OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Thursday 9 November 2023

Session 6

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Thursday 9 November 2023

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CONSTITUTION, EUROPE, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE
30th Meeting 2023, Session 6

CONVENER

*Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab)
*Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
*Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
*Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Noé Cornago (University of the Basque Country)
Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con) (Committee Substitute)
Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP) (Committee Substitute)
Professor Stéphane Paquin (École nationale d'administration publique)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

James Johnston

LOCATION

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)

Scottish Parliament

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Thursday 9 November 2023

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Interests

The Convener (Clare Adamson): Good morning, and a warm welcome to the 30th meeting in 2023 of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee. We have received apologies from Kate Forbes, who is being substituted by Audrey Nicoll—a warm welcome to her, too—and from deputy convener, Donald Cameron MSP. I know that our thoughts will be with Donald this week.

Mr Cameron will be substituted by Pam Gosal, whom I welcome to the committee. As this is your first time here, Pam, I invite you to make a declaration of interests.

Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con): Good morning, everybody. I just want to put on the record that I am chair of the cross-party group on India and that, in October, we had a cross-party delegation visit to India.

National Outcomes

10:00

The Convener: Our main agenda item this morning is the continuation of our evidence taking for the committee's inquiry into the Scottish Government's national outcomes and indicators relating to international policy. We are joined remotely by Noé Cornago, associate professor of international law and international relationships, University of the Basque Country; and Professor Stéphane Paquin from the national school of public administration in Quebec. Thank you both for joining us this morning, but a special thank you to our colleague from Quebec—I understand that this will be a very early start for you this morning.

I will open with a general question about how civil society plays a part in the paradiplomacy that happens in your countries. I will bring in Noé Cornago first.

Noé Cornago (University of the Basque Country): First of all, thank you for the invitation. It is an honour and a pleasure.

For a long time, Basques have known both levels. They have known the importance of civil society as well as Governmental input since the early years of Basque autonomy during the civil war in Spain in 1936, when the first statute of autonomy was approved. At that time, civil society was already behind and with the Basque Government abroad.

Today, I will say that the situation is different, with perhaps fewer politicised expressions of civil society—let us say, non-governmental organisations working in development aid or the private sector. Compared with Catalonia, though, I would say that the situation is very different. Over the past 20 years, Catalonia civil society has worked closely with—even a little bit under—its orientations, even if that relationship has sometimes been contentious. However, it is clear that Catalan international outreach over the past 20 years has been welded with civil society and widely understood. In the case of the Basque Government, I would say that it is, perhaps, more distinctive of Basque paradiplomacy and international outreach from the point of view of the Government, with an emphasis on the international dimension of being an autonomous community with important and exclusive powers and an institutional profile.

Professor Stéphane Paquin (École nationale d'administration publique): As you will know, Quebec has a political system similar to what you have in Scotland—that is, the Westminster style of Government. In Quebec, there is a Ministry of International Relations and La Francophonie,

which is in charge of all of Quebec's international policy; it is also in charge of outreach not just to the different ministries of the Government, but to civil society. In order to do that, the Government of Quebec has created in academia the position of research chair on different topics, and they can ask questions and organise conferences with researchers and students. It has also created many institutions with non-governmental organisations and, of course, the business sector, not just in Quebec City or Montreal, but all over the province of Quebec. So there is a clear effort to have domestic outreach to help people—and even municipal government—internationalise their activity.

My short answer, then, is yes, there are a lot of links between the Government and different organisations in civil society to promote international relations and internationalisation activities.

The Convener: Thank you. I will move to questions from my colleagues and call Mr Stewart first.

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Good morning, gentlemen. I want to ask you both about the effectiveness of the external engagement between Governments. Professor Paquin, you have mentioned that there is a Westminster-type environment in Canada, as a result of which you have to co-operate and work together to pursue your international engagement policies as individuals in your communities. How do you manage to be effective on both sides? What are you trying to achieve in your areas—that is, in Quebec and the Basque Country? Does the national Government work with you or are there tensions and difficulties in trying to achieve what you want? Do you believe that the system is working well for both of you, or not?

Professor Paquin: You have asked a very important question. Quebec has been involved in international relations—to put it simply—since the 1960s. At the beginning of the phenomenon, there was a lot of tension with the Canadian Government, and those tensions were super important during the close referendum on Quebec's independence in 1995, and in 1980, too, for one obvious reason: knowing that it needed international support to become a sovereign country, Quebec sought the help of the French Government, and that created a lot of tension with the federal Government of Canada.

However, all of that ended a good 20 years ago. Nowadays, the support for independence has decreased—it is now at about 35 per cent in Quebec—and even though the political party that is in power in Quebec qualifies itself as nationalist, it is opposed to independence. That means there is much less friction with Canada over Quebec's international relations. That is the first big picture.

I should also point out that Quebec is not the only Canadian province with international relations. For example, the province of British Columbia has 23 international offices, Alberta has 15 and Ontario has 12. Ontario used to have more than 20 international offices, and now Quebec has 35. So, Quebec is not alone in having international activities. If the federal Government were to be harsh on Quebec and not on the other provinces, that might create a problem.

Finally, in international negotiations such as trade negotiations, the Canadian Government needs the co-operation of the provinces, because the provinces will have to implement the agreement at some point. In Canada, the provinces can refuse to do so if it falls within their field of jurisdiction. Therefore, since the 1960s, Canada and the provinces have signed multiple intergovernmental agreements to increase the participation of the provinces in international negotiations. That is the case for trade, human rights, healthcare and education, but not for climate change agreements or negotiations. On some of those issues, there is some tension, as is typical and normal in a federal regime, but, overall, things are much better now than they were 25 or 30 years ago.

Alexander Stewart: Are there still some tensions in the Basque situation of the sort that Canada has moved on from? It would be useful to get a view from the gentleman from there.

Noé Cornago: As my colleague Stéphane Paquin has underlined, there is a long tradition of this sort of thing in Quebec. I would say that, in Canada, the confidence in governors has gone on for centuries, while in the Spanish autonomous government system, the confidence in governors has been going on for less than that—say, approximately 10 or 15 years. It is not even been heard about every day.

