly.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Well, thanks, Julia.

00:05:10.060 --> 00:05:11.400
<v SPEAKER_1>All of that makes good sense.

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<v SPEAKER_1>And certainly, as you point out, it is getting more difficult, certainly for journalists to go to China and also, I think, students.

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<v SPEAKER_1>So having another place and certainly Taiwan, my observation from having lived in Hong Kong, was that the people in Taiwan, for existential reasons, had a very acute perception and knowledge of what was taking place in the People's Republic of China, probably better than almost any other place I was conscious of.

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<v SPEAKER_1>But let me shift to you, Phil.

00:05:42.840 --> 00:05:57.740
<v SPEAKER_1>Can you just remind listeners about our official relationship with Taiwan and our position on China's claim that it is an integral part of China that must inevitably become, again, once part of the motherland?

00:05:59.220 --> 00:05:59.840
<v SPEAKER_2>Sure, Colin.

00:05:59.840 --> 00:06:06.080
<v SPEAKER_2>Well, as listeners probably know, we established diplomatic relations with China in 1970.

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<v SPEAKER_2>At that time, how we would handle a Taiwan issue was part of a document that both sides agreed to.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The way we stated is that Canada takes note of China's claim over Taiwan.

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<v SPEAKER_2>That's a very limited, doesn't go as far as China would have liked us to go, obviously.

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<v SPEAKER_2>China regularly refers to the one China principle, which is that China has sovereignty over Taiwan, which of course we don't acknowledge.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Interestingly, the US, when it established diplomatic relations with China nine years later, they used the term acknowledge.

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<v SPEAKER_2>They acknowledged China's claim over Taiwan, which to me sounds a little stronger.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Ours is a very cautious recognition that there is a claim there, but no statement on the claim itself.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So what that does actually is it gives us lots of leeway to pursue our relationship with Taiwan.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And Canada, I think for several years, was very hesitant about this, but I think we're seeing more and more, and we've seen more and more interest in fleshing out what is a very fruitful economic and political relationship with certain limitations.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We wouldn't send a Prime Minister there or the Defense Minister or the Foreign Minister.

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<v SPEAKER_2>There are certain limitations on high level engagement both ways.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But beyond that, there are many things that we can do.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We started with more or less a trade office in Taiwan that was just kind of focused on, run by the Chamber of Commerce, focused on business.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Now what we have in Taiwan, in Taipei, is essentially it has all the functions of an embassy, but we don't call it that, which is what other countries do as well.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So we have lots of leeway with what we can do with Taiwan.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I don't think we have necessarily, necessarily pursued it

as much as we could.

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<v SPEAKER_2>There's lots more we could be doing.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But this is why I think Julia's paper is pertinent right now, in looking at how we can use this linkage to Taiwan.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Taiwan's position in Asia and in the Sinosphere to our advantage.

00:08:40.680 --> 00:08:41.120

<v SPEAKER_1>Thanks, Phil.

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<v SPEAKER_1>I think that's very useful because it sets a bit of the scene.

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<v SPEAKER_1>As you say, there is a nuance between the Americans' acknowledgement and our simply noting.

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<v SPEAKER_1>It's not just years, but it does give us a bit more scope.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Julia, to go back to, as Phil says, you've got a very good paper here.

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<v SPEAKER_1>You were in Taiwan earlier this year.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Tell us a bit about that visit.

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<v SPEAKER_1>What did you learn and what do you want readers to take from your paper?

00:09:06.920 --> 00:09:08.860

<v SPEAKER_1>I accept that China is increasingly difficult.

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<v SPEAKER_1>You point this out.

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<v SPEAKER_1>But I wonder why not, for example, Hong Kong, but I'd be

interested in your sense as to how you came to your conclusions and what you want people to take from the paper.

00:09:22.300 --> 00:09:23.100

<v SPEAKER_3>Sure.

00:09:23.100 --> 00:09:38.220

<v SPEAKER_3>I'll give a little bit of background on how I did the research on the paper, which is that I spent three months in the spring of 2025 based at National Taiwan University's Center for China Studies, looking at the question of Taiwan as a springboard for learning about the Sinosphere.

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<v SPEAKER_3>This was particularly interesting for me because I'd lived in Taiwan 30 years ago, and I've been back from time to time, sometimes professionally, but mostly to see friends.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Over that time, I've observed Taiwan's remarkable development, its economic dynamism, its technological prowess, its democratic evolution, and its embrace of progressive social values.

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<v SPEAKER_3>It's very interesting to be back in Taiwan for an extended period and to tune into current realities in Taiwan today.

