

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / China's leader makes direct rebuke of US

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I'm Robin Ince. That is Brian Cox. My favourite topic we've covered recently on The Infinite Monkey Age is black holes. It turns out that it's the one that's listened to most because people keep rewinding it. I loved the one that we made about spiders because we had guests that were just so passionate about the subject and you got scared when that spider came out. That little squeal was beautiful. It was a spider running wild in Australia. It is one of the most exciting episodes we've ever done. The Infinite Monkey Age. Listen wherever you get your BBC podcasts. You're listening to the Global News podcast from the BBC World Service.

Hello, I'm Oliver Conway. We're recording this at 14 hours GMT on Tuesday, the 7th of March. The Chinese President Xi Jinping has launched an unprecedented attack on the US, accusing it of trying to encircle China. Britain has set out legislation designed to stop asylum seekers crossing the English Channel on small boats. And we hear about the climate threat from so-called methane bombs. Also in this podcast. He is God. He is God. Why is he God? That's my big statement. Why, despite multiple accusations of sexual abuse, the architect of Japanese pop idol culture is still revered even in death. China's leader rarely, if ever, criticizes the US directly.

But at the latest Communist Party Congress, President Xi Jinping said this.

Western countries led by the United States have implemented all-round containment, encirclement and suppression of China. He was speaking at a closed meeting of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and his comments were first reported by the state news agency, Xinhua. At a later news conference, the foreign minister, Qin Geng, went further, saying the US should change its policies or risk conflict with China.

If the United States does not hit the break but continues to speed on the wrong path, no amount of guardrails can prevent derailing, and there will be conflict and confrontation. Who will bear the catastrophic consequences? Such competition is a reckless gamble, with the stakes being the fundamental interest of the two peoples and even the future of humanity. Naturally, China is firmly opposed to all this.

In recent years, China's technological ambitions have been constrained by a series of restrictions from the US and others. So what to make of those comments from the Chinese president?

I asked our Asia-Pacific editor, Celia Hatton, for her reaction.

Frankly, shock to hear those words from Xi Jinping, from China's really powerful leader. I've been covering China for 20 years, and I had to double check that those words were attributed to Mr. Xi, because he never says things like this. In fact, most China watchers think this is the first time he's ever directly called out the United States using such language. It certainly directs attention towards the United States, places a lot of blame at the United States, right as China's in the middle of its all-important parliamentary two sessions they're called. What I think is also interesting, though, is that he didn't make these comments directly in the parliamentary building, in the great hall of the people, not to all of the 3,000 parliamentary delegates. Instead, he made them behind closed doors. He actually made them on Monday, but they weren't reported by state media until today. So yes, they're very direct comments, but they're still made behind closed doors. So in a way, we're hearing what Xi Jinping thinks privately, even though these words are attributed to him.

What does he want to happen, and what's likely to happen as a result of these comments?

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Well, Xi Jinping certainly sets the tone for what other Chinese leaders are going to say. So he made these comments on Monday, and then we heard them repeated similar comments from Qin Gang,

from the foreign minister. And so really, this allows other people below Xi Jinping to kind of then also attack the United States in a more direct manner. So that's quite important.

I think also it shows that China is really unlikely to back down publicly in a lot of further confrontations with the United States, because Xi Jinping has basically told them they can't. However, it's possible that Beijing is thinking about following some U.S., not directives, but falling in line. So perhaps they are going to refrain from giving weapons to Russia. Perhaps they are going to hold off on a possible invasion of Taiwan, but they don't want to make it seem as if they're following U.S. orders directly. So this is a way of holding their heads high, criticizing the U.S., but actually doing some things that Washington wants right now. And might it make also China look more inward in terms of supplying those key things that they need for their technological sector?

Yeah. In fact, they've also just announced this morning in some policies that haven't been totally fleshed out yet, but this idea that they're going to start really pushing their own homegrown tech. They really have to do this, because U.S. sanctions on Chinese-made technology are really starting to ramp up. And so Beijing really has no choice. If they really want to get their economy going again, it's out a 30-year low at the moment. If they really want to start doing that, they're going to have to start relying on themselves a bit more.

Celia Hatton. Well, China's relations with the West have been touched upon by the UN Human Rights Chief at a major speech in Geneva. Volker Tuerk said he'd opened up channels with China to follow up on various issues, including the treatment of China's Muslim minority Uighurs, which was highlighted in a special UN report on Xinjiang last year.

I heard more from our Geneva correspondent Imogen, folks.