From that point of view, Spain is clearly a very different country. It is a unitary country—a unitary state. It is true that that allows for a significant level of decentralisation in many important aspects; indeed, in some aspects—its fiscal situation, for instance—the Basque Government has strong powers. Of course, when you have exclusive powers in matters of real interest, there will always be a contentious dimension.

Another important peculiarity of the Spanish constitutional system is that we do not have a proper second chamber or territorial senate. The Spanish Senate is composed of representatives of the provinces, not the autonomous communities. Depending on the autonomous community, those communities have the possibility of appointing a

variable number of representatives; however, it is a small representation and not really tailored to meeting the needs of a highly regionalised and decentralised state.

This is extremely important, but one of the virtues of the Spanish political system is that our systems of intergovernmental co-ordination and collaboration are extremely weak, both in regional terms—perhaps not at the local level, but autonomous communities are very rarely able to co-ordinate themselves seriously—and vertically. Attempts have been made to do something about that, but they never work, because another peculiarity is that the most critical actors—the Basque Country and Catalonia—have recognised, in their own institutions of autonomy, the possibility of having a bilateral channel of communication with the central Government. Even when the central Government promotes governors to negotiations, the Basques and Catalans tend to say, "No, we prefer our bilateral channel, which is formally established in our institutional autonomy."

A final element—and one that probably has more explanatory power—is party politics. The party system in Spain is peculiar, because, in contrast with, for instance, the British system, national and regional parties compete with each other over the composition of both chambers and the regional Governments. As soon as they realise a mutual need for support to secure stability in office or parliamentary support, they will completely change. If, for instance, the socialist party has an absolute majority, it will be very reluctant to collaborate with the Catalans or the Basques. If it needs the Basques and Catalans, it will, as we are witnessing at the moment, be willing to collaborate. The same thing will happen with the Catalan and Basque political parties if they do not need the support in the Catalan or Basque chamber.

In the Spanish case, then, it is party politics and political opportunity that shape changes more, perhaps, than any formal system of the distribution of powers or formal mechanisms of intergovernmental co-operation, and such an approach has elements of progress, sometimes, and sometimes elements of regression.

The Convener: I would like to ask a supplementary along the lines of Mr Stewart's questioning. When the committee visited Brussels, it met the Canadian mission. Given the new situation that Scotland finds itself in outside the European Union, can you tell us how Quebec integrates with the Canadian mission as a third party in Brussels? Moreover, how does Basque paradiplomacy happen in Brussels, given that the Basque Country itself is still within the European Union?

10:15

Professor Paquin: Quebec has been present in Brussels as an autonomous representation since the early 1970s, with an office outwith the Canadian embassy and the different institutions that Canada has with the European Union. That is not always the case; in some countries, Quebec representation sits within the Canadian embassy. For immigration purposes, Quebec agents are typically within the Canadian embassy, but that is not always the case. It is on case-by-case basis.

My understanding is that, in Brussels, there are formal and informal links. Informally speaking, if the Canadian embassy were to host a reception in its house, Quebec representatives might or might not be invited. They get invited a lot, but it depends on who is in charge at the Canadian embassy and who is in the Quebec delegation. If the people get along well, they will be invited. That is also the case for the personnel who work for the Quebec representation in the Canadian embassy. The Quebec team has around 15 or 20 people who work there full time; perhaps more than half are locally hired, so they come from Belgium. As they stay there for a very long time, they typically build good working relations with the Canadian embassy and other sub-state Government organisations. That is the informal part.

As for formal links, they tend, with specific events, to co-ordinate things to make sure that everything is fine and that they are working properly together. One of the very big achievements of the Quebec representation in Brussels has been the relaunching of the free trade negotiations between Canada and the European Union. When we look back a good 15 or 20 years, we will see that Canada and the EU did not succeed in the first run of negotiations in the early 2000s, and it was the Quebec delegates in Brussels who relaunched negotiations by convincing the Prime Minister of Quebec that it was in the interests of Quebec to have a free trade agreement with the European Union. After that, the Prime Minister of Quebec convinced the premier of Ontario—and that, together, makes up 70 per cent of Canada's economy.

There was then, with the help of the Canadian embassy, a joint visit to the EU to see whether there was any interest in the EU. They convinced the Canadian Government as well as the French Government—which, at the time, was leading the European Union—to start negotiating. It was a very big success for Quebec diplomacy, and it all happened, because of Quebec's representation in Brussels and the fact that it typically works well with the Canadian Government. The Brussels posting is not conflictual for Quebec; it is not like, for example, Paris.

Noé Cornago: I would say that, for the Basque Government and the Basque nationalists, being present and active in the European Union process has been a landmark for them. It was very important for them to perform well. Indeed, they had participated in the early conversations on the creation of the European community and the various conferences in the 1940s and early 1950s—they were there even in exile.

In 1988, the delegation of the Basque Government first opened its office in Brussels. It is important that I underline that it was supposed to be a showcase involving all the Spanish autonomous communities, with the delegation being opened with the status of one official representation—that is, a public entity official representation. The Spanish Government, which was led by the socialist Felipe González, immediately complained and filed a suit; when the case went to the constitutional court, it unexpectedly decided in favour of the officiality of the Basque delegation in Brussels. The magistrates understood that it was an expression of the European Union—or the European Economic Community, as it was at the time—in the context of what was basically an expanded field of domestic politics.

It is funny because, after that, the Basque Government was considered a real success. Other delegations abroad have been copying the Basque Country over the decades in establishing the same sort of official representation—and not only in the European Union but in the Americas, too. For them, the Basque example has been influential and instrumental in shaping an institutional official profile abroad.

Beyond that, the Basque delegation in Brussels has done really good work over time. It has a really technical profile, and it looks for partnerships in order to understand all the intricacies of the European integration process, remaining quite distant from political controversies. It has been a learning process—say, a sort of provincial learning.

That is very different from the Catalan case. The Catalans have a serious and functional delegation in Brussels, but as part of their process, they fully decide their own business, which further complicates even the most bureaucratic task.

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): Good morning to our panel members. It is nice that you have been able to join us. I am interested in exploring a little the importance of domestic policy in Scotland, for example, and how important that is for sub-states such as yours when it comes to scoping investment opportunities for businesses.