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<v SPEAKER_3>One of the things I'd like to underline is that direct access to experts in the PRC by international researchers, analysts, journalists, and diplomats is shrinking due to ideological constraints in China, discouraging this kind of interaction with foreigners.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And as a result, there's a growing international recognition of the value of the China expertise available in Taiwan.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So for Canadians and other international China watchers, this offers perspectives which are hard to find outside the cynosphere.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And as a political scientist in Taiwan put it, we should not let the specter of demonization of China prevent us from understanding what is actually going on in China.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So in my view, the specter of demonization casts a long shadow, including in Canada.

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<v SPEAKER_3>But regardless of how we feel about the direction and policies of the People's Republic of China, Canada needs people who have a sound understanding of what's actually going on in China.

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<v SPEAKER_3>For those who choose not to go to the People's Republic of China, engaging with China specialists in Taiwan can help shed light on this question.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Now, naturally, I recognize that there are limitations to the views of China specialists in Taiwan, and this calls for critical thinking regarding potential bias and the ability to judge whether the conclusions drawn are substantiated by the evidence provided.

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<v SPEAKER_3>I might add that the need for vigilance about not letting ideology color conclusions about the Sinosphere applies here in Canada as well.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So one thing that surprised me in Taiwan was the extent of continued academic engagement between China specialists in Taiwan and their counterparts in mainland China.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Of course, the degree of academic collaboration and exchange between faculty, students and researchers on either side of the Taiwan Strait has decreased dramatically since the high point over a decade ago.

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<v SPEAKER_3>But this engagement is still significant and certainly more expensive than Canada-China academic collaboration has been since the downturn in our bilateral relations.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So I think there's a lot for Canadians to learn from informed China watchers in Taiwan about their observations of China's economic and political and social developments.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Another thing that surprised me about Taiwan was the extent of courses taught in English at Taiwan universities.

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<v SPEAKER_3>There are several reasons for this, including Taiwan's push for bilingual education in Mandarin and English, as well as

Taiwan's interest in attracting international students and ultimately skilled workers to sustain Taiwan's economic growth.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So the upshot is for those that are not fluent in Chinese, there are many courses available in English and indeed entire degrees in English at either the undergraduate or graduate levels, including focus in fields that focus on China or Asia, as well as international relations, political science, economics, business administration, science or engineering.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So there's lots of things to be learned from Taiwan and it's becoming more accessible to those who are interested at the same time as access to doing those kinds of academic research pursuits in Mainland China is more constraint.

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<v SPEAKER_1>No, and as you point out, as a place to live, if you're a Westerner, you're extremely comfortable.

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<v SPEAKER_1>It is so different from when I first visited in 1987 and it was just emerging from the Chiang Kai-shek.

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<v SPEAKER_1>His son was in charge and he was still a dictatorship and to me, it mirrored both physically and culturally what I'd seen in Beijing early in the year.

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<v SPEAKER_1>But as time went by, as you say, how remarkable the change has been.

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<v SPEAKER_1>I was reading your paper again this afternoon and this quote, which I'd read the first time, but it stood out again the second time.

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<v SPEAKER_1>I'm going to read it to you because I want you to comment on it.

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<v SPEAKER_1>The quote is, the Chinese Communist Party justifies its legitimacy by taking control of the narratives of Chinese history, posing an existential threat to Taiwan.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Historians outside the PRC can make a contribution by re-

establishing the historical record.

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<v SPEAKER_1>We need to articulate creatively how history can transform identity.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Can you comment on that?

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<v SPEAKER_1>You may remember.

00:14:18.980 --> 00:14:26.340

<v SPEAKER_3>You guys definitely remember the quote and the sociologist who made that, sorry, the historian who made that.

00:14:26.340 --> 00:14:27.840

<v SPEAKER_1>I just found it quite interesting.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Again, you had cited the historian.

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<v SPEAKER_1>I thought this was something that kind of stood out as to making partly the argument why you want to be there.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Yeah.

00:14:37.320 --> 00:14:39.480

<v SPEAKER_3>I would say a couple of things.

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<v SPEAKER_3>One of the things that has evolved in a very interesting way over the last, say, two or three decades is the question of what is the identity of the people who live in Taiwan?

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<v SPEAKER_3>To what extent do they perceive themselves as Chinese?

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<v SPEAKER_3>To what extent do they perceive themselves as Taiwanese?

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<v SPEAKER_3>To what extent do they perceive themselves as both?

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<v SPEAKER_3>And the statistics on that have shifted quite considerably.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So that tells us a number of things.

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<v SPEAKER_3>One is with the increasing economic, political, and technological development of Taiwan, I think there's greater pride in what Taiwan stands for in its own right.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And at the same time, there is a perception of how Taiwan is treated by the People's Republic of China.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And of course, the question of history, who controls the narrative, is one that both China and Taiwan have an interest in.