What Volker Tuerk said was that he had made recommendations to China about the contents of that report. Let's not forget it contained credible evidence of possible crimes against humanity, that report. Now, many human rights activists would have liked to see that report debated right here in Geneva, but member states said no, we're going to put it on the back burner for now. So Volker Tuerk said clearly, well, I haven't forgotten it. I've made recommendations, those recommendations require, and that's the operative word, an answer. But I think among diplomats, it reflects what Celia Hatton was just saying there now. They don't think it's the moment to go full confrontation with China right now. They don't want to push China closer to Russia and getting involved in that war. In fact, one very, very senior UN official said to me last week off the record, I can't tell you who it was, but very senior. Let's not forget it is Beijing that has told Moscow nuclear weapons are a red line for us. You do that, we're out of here, you can forget us. And I think that's very in the, you know, the top of the agenda a little bit in the minds of Western diplomats right now. Geneva correspondent image in folks. Now, have you heard

of methane bombs? Well, according to the Guardian newspaper, they pose a huge threat to the climate

with the potential to release the equivalent of 30 years of US greenhouse gas emissions. The newspaper revealed details of more than a thousand super emitter sites pumping methane gas into the

atmosphere, the worst of which spewed out pollution equivalent to 67 million cars. I spoke to our environment correspondent Matt McGraw. Methane is one of the most powerful warming gases in wide usage around the world. Methane has been growing for the last 15 years or so and it's about 80 times more warming than carbon dioxide. It doesn't last as long, but it does in that period of 10 years when it's active in the atmosphere cause a lot of problems. And it comes from numerous different sources from the oil and gas industry, from agriculture, from cows, and also from refuse sites. So there are a number of different problems with it. What this report suggests is that last year in 2022, some sites or about a thousand of them were producing huge amounts of methane going

up into the atmosphere. One of the sites in Turkmenistan was producing about 427 tons per hour at peak rate. So it's a very bad picture, particularly in countries like the US, Russia, and Turkmenistan, which have the most facilities that are leaking. And what are these methane bombs that the report refers to? Yeah, the report talks about these methane bombs as locations, most of them oil and gas facilities where if you add up all the methane that's going to come out of them, it would be over a billion tons over the lifetime of these oil and gas facilities. Now half of them are so are in operation. The rest of them aren't yet in operation. And that's the big worry that they would, if all developed on their current plans, completely blow the budget to keeping global temperatures under 1.5 degrees Celsius, which all the countries in the world have essentially committed to do. And is this a new problem or are we just becoming more aware of it? It's a problem that's been gone on a long time. It's gotten worse since about 2007. And the real worry about methane is that, you know, methane is produced by the activity of bacteria and the warmer the world gets through our actions, essentially, the more bacteria produce more methane in wetlands in refuse sites amongst cattle and so on. I suppose the good news and all this, if you wanted to look for a silver lining, is that it is readily dealt with because countries around the world have signed up to remove methane as much as possible over the next 10 years. So while it has an enormous warming potential and is extremely dangerous, people are aware of it and taking action. And as we know over the last year, the price of gas of which methane is a form has gone through the roof and is a big financial incentive for countries to cut their emissions of methane in the near term. Our environment correspondent Matt McGraw, as we heard on Monday's

global news podcast, the British government is introducing a new law to try to stop migrants crossing the English Channel in small boats. It says anyone who arrives in the UK illegally will immediately be deported and banned from ever returning. The government says the new bill will push the boundaries of international law. The opposition says it will not work. But what's the view in France from where record numbers of migrants have been setting off on this dangerous voyage? Jean-Paul Moulot is regional councillor for the area around Calais. What's very positive is that we are talking to each other in between the UK and France. So that's good news. But over the last 20 years, we've seen so many lows about immigration, which is not a great result. And it's been actually worse over the last two years. So we need coordination, action and ambition. We need a new treaty, not just a new regulation in the UK or new regulation in France. We need to work together. For more on the reaction from France, I spoke to our correspondent in Calais, Lucy Williamson. There's been very little official reaction so far. Of course, the Prime Minister, Richie Sunak, is due here later this week for talks with President Macron. And no doubt this plan and the issue of migration small boat crossings will be a big part of that conversation. But

one of the issues that has plagued the relationship in recent years has been the issue of returns. I mean, the UK would like to bar entry to a lot of those who come over in small boats. Under this new plan, it seems to be made automatic that they won't be allowed entry or to claim asylum in the UK. But where to send them on has been the issue. The Rwanda plan, of course, is mined in the courts

and France up until now has been adamant that it will not take back returns from the UK, at least not without a wider EU plan. And I think that question of implementation is really key because here in the migrant camps in northern France, policy announcements have never been enough to deter people from trying to cross. If there are no concrete measures taken as a result of these policies, they tend not to have much impact. And that's certainly what we're hearing from migrant associations, for example, on the ground here. So what are the kind of concrete measures that would have an impact? Are we talking about more French patrols, things like that off the coast? It's been very difficult, hasn't it? I mean, this small boat crossings, they arose because of the level of investment that was put into securing the port area and the Euro tunnel site. Before that, those were the main means of crossing. But because so much money and effort was poured

into securing them, the migration route shifted to something that people had previously thought was absolutely unimaginable to take a small boat across the channel. Now it's the main means of getting across for migrants here. So it just shows the level of motivation and commitment that people

have to reach the UK by the time they land here in northern France. And the joint patrols, I mean, we're told that there haven't been that many British officers present for the patrols here.