I will give you an example. I am an MSP in the north-east of Scotland, which has an opportunity to shift from oil and gas production to renewables production. There can be some challenges in and around, for example, planning and consenting policy in Scotland, and, with particular reference to timescales, that may have an impact on the attractiveness of Scotland for international partners to come and invest here. That is just one example, but I am interested more broadly in how domestic policy is scoped or considered when our global colleagues, including those in Europe, may be looking to develop in Scotland.

Noé Cornago: The Basque Government has tried to build a network of interests for trade and investment. That works pretty well, but it mostly focuses on small and medium-sized enterprises. Although the Basque economy is wealthy, affluent, modern and innovative, it is not that big; it is a small regional economy. Despite best efforts, the most influential economic agents in the Basque economy are bigger than the reach of Basque Government policies. For instance, in the Basque Country, we have Iberdrola, which is a big corporate group, Repsol, and the Mondragon Corporation, which is a big group as well. Perhaps there is too much focus on small and medium-sized enterprises, but it is more difficult for the Basque Government to enter into dialogue about big investments with big firms. It is different for Catalonia and Madrid, which are bigger economies. That may explain the differential disadvantage.

Professor Paquin: It is a very good question. Quebec is a small francophone nation in North America. Most of our trade and investment is with the United States, but, as far as the United States is concerned, we could be living somewhere in Japan. It does not have any idea of who we are. When it does know, sometimes it is biased or the information is not very good. In the 1960s and 1970s, it became clear that Quebec needed to increase its international presence in the United States and around the world in order to promote Quebec's distinctiveness and to explain the basic facts of who we are and what kind of economy we are.

English Canadians and Americans have kind of the same culture; they understand each other easily. Since the federal Government is majority English Canadian, it sometimes does not make the necessary effort to explain the Quebec difference. For example, in Quebec, a very contentious issue is the linguistic legislation that promotes French. If an American business opens in Montreal, it will have to operate in French after a certain period. That is the kind of thing that we need to explain to people outside Quebec. A lot of public diplomacy in Quebec is targeted towards

the United States and the rest of the world in order to explain the Quebec difference.

There is another major difference. Quebec sees itself as a social democracy in North America. That is not the kind of thing that Americans understand easily. We have state-owned enterprise in the energy sector. We export a lot of the energy to the United States. That also needs to be explained to Americans. It is really key that those kinds of things are explained. The Government of Quebec feels that it has to do that itself.

On that very question, as I mentioned, there was a referendum on independence, which conflicted with the aims of the federal Government at that time. The Government of Quebec separated trade and investment missions from international relations. Basically, we have a Ministry of International Relations and La Francophonie that deals with international relations but does not deal with trade or international investment. We have a state-owned enterprise called Investissement Québec, which is in charge of attracting foreign direct investment and promoting trade. We also have the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, which works like a pension fund, if you like. It invests Quebec's pension funds all over the world. Those actors have become very important. For example, the caisse de dépôt is the first, most important Canadian investor inside and outside Canada.

It is important to explain the regional difference, and Quebec is not alone in that. As you know, the oil and gas energy sector is very present in Alberta. To be honest, the tar sands have a bad reputation not only in Canada, but internationally. When Alberta wants to promote the creation of a pipeline between Alberta and Texas, it needs to do that itself. Canada is so divided on the issue that the Canadian Government is not going to push it very much with the United States. Alberta needs to do that for itself, which is why it has been doing that for a good 20 years. I hope that I have answered your question.

The Convener: I will take a supplementary question from Mr Bibby, then bring Ms Nicoll back in.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): Professor Paquin, on your point about the separation of international work and investment in trade, when we look at outcomes and try to attract investment and trade to Scotland, we hear about a desire for business to have a single point of contact. You have different levels of government, departments—perhaps you have economic development departments and international departments—and businesses that may look to attract investment. Does that work well in practice for achieving the outcomes of investment and trade and creating that single point of contact in order to avoid the duplication that can sometimes get in the way and frustrate trade and investment?

10:30

Professor Paquin: You are right. That is a very important question. Over time, there have been multiple changes in Quebec. For example, if you look at the structure of the Canadian Government nowadays, you see that Global Affairs Canada has trade, investment and international affairs in one big ministry—one big department. In Quebec, two years ago, trade promotion and trade investment sat with the Ministry of International Relations and La Francophonie. Prior to that, the economy ministry was in charge of trade promotion. There were also multiple tools on top of that. For example, Investissement Québec—I am simplifying—was created in the 1960s and has a $4 billion or $5 billion budget, in Canadian dollars, every year. That is 10 times larger than that of the Ministry of International Relations and La Francophonie.

The way in which the law is written now means that the Ministry of International Relations and La Francophonie is there to help Investissement Québec. In Quebec's different international offices, there are also sometimes representatives of Investissement Québec within the Quebec delegation. Most of the time, however, Investissement Québec has its own offices, and it is pretty clear that, if you want to do a trade fair somewhere or want to invest in Quebec, you will be directed very quickly to Investissement Québec. It is not the Ministry of International Relations and La Francophonie that will do that. If you want to organise an international event in, say, Chicago or Mexico City, however, it is clear that the Quebec representation over there will be helping Investissement Québec and all the Quebec partners to achieve their ends.

I understand your point about having one focal point in order to make things easier, but the reason that a distinction is made in the case of Quebec is that the politics of Quebec, especially when there is nationalism or a referendum, are becoming too sensitive, so the preference has been to depoliticise trade and investment by creating a state-owned enterprise that is at arm's length from the Government and can thus operate more freely and distance itself from some of the Government's harsher positions. That is the way in which it was created.

The most recent reform was done just four years ago, and there was then the pandemic, so we do not have an evaluation of whether it is going super good, but, for the moment, my feeling is that that recipe is working very well, and I do not see major change happening in the future. Even if

there is a change of Government, the structure will probably remain.

Audrey Nicoll: Thanks very much for those comprehensive responses. I will ask a brief follow-up question that comes back to my original question about domestic policy. In the context of not only planning and consenting—the example that I gave—but trade and investment, do you agree that, when developing policy, it is important that it has an international trade compatibility or compliance element? I will start with Professor Cornago and then bring in Professor Paquin.