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<v SPEAKER_3>But I think this particular historian was also talking about the value of people in the Sinophone world, which could include academics outside of Asia, could include, for example, historians of China in places like North America or Europe.

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<v SPEAKER_3>They may have something to contribute on the interpretation of Chinese history and exactly what the evidence demonstrates that narrative is or isn't.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Phil, let me turn to you again, because you'd help draw this paper to my attention.

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<v SPEAKER_1>As an Asia hand, a China hand, how do you assess Julia's observations?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Well, first of all, I really enjoyed Julia's paper, and I think she's made some excellent points about Taiwan, about Taiwan as a place to increase one's capacity, one's understanding of China at large, of China's history, of Asia's history.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Speaking of history, this is a very important point, because China and Chinese officials, as you both know, use their interpretation of Chinese history quite liberally in how they underpin and present their positions to other countries.

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<v SPEAKER_2>For example, the long-standing statement that Tibet has always been an inseparable part of China, and it's just not true.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Chinese officials would get annoyed with me when I'd pull out a map of earlier dynasties and show, well, Tibet isn't part of you here.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Similarly, their approach to Taiwan is also governed by this, and if they can control a narrative, I'm not so much worried about historians who have a much more strong basis in the history of China and the history of Asia.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Although China has for many years controlled some of that narrative as well on the academic side or certainly pushed it.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But I think it's politicians or regular other people who come to China, impressed by the officials' knowledge and interpretation and use of history to present their case, and therefore don't do it in a critical way.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Things are overlooked, things are presented differently.

00:18:03.720 --> 00:18:27.440

<v SPEAKER_2>To have a place where different narratives, historical narratives are present and discussed is very important, not just from the field of history, but how we engage for our engagement, the engagement of Taiwan and politicians with Asia as a whole.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The other thing I just think about this is we can take Julia's observations and expand them a bit.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Because I think that Taiwan can be a good platform, a good jumping off place for doing business as well in Asia.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Now, there was a time when time investment was, Taiwanese investment in China was huge.

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<v SPEAKER_2>That has been declining in recent years, especially under the current Taiwan government, and the last couple of Taiwan governments.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The last Taiwan government place too, because they're not

from the Guangdong Party, and China doesn't like them very much.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But the conditions have been different, but there's still a significant Taiwanese investment.

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<v SPEAKER_2>As Canada is trying to increase its presence in Asia, we are still an economy that has a lot of small and medium-sized enterprises that lack a lot of the resources to have a strong, sustained presence in Asia than necessary for engaging or to have the resources to understand the countries that are dealing with.

00:19:37.660 --> 00:19:47.720

<v SPEAKER_2>But if there's great capacity, I believe, in Taiwan for establishing partnerships, strategic partnerships with Taiwanese companies.

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<v SPEAKER_2>You could have a commercial relationship that's governed by the rule of law, protected by contract law, a commercial relationship with people who are counterparts, who understand China, understand the language, the culture and the region.

00:20:03.740 --> 00:20:17.720

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think that's, you know, this can be a very good platform for strengthening Canada's commercial ties in China, in Taiwan, but also in other parts of Southeast Asia, where Taiwan is very present.

00:20:17.720 --> 00:20:19.720

<v SPEAKER_2>So it would be a good place.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It would be good to see more Canadian companies forming these partnerships as kind of a springboard to doing business as well in China, or in China and of course in other parts of Asia.

00:20:34.620 --> 00:20:38.040

<v SPEAKER_4>Hi, I'm Dave Ferri, the President and CEO of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

00:20:38.040 --> 00:20:42.660

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00:20:51.560 --> 00:20:57.040

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00:20:57.040 --> 00:21:01.000

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00:21:01.000 --> 00:21:07.900

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00:21:07.900 --> 00:21:14.720

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00:21:14.720 --> 00:21:20.580

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00:21:23.980 --> 00:21:24.420

<v SPEAKER_1>Thanks, Phil.

00:21:24.420 --> 00:21:26.620

<v SPEAKER_1>Well, you've in a sense anticipated my next question.

00:21:26.620 --> 00:21:28.700

<v SPEAKER_1>So I'll ask you to lead on this one, Julia.

00:21:28.700 --> 00:21:47.100

<v SPEAKER_1>And that would be your advice to Prime Minister Carney as he looks to next steps with both China and Taiwan, keeping in mind that we want a relationship with China, but the relationship with Taiwan, as Phil points out, has actually worked out very well for Canada.

00:21:50.060 --> 00:21:52.400

<v SPEAKER_3>Thanks for that question, Colin.