Noé Cornago: It is a very interesting question. Historically, the Basque Country in the 20th century had a highly industrial economy, and it suffered very much as a result of industrial reconversion. This will therefore produce a new ace, I will say, for when the Basque Country recovers its autonomy. It was trying to recover from that industrial decline and to foster a new, modern and innovative economy. From that point of view, I will say that the Basque Government, across time, has always tried to keep in mind the element that you described. If we need to promote a new economy and get new investment, it should done be in line with the newest business standards, in terms of decent work, intergovernmental dimensions and not affecting critical infrastructure. As also happens in Quebec, in the case of the Basque Country's trade and investment, such policies are outside the scope of the cabinet of the presidency of the Basque Government. It is not the president himself, or herself in time, who is in charge of controlling that directly. Rather, it is in a separate ministry.

That creates a peculiar situation. On the one hand, the Basque Government has had a clear understanding in the past 50 years that trade and investments will be promoted according to international standards. The Basque Country has always put a lot of emphasis, as a new economy, on adapting to the newest standards. The threat has been that the presidency of the Basque Government has been extended outside that. It was outside that that the planning for international relations by the Basque Government was done.

Finally, the moral and political dimensions of the international relations of the Basque Country are becoming increasingly influenced by the trade and investment agenda. There are criticisms in the Basque Parliament that the Basque Country's external relations have too much focus on trade and investment in and not enough focus on the wider non-political agenda. That is a point of contention. For instance, intensive parliamentary control of the Basque Government's actions may come up in discussions on the commission of external affairs with the Basque Government. The way in which the Basque Government presents itself across the world is increasingly attached, perhaps too much so, to the trade and investment agenda and less to other aspects.

Of course, it is also important to recognise that the Basque Government has 80 offices all over the world for trade and investment, which are attached to a very important network of global development aid. That is quite an important contribution to the Basque Country. It also has a network with the Basque diaspora and is involved in the promotion of the Basque language and culture. It is not exclusively focused on that, but the pragmatic approach is displacing a more political and social agenda.

Audrey Nicoll: We are conscious of time. I do not know whether you want to move on, convener.

The Convener: I think that it is fine.

Audrey Nicoll: Okay. Professor Paquin, do you want to add anything to that?

Professor Paquin: On free trade, in the case of Quebec, there has been a consensus between the political parties there since the 1980s that Quebec needs free trade. Even the political parties on the left are favourable to free trade. On the right, it is obvious why: they want to explore and think that free trade is the best way to grow the economy. On the left, the Parti Québécois, which was favourable to independence for Quebec, thought that it would be easier to become independent if we were part of free trade agreements, especially with the United States.

That situation still holds for the most part, but in recent years, especially with the rise of protectionism in the United States and the conflict with China, there has started to be tension. The Government of Quebec has an agenda of economic nationalism. It wants to promote Quebec businesses; after the pandemic in particular, we realised that we were too dependent on international imports from China. There is now a movement where the Government of Quebec wants to promote local enterprises, and some of its actions might be contrary to trade agreements that we have. That is a source of big tension. Will it be challenged in the courts? I am not sure, but, clearly, there is some very important tension there. The basic facts are simple: Quebec exports the equivalent of 50 per cent of its gross domestic product and 76 per cent of those exports go to the United States. So, we need a free trade agreement with the United States and, of course, with other partners.

Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP): It is very interesting to hear your comments. I spent a year in Canada at the University of Prince Edward Island and I worked for quite a time on the Committee of the Regions, which is mentioned in our papers.

I am particularly interested in Professor Cornago's comments about progress and regress in relation to how this thing works. We have a quote from President Biden, which says that the foreign policy of Canada in peacetime is to be at war with Quebec. It feels a bit like that in the UK just now, in my view. We have an increasingly insecure and paranoid UK Government that is now saying that, when a Scottish minister tries to be active internationally, they first have to speak to the UK ambassador or ambassadorial staff. Also, like other parts of the UK, Scotland was completely cut out of the discussions on Brexit and the trade discussions afterwards. It feels a bit like a curtain is coming down.

Professor Cornago, I think that you said that the progress and regress often depends on the political imperatives. For example, if the Basque representatives could provide the balance in the Spanish Parliament, that would empower them. I wonder whether, in either of your experiences, there is any pragmatic way to get a basis on which the Governments might be better able to work together, other than a sort of political force majeure.

On trade and industry, our position is pretty much the same as Quebec's. We have Scottish Development International, which is the most successful body of its type in any part of the UK, apart from the south-east of England, at getting foreign direct investment. Generally, however, outwith trade and investment, how best could the two interests—the UK Government and the Scottish Government, in what is obviously a very centralised unitary state, unlike the confederation that you have in Canada—rub along to get to a more productive relationship, outwith the political ins and outs of representation in the UK Parliament, if that makes sense?

Noé Cornago: That is an extremely interesting question. In the case of Spain, an additional complication, which it has in common with the UK, is that there is a really asymmetrical system. There are solutions that work really well in, for instance, Austria and Germany. The German Länder have exclusive powers and they are entitled to be there when the international dimension is being discussed. They are even able to veto an international treaty, is the case with the active roles that Professor Paquin underlined in Quebec, Bologna and, even better, for some time, the Atlantic free trade agreement.

In an asymmetrical system, it is much more complex to do that, from any point of view. The Spanish political system is also asymmetrical when it comes to political representation in the Spanish Parliament. A sort of general formula is therefore really elusive. From that point of view, it is perhaps more productive to work through provincial approaches. That means mutual adjustments and people not trying to either progress quickly or, for others, regress in the context of a political paradigm that makes it almost impossible to shape a vision of the future with a smooth transformation of political institutions and so on. It is almost impossible to transform and reform the Spanish constitution through constitutional means, at least in a short time. Perhaps the legislative role of Parliament should be understood in that way as a constructive approach.

A long time ago, there were some papers from both Canadian and British scholars about the importance of having a diplomatic culture in intergovernmental relations within Canada and the UK. In both cases, despite the problems, there is some background to that and there is already experience. For instance, representatives of Scotland in Brussels have diplomatic status as diplomatic agents that is fully recognised by the Foreign Office. That approach is unthinkable in Spain today, but it would probably serve to integrate and normalise the experience a little, not only in Brussels but in other countries as well.