00:21:52.400 --> 00:22:16.960

<v SPEAKER_3>So my advice to Prime Minister Carney is that engaging in discussion with the People's Republic of China does not mean endorsing China's position or behaviour, but such engagement will allow us to better understand why China behaves the way it does on bilateral, regional and global issues and to anticipate points of persuasion or dissuasion that would be most effective in our negotiations.

00:22:16.960 --> 00:22:36.800

<v SPEAKER_3>Canada needs to have regular dialogues with the PRC, and the recalibration of Canada's relations with China calls for the reinvigoration of a suite of bilateral consultation and dialogue mechanisms, some of which have been dormant, others have recently resumed, for example, the joint economic and trade consultations.

00:22:36.800 --> 00:22:41.460

<v SPEAKER_3>These are practical discussions on issues and themes that are of interest to both sides.

00:22:42.180 --> 00:22:47.560

<v SPEAKER_3>I would also advise Prime Minister Carney to avoid referring to China as a disruptive power.

00:22:47.560 --> 00:22:56.180

<v SPEAKER_3>Similarly, I would hope that advisors to President Xi Jinping will be advising him and the Chinese Foreign Ministry to drop China's wolf warrior language.

00:22:56.180 --> 00:23:01.040

<v SPEAKER_3>In this way, both sides will start from a neutral position.

00:23:01.040 --> 00:23:11.820

<v SPEAKER_3>Given China's political, economic, technological and security influence, Canada cannot afford to refuse to engage with China and must rebuild a constructive relationship.

00:23:13.100 --> 00:23:25.000

<v SPEAKER_3>In many respects, Canada's interests with China are similar to those of many other countries in Asia, all of which are carefully navigating how to balance their relations with both the US and with China.

00:23:25.000 --> 00:23:35.460

<v SPEAKER_3>As for how Canada should engage with Taiwan, it's not an either-or proposition where recalibrating relations with China will necessarily require engaging less with Taiwan.

00:23:35.460 --> 00:23:49.240

<v SPEAKER_3>On the contrary, having good relations with both serves to convey an important message about the respect which Taiwan has earned through its economic success, its world-class technology, and its vibrant democracy.

00:23:49.240 --> 00:23:58.060

<v SPEAKER_3>So Canada's solid bilateral relationship with Taiwan should continue at the same time as Canada recalibrates its relations

with China.

00:23:58.060 --> 00:24:10.640

<v SPEAKER_3>A final point with a slightly longer-term perspective, Canada needs to invest seriously in capacity building in China competencies and encourage Canadians to become better educated about China.

00:24:10.640 --> 00:24:18.120

<v SPEAKER_3>To use your phrase, Colin, quote, education can serve as a conduit for engagement and to foster understanding, unquote.

00:24:18.120 --> 00:24:28.400

<v SPEAKER_3>Canadians in the public, private, nonprofit sectors, the media and academia need the skills and the competencies to make informed assessments about China.

00:24:28.400 --> 00:24:34.720

<v SPEAKER_3>And as I underline in my paper on reimagining China studies, Taiwan is a platform for engaging with the biosphere.

00:24:35.640 --> 00:24:39.860

<v SPEAKER_3>China competencies can be pursued in China or in Taiwan.

00:24:39.860 --> 00:24:53.780

<v SPEAKER_3>But to do this, Canada needs to create exchanges and bridges of knowledge and collaboration to facilitate this pursuit by Canadian students, faculty, researchers, analysts, journalists and professionals of all kinds.

00:24:53.780 --> 00:24:54.400

<v SPEAKER_1>Thanks, Julia.

00:24:54.400 --> 00:24:57.940

<v SPEAKER_1>Phil, I think Julia makes a pretty compelling case.

00:24:57.940 --> 00:25:04.160

<v SPEAKER_1>Do we have to start afresh with the Indo-Pacific strategy or can we simply get on with it?

00:25:04.260 --> 00:25:12.920

<v SPEAKER_1>Because sometimes we spend an awful lot of time just to do what it took seven, six, seven years to get out the Indo-Pacific strategy.

00:25:12.920 --> 00:25:19.880

<v SPEAKER_1>Although I think the difference this time is we have a Prime Minister who really is interested in Canada internationally.

00:25:21.380 --> 00:25:37.800

<v SPEAKER_2>Well, the Indo-Pacific strategy, I think the current version of the Indo-Pacific strategy can't really sit, and I'm referring back to what Julia said, it can't really sit if we want to have a different kind of relationship with China, the kind of relationship that the Prime Minister is pursuing.

00:25:37.960 --> 00:25:40.700

<v SPEAKER_1>She said the disruptive power thing simply isn't going to go.

00:25:40.700 --> 00:25:41.200

<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah.

00:25:42.020 --> 00:26:00.200

<v SPEAKER_2>The Indo-Pacific strategy, if you look at it, has more to do with Southeast Asia, big focus on Southeast Asia, which is good, but a few other areas in security, then China, it doesn't, all it is basically is just a screed about China in the world without having, offering anything constructive.

00:26:00.200 --> 00:26:12.660

<v SPEAKER_2>So yeah, they'll have to redo that, but I'd rather they didn't focus on reworking some of the language and focus on actually putting resources in and getting stuff done, especially in Southeast Asia.

00:26:12.660 --> 00:26:23.840

<v SPEAKER_2>Because as you know, Colin, in Southeast Asia, we're considered to be a less than necessarily reliable partner in the long run, because we've had a very on-and-off relationship with the region.

00:26:23.840 --> 00:26:25.920

<v SPEAKER_2>On China, a couple of things.

00:26:25.920 --> 00:26:43.260

<v SPEAKER_2>One, I think sometimes there's been a tendency from the diplomats, but for higher level people or some people driving policy to look at China and Taiwan as an either or proposition, as Julia mentioned.

00:26:43.320 --> 00:27:01.100

<v SPEAKER_2>And somehow, either way, it seemed to me when I was looking after this area, it seemed to me that there was reluctance to do more with Taiwan when our relations with China were good, because people didn't want to mess that up.

00:27:01.100 --> 00:27:07.120

<v SPEAKER_2>And there was reluctance to do stuff with Taiwan, and relations were bad, because they thought they would make it worse.

00:27:07.120 --> 00:27:09.860

<v SPEAKER_2>Or people say somehow there's this saw-off.

00:27:09.860 --> 00:27:14.780

<v SPEAKER_2>We have good ties with China, then we will have lousier ties with Taiwan, and back and forth.

00:27:14.780 --> 00:27:16.380

<v SPEAKER_2>I think Julia is quite right.

00:27:16.800 --> 00:27:17.560

<v SPEAKER_2>We can do both.

00:27:17.560 --> 00:27:20.180

<v SPEAKER_2>We can walk and chew gum at the same time.

00:27:20.180 --> 00:27:27.500

<v SPEAKER_2>It's just a matter of navigating some of the sensitivities across Straits and some of the other areas.

00:27:27.500 --> 00:27:38.320

<v SPEAKER_2>What I'd recommend, well, first of all, on the Canada-China relations side, I think we just need a more balanced, focused business-like approach.

00:27:38.320 --> 00:27:50.120

<v SPEAKER_2>We need to recreate or establish a platform of engagement where we can address issues of mutual importance, global issues, as well as address the tough things that we disagree on.

00:27:50.120 --> 00:27:54.800

<v SPEAKER_2>If I were to give some counsel to the Prime Minister, I think he probably doesn't need it from me.

00:27:54.800 --> 00:28:08.700

<v SPEAKER_2>But first of all, avoid the performative politics and look actually to start having, have constructive discussions about how we're going to address some of the outstanding irritants like EV tariffs and canola.

00:28:09.300 --> 00:28:14.100

<v SPEAKER_2>You know, this hits, I'm sitting out here in BC.

00:28:14.100 --> 00:28:17.140

<v SPEAKER_2>This stuff really is hitting us, hitting the West hard.

00:28:17.140 --> 00:28:27.340

<v SPEAKER_2>And this happens several times where Canada takes actions that kind of support a central Canadian industry and the canola farmers get hit by China's reactions.

00:28:27.340 --> 00:28:38.360

<v SPEAKER_2>So you know, I think there are ways you could start finding ways to reduce the EV terrorist slash canola problems.

00:28:38.460 --> 00:28:52.440

<v SPEAKER_2>You can, through some consultation, through creative use of tariff quotas, you know, where you have tariffs up to a certain level, low tariffs up to a certain level of imports, and then higher tariffs afterwards, like we do with products already.

00:28:52.440 --> 00:28:57.820

<v SPEAKER_2>So I think there's options we could do to kind of start moving in the right direction on this.

00:28:57.820 --> 00:29:12.880

<v SPEAKER_2>And on Taiwan, you know, I think there's been a lot of good progress in the last few years with a foreign investment protection arrangement, as science and technology arrangements, the sending of ships to the Taiwan Straits.

00:29:12.880 --> 00:29:20.280

<v SPEAKER_2>I think this is all stuff that, that, you know, especially the more sensitive issue of our, the Taiwan Straits.

00:29:20.280 --> 00:29:24.440

<v SPEAKER_2>This is stuff that, that in particular China doesn't like.