Spanish politics has become extremely contentious in the past year and it remains difficult. In Spain right now, the Catalans may have had an element of progress, but it will be temporary progress, because the strong development of this political paradigm is contested. As soon as all the coalition mess is needless, it will regress to the previous situation. This is Basque politics. We need a broader and bigger picture of what is at stake. From that point of view, some developments in Quebec, which has its own experience of more audacious moves that basically failed, are very telling about what could be for the Basque Country, Catalonia and Scotland.

I am not sure that I have really answered your question, but it goes to the core theme of our discussion today.

10:45

Professor Paquin: I understand what Keith Brown means and what he referred to as regards the UK Government. That happened a lot in the past with the Canadian Government and the provinces. However, a major difference between Scotland and Canada is that we have a highly decentralised federal regime. Quebec is in charge of all education policy, all healthcare policy and a lot of climate change policy. Culture and economic development are also local issues. It is recognised by most people that Canada has the right to sign any treaty that it wants, even in fields that are under the jurisdiction of the Canadian provinces. However, the provinces cannot be forced by the

federal Government to change their legislation or regulation in order to implement an agreement. That is where they have leverage.

For example, every agreement that is ratified by Ottawa that touches on trade or requires regulations to be changed needs to be approved by the National Assembly of Quebec. There needs to be a vote on whether Quebec consents to the agreement before the laws and regulations can be changed. That gives Quebec leverage. Canadian provinces cannot be forced to implement international agreements. That is why, with the passing of time, the federal Government realised that it needed to work with the provinces.

It is not perfect. There is no big agreement between the Canadian Government and the provinces. There are some sectoral agreements, but many of them are ad hoc or they work on a case-by-case basis. That is why Quebec also has a permanent delegation in Ottawa. It has an office in Ottawa to lobby the federal Government in order to protect the interests of the Government of Quebec, but also to share information and make sure that the Canadian Government understands the problems that are facing the Government of Quebec on some specific international issues and things like that.

The Canadian provinces also created the Council of the Federation, at which the premiers meet regularly, often to discuss international issues that are on the table. No representative of the federal Government is present at those meetings, but the premiers will express their provinces' points of view on international issues, specifically on trade and climate change, and say where their provinces sit. That puts a lot of pressure on the federal Government. It is really hard for it to ignore the provinces after that international negotiation.

Noé Cornago: May I add a comment on a point of difference between Canada and Spain with regard to this discussion? Paradoxically, even if many of the statutes of autonomy introduce some provisions claiming the right of autonomous Spanish communities to be consulted on matters—they have no treaty-making powers under their exclusive or shared powers—those have never been put to work. Even in the simultaneous negotiations on the refinement of the Spanish constitutional system, that was explicitly refused. In our political culture, our constitutional system and our political system, opportunities to advance on that important aspect have so far been closed. From that point of view, the Belgian solution, which is a beautiful formula for internal and external matters, would be a dream for the Basque Government and for all autonomous communities. It would be a solution. At this point, however, it is difficult to reach that point in Spain.

Keith Brown: Thank you for your answers. Unlike in the Canadian example that was given, there are cases where the UK Government is obliged to consult the Scottish Parliament, but it has become increasingly normalised for it to ignore what is said. It is able to do that. In fact, the UK Government describes it as a self-denying ordinance as to whether it will take any notice of what is said.

To what extent do the international activities of Quebec reflect and build on any discretion that it has on immigration? I understand that you have a slightly decentralised immigration system. In Scotland we are suffering depopulation, so the extent to which we should have freedom of action on immigration is a matter of interest. We used to have that under something called the fresh talent initiative. To what extent does Quebec make use of such discretion?

Professor Paquin: It makes a lot of use of it. In Canada, there is shared jurisdiction on immigration. Quebec and the Canadian Government have intergovernmental agreements on how to select immigrants. To simplify matters, when we are talking about the reunification of refugees with family members, that is for the Canadian Government at the federal level. However, when we talk about what we in Quebec call economic immigration, which refers to those who come to work and to live, that is for Quebec alone.

Quebec has multiple offices around the world to attract immigrants. It has a ministry of immigration and a different policy for integration. Each year, Quebec attracts 65,000 economic immigrants and about 70,000 international students—that is a different category. About 100,000 people a year come here to work—for example, in the fields on farms in the summer—and then go back to their country of origin, such as Mexico. There is also that temporary working immigration.

In all those cases, the role of Quebec is key. On economic immigration, Quebec is a very important actor. When Quebec says that an immigrant has been selected and it issues a certificate of selection, the federal Government can then start the process of giving them their permanent residency and, at some point, their passport. Quebec has five representative offices around the world to attract immigrants, and it does a lot of international immigration fairs to try to attract immigrants.

A recent example is the new law that was adopted in Quebec a few months ago whereby, if someone from Scotland, for example, comes to Montreal and studies in French at the Université de Montréal for a year, that will simplify their access to Canadian nationality. It will go faster because they have studied in Quebec for a year. It

is called the programme de l'expérience québécoise.

Those programmes seem to be working very well. On a per capita basis, Quebec attracts three times more immigrants than the United States and four times more than France. It is quite a large number.

Neil Bibby: I would like to understand a bit more where that migration comes from. It will come from all over, but are there any particular countries or regions to mention?

Professor Paquin: For Quebec, France is, if not first, then second, and the French-speaking countries of north Africa and francophone Africa will be next. China, India and countries in Latin America send a lot of students. If people from India, for example, do not speak French when they arrive in Montreal, it takes a little bit longer for them to have the possibility of immigrating. A lot of points are given to immigrants if they speak French. It is not vital, but if they do not speak French, it takes a little bit longer. It is a system of points. I am not a specialist on immigration policy, but the basic idea is that, if someone has a good education, they are young and they speak French, you get more points.

The Government of Quebec typically attracts a lot of immigrants. From what I am seeing, the tide is turning. People feel that Canada's immigration policies are too generous and that there are too many immigrants. We used to be super pro-immigration, but it seems to be changing, probably because of the political discourse in the United States. However, Canada as a whole still attracts half a million people a year. Given our population, that is a lot.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I am interested to hear more about how the provinces in Canada work together and what the formal structures are for that and then to hear from Professor Cornago about how the Basque Country and Catalonia work together within Spain. I was struck by the experience in Germany where, I think, they have more of a formal structure—the Bundesrat—which allows the Länder to come together and reach joint positions. Notwithstanding what Professor Paquin said about policy differences between some of the provinces over energy, for instance, I am interested in how that shared interest is codified and what the structures are for joint working.