00:29:24.440 --> 00:29:33.000

<v SPEAKER_2>But we have to continue to be sending a message of the importance that Canada establishes through this relationship.

00:29:33.880 --> 00:29:40.560

<v SPEAKER_2>And we have to keep, you know, whether it's not just economic, but also political, and also cultural.

00:29:40.560 --> 00:29:53.680

<v SPEAKER_2>You know, Taiwan is, is in so many ways, it's such a, you know, it's a progressive country, you know, it had the first, the first transgender, you know, cabinet minister in Asia.

00:29:53.820 --> 00:29:56.460

<v SPEAKER_2>It, there's a lot, a lot to offer.

00:29:56.460 --> 00:29:59.060

<v SPEAKER_2>So we have to be, continue to be supporting it.

00:29:59.460 --> 00:30:14.940

<v SPEAKER_2>But we can do that and also have a business-like

arrangement with China that focuses on our interests and, and leaves room for some of the hard stuff as well to, to discuss in private.

00:30:14.940 --> 00:30:24.040

<v SPEAKER_2>But, you know, we can do this and we can, we can manage these relationships, I think, if we do it intelligently and, and strategically.

00:30:25.260 --> 00:30:26.820

<v SPEAKER_1>I think all that makes good sense.

00:30:26.820 --> 00:30:30.240

<v SPEAKER_1>Julia, my last question before I'm going to ask you both what you're reading.

00:30:30.240 --> 00:30:33.740

<v SPEAKER_1>How does Canada position itself in the changing world?

00:30:33.740 --> 00:30:40.240

<v SPEAKER_1>The past we've used titles like useful, helpful, fixer, linchpin, bridge builder.

00:30:41.480 --> 00:30:47.160

<v SPEAKER_1>But what we face now in the Asia Pacific, or maybe I should say Indo-Pacific, is quite different.

00:30:47.160 --> 00:30:54.580

<v SPEAKER_1>So in, in looking at the bigger picture, the Sinosphere, how do we want to position ourselves as a country?

00:30:56.220 --> 00:30:57.000

<v SPEAKER_3>Uh, thanks, Colin.

00:30:57.000 --> 00:30:58.780

<v SPEAKER_3>That's also a very good question.

00:30:58.780 --> 00:31:05.860

<v SPEAKER_3>In my view, Canada should position itself as a middle power, which upholds multilateralism and the rule of law.

00:31:05.860 --> 00:31:27.360

<v SPEAKER_3>This is a role which Canada fulfilled at the beginning of my diplomatic career, and which is solely needed today, as international institutions and the concept of multilateralism are being systematically undermined by the US under the Trump administration and by China, from the United Nations to the World Trade Organization and many others.

00:31:27.360 --> 00:31:49.120

<v SPEAKER_3>Given that in many respects, East Asia is the nexus of

US-China rivalry, Canada would do well to gauge the positions of other middle powers and China's neighbors, such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, as a grouping, to identify issue-based coalitions which align with Canada's national interests.

00:31:49.740 --> 00:31:57.660

<v SPEAKER_3>Many of these countries are explicitly pursuing hedging policies vis-a-vis China and the US, and this should give us food for thought.

00:31:57.660 --> 00:32:08.380

<v SPEAKER_3>It does not advance Canada's interests in Asia to be perceived as entirely aligned with the US and antagonistic to China.

00:32:08.380 --> 00:32:15.600

<v SPEAKER_3>So in my view, the Government of Canada needs to put substance to its aspiration to be seen as a credible and reliable partner in Asia.

00:32:16.160 --> 00:32:22.100

<v SPEAKER_3>As Phil mentioned, this is something that has troubled Canada's reputation, especially in Southeast Asia.

00:32:22.100 --> 00:32:29.620

<v SPEAKER_3>To do this effectively, Canada can no longer pay attention only to sectors or issues that matter to us in Canada.

00:32:29.620 --> 00:32:42.300

<v SPEAKER_3>We need to become much better at listening to what matters to our partners in Asia, especially middle powers and those with whom we have shared interests, to be advanced collectively and through multilateral frameworks.

00:32:42.860 --> 00:32:52.480

<v SPEAKER_3>And Canadian officials, government and corporate leaders and professionals must do more than merely fly in and fly out of Asia for occasional meetings and summits.

00:32:52.480 --> 00:33:03.580

<v SPEAKER_3>I might also suggest that the government of Canada needs to be cautious about conflating the interests of Canadian diaspora communities with Canada's national interests.

00:33:03.580 --> 00:33:16.960

<v SPEAKER_3>This came up a few weeks ago, Colin, when you discussed values versus interests with Professor Emeritus Pittman-Potter of University of British Columbia in a webinar hosted by University of Toronto's Professor Lynette Ong.

00:33:16.960 --> 00:33:26.160

<v SPEAKER_3>Heritage ties to a particular country can be an advantage, but should not steer how Canada pursues its national interests with that country.

00:33:26.160 --> 00:33:34.480

<v SPEAKER_3>As Pittman put it, quote, we need to guard against the Canadian tendency to treat diaspora as instruments of Canadian policy.

00:33:34.480 --> 00:33:38.520

<v SPEAKER_3>Let individual Canadians decide how and when they want to contribute.

00:33:40.100 --> 00:33:45.040

<v SPEAKER_3>Of course, this observation applies to the treatment of all diasporas, not just those from China and Taiwan.

00:33:45.040 --> 00:33:52.380

<v SPEAKER_3>It's thus relevant to how Canada adjusts its foreign policy to position itself effectively in our changing world.

00:33:52.380 --> 00:34:04.040

<v SPEAKER_3>And this requires a very careful balance to ensure that domestic political factors do not distort the pursuit of Canada's national interests in our global engagement with persistence, clarity and conviction.

00:34:05.520 --> 00:34:06.740

<v SPEAKER_1>Well said.

00:34:06.740 --> 00:34:24.980

<v SPEAKER_1>Phil, you've made the point, and certainly Julia, she's aligned it to consistency and follow through and middle power, multilateralism and the dangers which we fall into the trap year after year of diaspora politics.

00:34:26.460 --> 00:34:27.420

<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah.

00:34:27.420 --> 00:34:27.600

<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah.

00:34:27.600 --> 00:34:32.720

<v SPEAKER_2>You know, I think what Julia has said is, you know, it's very articulate.

00:34:32.820 --> 00:34:35.840

<v SPEAKER_2>I think it summarizes it very well.

00:34:35.940 --> 00:34:40.340

<v SPEAKER_2>And I would go back to the term that I used and that she used also, the reliable partner.

00:34:40.340 --> 00:34:42.000

<v SPEAKER_2>That's what we have to be.

00:34:42.160 --> 00:34:44.560

<v SPEAKER_2>And listening, fighting out what their interests are.

00:34:45.520 --> 00:34:56.400

<v SPEAKER_2>And because many of those problems that are their concerns are also our concerns because they have an impact on regional stability, whether it's migration, climate change, water.

00:34:56.400 --> 00:35:07.240

<v SPEAKER_2>I'm a big fan of studying the use of water and the problems with water because that will be a source, I believe, of significant geopolitical conflict in Southeast Asia in the next coming decades.

00:35:07.240 --> 00:35:11.220

<v SPEAKER_2>So building partnerships along these issues is very important.

00:35:11.220 --> 00:35:14.680

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think we have to step back further.

00:35:14.680 --> 00:35:35.620

<v SPEAKER_2>We have to have a real sense of take a break from how we identified ourselves before because the helpful fixer moniker that are relied to a great extent on our ties with the United States, and our ability to be a bridge to US policy sometimes.

00:35:35.860 --> 00:35:50.920

<v SPEAKER_2>And I remember in negotiations in the WTO or other places where we would work with the US, on sometimes the US would have a want to present something, and they knew that if they presented it, that no one would accept it.

00:35:50.920 --> 00:35:55.740

<v SPEAKER_2>But if we liked it and agreed with them, if we were to present it, then people would accept it more.

00:35:55.740 --> 00:35:58.060

<v SPEAKER_2>And that kind of worked both ways.

00:35:58.060 --> 00:36:00.880

<v SPEAKER_2>So, you know, that is gone.

00:36:00.880 --> 00:36:08.980

<v SPEAKER_2>That's, that's, I think, to a great extent, that is a whole, that is created a relationship with the US.

00:36:08.980 --> 00:36:13.940

<v SPEAKER_2>The changes that have happened are creating a shift in how we operate.

00:36:13.940 --> 00:36:17.680

<v SPEAKER_2>And this kind of role that we used to play, that's gone.

00:36:17.680 --> 00:36:22.200

<v SPEAKER_2>We have to find a new definition of how we operate internationally.

00:36:22.200 --> 00:36:25.060

<v SPEAKER_2>I think Julia summarized it very well.

00:36:25.060 --> 00:36:25.860

<v SPEAKER_1>I think you're quite right.

00:36:25.860 --> 00:36:27.820

<v SPEAKER_1>I like the idea of a reliable partner.

00:36:27.820 --> 00:36:28.240

<v SPEAKER_1>All right.