Professor Paquin: The Forum of Federations, which I referred to earlier, is involved in the provinces working together. Typically, it has one big meeting a year on general policy or general topics. The specific ministers will also meet regularly. For example, the ministers of education, the economy and healthcare will meet regularly to share data and experience and to put pressure on the federal Government, typically to get more money or something like that. The Forum of Federations was created about 20 years ago. It is more like the premiers getting together to put pressure on the Canadian Government. The federal Government is not invited to those meetings. The federal Government can ask the provinces to meet with it on specific issues, but that is less common nowadays. That happened a lot in the past, but much less so in the past 10 years. Although they are independent, the provinces and the federal Government have to work together very well to handle crises.

There are also some sub-state institutions. For example, the premiers of Quebec, Ontario and the Maritimes and USA state governors meet every year, and have done so every year since the 1970s, to talk about trade, energy, investment and stuff like that. That is a multilateral, sub-diplomacy meeting that happens a lot. There is a multiplicity of such meetings in North America that include Canadian provinces. On top of that, neighbouring provinces work together. For example, Quebec and Ontario share a border and, together, have 70 per cent of Canada's population. They tend to work closely together on multiple issues. It is a bilateral relationship, or bilateral diplomacy, between the two provinces. That is basically how it works.

Mark Ruskell: Are there links between provincial assemblies as well—not just the Governments but parliamentarians and assembly members?

Professor Paquin: I have not talked about that, but it is true that the National Assembly of Quebec—the Parliament of Quebec—has international relations with multiple Parliaments in the world, Canadian provinces, US states, La Francophonie in general, as well as with the Commonwealth countries.

11:00

For example, when the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement was negotiated under Trump, the Government of Quebec convened representatives from the legislative Governments in Canada, the United States and Mexico to talk about the impact of the negotiations on their constituencies and their political power. The Parliament of Quebec tends not to do that super often, but, when the issue is important, there is a good chance that it will do something.

Noé Cornago: In Spain and in the Catalan and Basque regions, the Spanish intergovernmental system is quite precarious, as I mentioned. It takes place through the organisation of the so-called "horizontal" or "autonomous" communities and the

sectoral conferences with the Spanish Government. Only one has an international profile, and that is the sectoral Conference for European Affairs. It is not very good, but not so bad, either; at least it exists. However, both the Catalan and Basque Governments complain about the way it works, because it is clear that, particularly in the case of the Basque Country, there are some exclusive powers that are worthy of bilateral treatment—that is set out in the Basque statute of autonomy. Even if the Spanish Government and other autonomous communities are friendly when discussing strengthening the system of intergovernmental co-operation, it is certain—my understanding is that it is difficult to avoid—that the Basque and Catalan Governments will vindicate a bilateral relationship with the central Government because such a relationship is statutory and is recognised as such.

Beyond that, there are a number of areas of collaboration between the Basques and Catalans on important initiatives, but, across time, the picture is paradoxical. In the early 1980s and in the 1990s, the Basque Country was in the midst of political violence and terrorism, and that created a context in which, all over the world, the Basque Country was seen as a troublemaker, and the Catalan Government was on its own path to building a new, modern system of self-government. That evolved in contradictory terms. At some moments, their paths coincided. For instance, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, they were in a similar position: the Basque Country started to put violence behind it and the Catalans were proud, of course, of their self-government but were in the initial stage of reforming the statute of autonomy. For a moment, they coincided in promoting joint initiatives in the Spanish Congress and in the Spanish political climate and negotiations.

The Catalan process has been a sort of element of distortion of the Basque attempts to follow their own path, for instance in Brussels or in terms of how the central Government modified the law on foreign action. The People's Party of Mariano Rajoy created a new Spanish state law on external action that affected the autonomous communities and introduced important restrictions. For instance, in Spain, the central Government has exclusive power over immigration. At the beginning of the Catalan process, the Catalan Government decided to create specific offices for immigration with delegations abroad, in an attempt, it said, to manage what could be good migration to Catalonia. Immediately, the Spanish Government expressed opposition. Finally, the Supreme Court declared the offices with a specific focus on immigration unconstitutional. Those contentions affected the climate of mutual co-operation between the Catalan Government and the Basque Government. At the moment, the expectations of any real improvement in relations are not clear. There has been a lot of—[*Inaudible*.]—but this has, I think, been broken.

Mark Ruskell: Thanks for explaining the complexity and, I think, the fluidity of the relations.

I want to go back to Quebec, Professor Paquin, and ask you about the position of Quebec in relation to the Arctic. Quebec obviously has a footprint in the Arctic as well as covering subarctic areas. How does Quebec engage with the increasingly difficult politics in the Arctic Circle, particularly now, given the position of Russia? I think I heard recently that Quebec has been going to Nordic Council meetings as an observer, and I am interested in how you engage with the Arctic Council.

Professor Paquin: That is a good question. I have not been paying attention to that in the last year or so. With regard to relations with Russia, I suppose that the tensions are super high, but I have not read or been informed about anything specific. However, you are right: because the Canadian Government accepts the situation, Quebec is an observer in the negotiations. Sometimes, even the Prime Minister attends those meetings. There is also a lot of consultation with the indigenous communities of Canada, which are also present in the negotiations, because, for Quebec and Canada, that issue is super important. With climate change, we all know that there will be a road in the north of Canada in the near future. For Quebec, one of the key elements of its international policy is protecting its interests in the northern part of the Arctic. Besides that, I can send you the reference for a book that was written on the issue, but I have not been informed or made aware of anything specific recently.

The previous Government—the Liberal Government—was really involved in Arctic issues. I think that the Coalition Avenir Québec Government is not, especially because of the pandemic. I have not read anything recently about the Arctic, but I know that Quebec is an observer in the negotiations.

Mark Ruskell: Quebec is part of La Francophonie: does that bring specific advantages in trade? You already mentioned immigration. French-speaking peoples from around the world may be attracted to come to Quebec, but are there wider cultural and trade advantages? Have structures been set up that are in some way similar to the UK Commonwealth that can help French-speaking regions and nations around the world to develop?

Professor Paquin: That is a good question. La Francophonie, as you know, is an international organisation. I think it has 54 member states plus

observers. In the past eight to 10 years, it has tried to be more focused on trade and investment; prior to that, it was more invested in education and culture. For example, everybody who lives in Quebec has a TV channel that is operated by an organisation related to La Francophonie, so we have not only French TV but TV from French-speaking countries all over the world. We also have a lot of university exchange between Francophone countries, but trade is the new idea and the new agenda.

Francophone countries of Africa, especially, have been rising fast in the past 10 to 15 years. For Quebec, that is an opportunity for new markets. Quebec opened an office in Senegal and smaller offices in Djibouti and Morocco. There is a direct flight from Montreal to Morocco in order to promote business. One reason why trade has become obvious is because a big share of immigration to Quebec now comes from north Africa or the French-speaking countries of Africa. There is a big diaspora, and diaspora and trade go together, so there are major interests. At the moment, you do not see it in the trade numbers for Quebec, because most of our exports go to the United States. That is unlikely to change in the near future. However, it is a market of interest, and it is a priority for Quebec to move into the markets of Africa and the Francophone countries.

Pam Gosal: Good morning, panel. My question is on international reputation. The committee has heard in previous evidence that Scotland's international reputation relies on the past. That view was repeated in the recent House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee report promoting Scotland internationally, which stated that there was a heavy focus on tartan. Although that hook is, of course, useful, particularly for tourism, we need to do a lot more to shift the focus on to things such as our scientific research and our business excellence. Have you experienced a similar need to move away from a more traditional reputation towards a more modern one? How have you achieved that?

Professor Paquin: Yes, of course, even in countries that think that they know us well. To be clear, France and Quebec have a long history and good relations, but the typical image that French people have of Quebec is something from the last century. They all believe that we live in a remote area on a farm somewhere. The typical image is not accurate. In the United States, it is the same. In the case of the United States, it is not that they have a bad image of Quebec but that they do not even know that we exist. I read a poll recently in which 30 per cent of Americans thought that Canada was a US state. They are far from the truth. If they believe that Canada is a US state, they certainly will not understand that Quebec is a province in Canada where 85 per cent of the population speak French and there is a different culture and different political system.

There is a lot of teaching to do. In order to promote its image, Quebec has put in place a public diplomacy service on social media. There is also a lot of intervention in the political media in the United States. When there is a crisis, for example, it is common that a minister will write a letter or do something like that. There are a lot of conferences also. The Government of Quebec put in place in the United States an association called the American Council for Québec Studies. It holds a congress every two years, and it finances a research chair and PhD students to promote research on and knowledge of Quebec in the United States. There is also an equivalent in France. There are a lot of Quebec-French relations in Europe and a lot of research projects going on between the two societies.

There are typically three sorts of tourism in Quebec: Canadians from outside Quebec, Americans and the French. Quebec has been very active in those markets to attract tourism, but it has also been active in trying to attract tourism from places such as Mexico, Latin America, China and Japan—with limited success, but it is not negligible.

The image of Quebec is a sensitive issue. Every time that there is negative news about Quebec in the American media, for example, there is typically a strong reaction from people living in Quebec. The Government is aware of that, and they try to change that by using public diplomacy.

Noé Cornago: Initially, after the transition to democracy and so on, the Basque Government enjoyed a good reputation. The reputation of the Basques all over the world was that they were hard-working and good in the kitchen, for lunch and dinner, and also that they were strongly against the dictatorship. They started with a particular and peculiar reputation, but it was a good one. That changed a little in the 1980s. After the transition to democracy, terrorism complicated things very much in terms of institutional outreach and the reputation of the Basque institutions and the Basque Government. It was quite complicated in the early stages of Basque autonomy, but, in the past 20 years, Basque branding has improved very much.

11:15

It is a small country, however. The Basque Government, by definition, needs to concentrate on its own jurisdiction, which is only three provinces of the so-called historical Basque Country—Euskal Herria—which would include Navarra and three Basque provinces on the French side. There is a split between the way in

which the Basque Government seeks to promote its branding abroad, which is focused, of course, on the distinctiveness of the Basque language and culture and the institutional and constitutional reality of the Basque Country, and the way in which Basque nationalism understands that the global branding of the Basque region is related to the historical Basque Country. Sometimes civil society movements and other political parties collide with the designs that the Basque Government formulates in that regard.

On the other hand, as we are concluding on this, the Catalan case is very telling about how reputation may evolve. For instance, in the case of Scotland, after the referendum—I was here—it did not lose its global reputation or branding. After Brexit, it even recovered or increased its global branding as a country that is worthy of attention with a complex culture and so on. The Catalan process has been detrimental to the international reputation of Catalonia, not, of course, for advocates of Catalan independence or independent nations without a state that are seeking and fighting for independence in other countries all over the world but, for sure, for institutional interlocutors, the private sector and other Governments all over the world.

Reputation is extremely important. President Ibarretxe tried to promote constitutional change in Spain in terms of mutating the status of the Basque Country from an autonomous community to a free associative state with Spain. He was very focused on a new approach to global branding for the Basque Country, using the methodologies of the United Nations Development Programme and producing calculations about human development in the Basque Country. At the time, that was quite innovative; no one did that at that time. Today, it is common to offer information on human development. For instance, the Scottish standards are above those in many other regions in the UK. In some aspects, they are even above the English standards of human development.

There are many benefits of global branding and reputation, but I underline that, at the end of the day, they are strongly dependent on the wider context, such as the political climate, economic crises and so on. It is difficult to handle if the context is unstable.

Pam Gosal: Thank you for your responses. I have a question about the locations of international offices, which was touched on earlier. The committee has heard suggestions that there should be a review of the location of Scotland's international offices. Currently, I believe, there are no offices in Spain, Italy or the Netherlands. How often do you review the locations and sizes of the offices? I am just back from a trip with the cross-party group on India. We have a presence in India, but we were asked to expand it because the trade deal and other things that are happening mean that there are lots more opportunities. It would be good to hear from both of you on how often the locations and sizes of the offices are reviewed. This time, I will go to Professor Cornago first.