00:36:28.240 --> 00:36:29.700

<v SPEAKER_1>You start on this one, Phil.

00:36:29.700 --> 00:36:31.960

<v SPEAKER_1>What are you reading or streaming these days?

00:36:31.960 --> 00:36:32.840

<v SPEAKER_2>Okay.

00:36:32.840 --> 00:36:33.900

<v SPEAKER_2>I don't stream much.

00:36:34.860 --> 00:36:35.600

<v SPEAKER_2>Two books.

00:36:35.600 --> 00:36:38.340

<v SPEAKER_2>I just finished as of yesterday.

00:36:38.340 --> 00:37:01.280

<v SPEAKER_2>One is The Conscience of the Party by Robert Suettinger, which is a biography of Hu Ya-Bang, who you will remember from your Hong Kong days, the reformist party secretary, who was cashiered by and fired in 1987 after the first set of student demonstrations, because he was pushing reform too much.

00:37:01.280 --> 00:37:07.140

<v SPEAKER_2>A lot of the reforms that Deng Xiaoping is credited with, actually started with him.

00:37:07.140 --> 00:37:20.140

<v SPEAKER_2>The second is There are Rivers in the Sky, a novel by Elif Shafak, which is a beautiful book about Mesopotamia and the Assyrian, about Assyria.

00:37:20.140 --> 00:37:34.780

<v SPEAKER_2>It takes place in three different timelines, 1872 and 2014 and 2018, brings together archaeology and ISIS and all sorts of issues related to water.

00:37:35.960 --> 00:37:37.420

<v SPEAKER_2>It's a beautiful book.

00:37:37.420 --> 00:37:38.100

<v SPEAKER_1>Excellent.

00:37:38.100 --> 00:37:39.140

<v SPEAKER_1>Very good recommendations.

00:37:39.140 --> 00:37:40.040

<v SPEAKER_1>Julia, what about you?

00:37:40.040 --> 00:37:42.240

<v SPEAKER_1>What are you reading or streaming?

00:37:42.240 --> 00:37:44.780

<v SPEAKER_3>Well, like Phil, I've got two books on the go.

00:37:45.980 --> 00:37:53.880

<v SPEAKER_3>One is, I'm reading Amitav Acharya's The Once and Future World Order, Why Global Civilization Will Survive the Decline of the West.

00:37:53.880 --> 00:38:00.360

<v SPEAKER_3>Amitav and I have known each other since our 20s and I'm always interested in what he's writing, especially when I'm included in the acknowledgments.

00:38:00.360 --> 00:38:08.020

<v SPEAKER_3>And it felt like a full circle moment when we both found ourselves in Taiwan earlier this year, pursuing our respective academic endeavors.

00:38:08.020 --> 00:38:17.000

<v SPEAKER_3>I'm also reading The Book of Swindles, Selections from a

Late Ming Collection, translated by Professor Christopher Rea and Bruce Rusk.

00:38:17.000 --> 00:38:29.300

<v SPEAKER_3>I met Chris when I gave a talk at UBC on my Taiwan research a few months ago and we discovered our shared interests related to encouraging young people to learn about the Sinosphere and master Chinese.

00:38:29.300 --> 00:38:37.380

<v SPEAKER_3>A book like this reminds us that deception is a universal human trait and that scams were as ingenious in early modern China as they are today.

00:38:38.740 --> 00:38:39.780

<v SPEAKER_1>Excellent.

00:38:39.780 --> 00:38:44.460

<v SPEAKER_1>Well, thank you, Julia, and thank you, Phil, and thanks for listening to this episode of The Global Exchange.

00:38:44.460 --> 00:38:52.580

<v SPEAKER_1>We were joined today by Julia Bentley and Phil Calvert in a discussion prompted by Julia's paper, Reimagining China Studies.

00:38:52.580 --> 00:38:55.940

<v SPEAKER_1>Taiwan is a platform for engaging with the Sinosphere.

00:38:55.940 --> 00:38:58.780

<v SPEAKER_1>As I said earlier, we'll link to it in our program notes.

00:38:58.780 --> 00:39:02.540

<v SPEAKER_1>You can find The Canadian Global Affairs Institute on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

00:39:02.540 --> 00:39:14.160

<v SPEAKER_1>The Global Exchange is brought to you by our team at The Canadian Global Affairs Institute, and my thanks go to our producer, Jordyn Carroll, who endured a snowstorm to be able to make this happen, and to Drew Phillips for providing our music.

00:39:14.160 --> 00:39:15.660

<v SPEAKER_1>I'm Colin Robertson.

00:39:15.660 --> 00:39:17.480

<v SPEAKER_1>Thanks for joining us today on The Global Exchange.