Noé Cornago: In the case of the Basque Government, delegations abroad are divided into two types, basically. There are those who work specifically on trade and investment—there are around 80 of those across the world, including in India. They work through a formula of private law through different forms of public-private partnership. The Basque Government is behind that, but it is also in the hands of private actors all over the world. Basically, as I mentioned, it is perhaps particularly functional for small and medium-sized enterprises.

In parallel, there is the network of delegations abroad that, compared with those of many others—for instance, Quebec—is quite modest. For a long time, because of the aspect that I mentioned before—that the Basque Government has wanted to have official delegations abroad, which, in the Spanish constitutional system, was a difficult thing to achieve—the Basque Government has been careful about opening new delegations. It has modified the network at some moments, but it is still quite a modest network, not in terms of the way in which it works but in that it does not have the ambition to multiply, let us say, nonsensical delegations abroad.

We have learned lessons from Quebec. At one time, Quebec opened plenty of offices, then it re-evaluated its approach when people were returning to offices, and it now has a more pragmatic approach. Stéphane will correct me if I am wrong, I am sure. The Basque Country tried to learn from those experiences, and it is more prudent about opening offices. Of the offices that are open, some of them operate not only in the country where they are but in other, surrounding countries in the region. For instance, the delegation in Santiago de Chile also has competences for other countries, such as Colombia. It is an important element, of course. It also has the network of the so-called Institute Etxepare, which is for educational delegations for the promotion of Basque culture and language.

Pam Gosal: Thank you. Professor Paquin, do you want to add anything to that?

Professor Paquin: In the case of Quebec, the principal factor that explains why there was an increase in the number of representations is economic growth, but, when there is a budget crunch and the economic situation is more difficult, many delegations are closed down. For example, in 1995, because of the difficult economic situation, the Government of Quebec closed half

of its representations abroad. Then it studied whether it was good idea to close them, and it realised very quickly that it was a bad idea, so, three years after that, it reopened them all and added some new ones. Since then, there has been a tendency to add representation. When the new delegation in Tel Aviv is opened, the number will be 35. That is the all-time record.

In terms of personnel, the big délégations générales are the ones in Paris, New York City, Rome and Tokyo. They are full-scale representations, so they deal with politics, economy, education and culture. Typically, they have a staff of around 35 people. Other representations—we call them "délégations"—are much smaller. Typically, they have staff of two, three, four or five people. Then there are offices, such as the Quebec office in Atlanta. Typically, one or two people work in those—they are pretty small. Also, do not forget that state-owned enterprises of Quebec also have separate representation. Further, immigration offices are separated from the count from the Ministry of International Relations.

To answer your question more directly, there is not some intense analysis by experts of where we open a location. It really depends on the political parties and the specific interests of the Government that is in place.

The Convener: Thank you. We are very tight for time—we need to close for chamber business shortly—but I want to squeeze in one final question.

I was interested when Ms Gosal mentioned some of the expertise that Scotland has in education, quantum computing, artificial intelligence and data, robotics and software and games. Outside the European Union, we find ourselves in a situation where Northern Ireland, as a result of the Windsor framework, keeps pace with Europe by default. There is a political statement from the Senedd in Wales and from the Government in Scotland that we should also keep pace with developments in Europe, but the UK Government has no stated objectives. We have recently seen the European Union legislate on AI, and, of course, the UK Government had a recent Bletchley Park summit on that issue.

Can you give a brief reflection on how you influence global issues, such as AI regulation, climate justice or some of the bigger global challenges, and how you have your voices heard in those negotiations, deliberations and summits? I will go to Professor Cornago first.

Noé Cornago: In the context of the European Union, there was a moment after the Maastricht treaty when some institutional avenues were open for regions to be participants in policy making, but, in the case of Spain, the result has been disappointing. The Basque Government is still indicating that it has to be there in some critical negotiations, but, for instance, the Committee of the Regions is almost dormant. There are no clear expectations for reform. For example, the advancements in the treaty of Lisbon were minimal—work was done on the early warning system relating to regional Parliaments with legislative powers. There is disappointment among regions across Europe, and the Basque Government also feels that, too.

On the other hand—this is another element—the financial crisis of 10 years ago, the Covid crisis and the current crisis have produced a completely different institutional system in the European Union. Critical decision making has been displaced to the Council, and there is a sort of institutional deformalisation. Despite the importance of the European Parliament, which is not in dispute, there is no clear vision of the place of regions in relation to that important element of policy making.

That explains why the Basque Government emphasises the importance of the recognition of the so-called regions with legislative powers—at one point, Scotland was also part of that network. The Basque Government is still committed to that, and it has a vision for new reform of the treaties of the European Union, by which that aspect can be addressed after many years in which it was forgotten or ignored.

Beyond that, with the Spanish system today, it is extremely difficult for autonomous communities and for the Basque Country to play an active part in the negotiations, even in those aspects that affect their exclusive powers. That is a difficulty that we have, and it is difficult to resolve. I mentioned the Belgian model for internal and external elements. That will be difficult to achieve in Spain, but, unless the situation is resolved, the role of autonomous communities will be minimal, even in negotiations that affect the most critical powers that they have.

Professor Paquin: Quebec has been participating in conferences on climate issues since the beginning of the 1990s. Typically, the Prime Minister or a minister will attend the event with some staff and some NGO members. That seems to be working, because Al Gore said many times that Quebec was a green superpower. The work that Quebec has done repeatedly over time in that regard is evident.

Artificial intelligence is also a key issue for Quebec, Montreal and Canada as a whole. A leading scholar on the issue, Yoshua Bengio, is supported by the Government of Quebec. Together, they created an institute on artificial intelligence that is concerned with the ethical use

of artificial intelligence in the world. The Government of Quebec tries to promote that a lot. The former Prime Minister told me that, if Quebec wants to have a full room of people in Hong Kong, the only way that it can do that is if they talk about artificial intelligence. They use those important issues to become more involved and have more influence. That is a good case of what we call “niche diplomacy”, where you select a specific issue and then brand yourself with that issue internationally over and over again. With the passing of time, that leaves traces, and you can build influence in that way.

The Convener: I am afraid that we have come to the end of our time. The fact that we have run right up against it is testament to how much we have enjoyed the session. We are thankful for your contributions. Thank you, both, very much for attending.

Meeting closed at 11:30.

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