That's certainly what the French have been saying. There has been a large degree of cooperation between the two on the ground. But it is very difficult. I mean, this is a very long coastline. It's more than 100 kilometres. They have to patrol. It's very difficult terrain.

There's lots of places to hide, sand dunes, forests, old bunkers that are very useful hiding places. And it's very difficult to be across all of that territory every night. So I think logistically,

it's a challenge. I think politically post Brexit, it's also a challenge. And yeah, we'll have to see later this week if anything does come out of the meeting between Rishi Tsunaka and Emmanuel Macron. Lucy Williamson in Calais. And the latest on the number of crossings, 197 migrants in five boats reached the UK yesterday, bringing the year's total to 3,147 people, according to the latest statistics. He was the architect of Japanese pop idol culture. And even in death,

he is revered despite allegations of sexual exploitation. Johnny Kitagawa ran a male only talent agency that churned out hit making boy bands. He held the world record for the most number one artists, the most number one singles and the most concerts produced by an individual. But he faced multiple accusations of sexual abuse from boys and men who once worked with him. As Moby and Azar reports now for a new BBC documentary. Fans of Japanese pop or J-pop gather in cheer for a glimpse of one of their favorite boy bands, Rashi.

J-pop has millions of fans all over the world.

And one company, Johnny and Associates has dominated the J-pop or Japanese pop market since being established in the 1960s. Its founder Johnny Kitagawa has had rumors surrounding him for decades that he sexually abused boys in his male only talent agency throughout his 50 year career. Claims of abuse were upheld in a 2003 libel case, but despite this he continued to work until his death in 2019 and he's still revered in Japan. I spoke to a fan on the streets of Tokyo.

He is God. He's God. He is God. Why is he God? That's my big statement.

Some of the abuse happened while boys were staying at Kitagawa's home. I spoke to a victim for the BBC's This World program who shared his story for the first time. Johnny told me go and have a bath.

Johnny filled up the baths. I thought, isn't he kind? But then he reached for my trousers.

I said, I'll take them off myself. But he replied with silence and that terrified me.

Later, several boys told me you have to put up with it or you won't succeed.

We tried several times to get answers from Johnny and associates about the allegations and struggled to speak to anyone. Eventually, I went to their offices. Hello.

Konnichiwa. My name is Mubin Azawa. I'm a journalist and from the BBC.

And I was met by one of the marketing team. This is how the conversation went.

Very nice to meet you. How are you doing? Okay. Thank you for taking the time to see me.

I believe we already replied to you. Please let any further communications behind whether the person who responded to the call. I hear what you're saying but that's not happening. I'm not getting a response at the moment. They replied to you already. They've replied to say that they don't want to respond to the allegations. That's all they've said. I'm very sorry. Any further conversations should go to them. So I want to speak to someone senior. I want to work out how we can make that happen. To be frank, I don't think, given the seriousness of the allegations, the fact that this relates to dozens of cases of young men, we were asked to stop filming.

I think it is currently on. If you want us to cut, we can cut. But as I'm saying,

the company CEO, Julie Keiko Fujishima, who's also Kitagawa's niece, later replied and said they are working to establish highly transparent organizational structures, adapting to the times in compliance with laws, regulations and strengthened governance with impartial experts.

In reporting the story, we contacted the police, entertainment reporters, music producers, newspapers, TV networks and even the public broadcaster, though none of them would speak to us.

An Ion curtain is drawn when you mention the name Johnny Kitagawa.

And so to this day, he's protected in Japan even after his death.

Moby and Azar and more details about his investigation into the J-POP scandal can be found on the BBC News website. Still to come on the Global News podcast?

All your films have such energy, like how do you do that?

The latest in our look at the likely contenders for best film at the Oscars.

Since Benjamin Netanyahu returned to power in Israel at the head of the most right-wing, nationalist and religious government in the country's history,

he has faced huge protests over plans to reform the judiciary.

Now, fighter pilots from an elite Israeli Air Force unit have joined in,

saying they will not attend training. Among them is the former chief of staff of the Israeli Defence Forces, Dan Halutz. He spoke to my colleague Razia Iqbal.

That's quite a word to use, dictatorship.

It's not only the matter of being controlled by a single person who is right now under three trials of misbehaving as a prime minister.

Yeah, of course, I'm referring to Benjamin Netanyahu. Part of the processes that he's trying to push forward

is to be able to control the judge's nomination to serve him in the future in order to ease his position vis-à-vis the court.

Can I just be absolutely clear? You are saying that part of these judicial reforms from your perspective

are designed to make the cases that are against the prime minister of Israel currently, there are pending cases of alleged corruption against him.

You are saying that these judicial reforms are designed to help him evade justice?

Yeah, part of it, of course, no doubt about it. If these forces will continue, we are going to face a very critical situation in Israel that the Supreme Court will stand in a position of colliding with the government.

And the question will be to whom are leaders of the security services who obey, either to the prime minister or to the Israeli law. What we see right now is a huge resistance of the public. About 400,000 people were collected last weekend in a huge demonstration all over the country.

But the government, of course, argues that however many people go out onto the streets to protest against these proposed changes in law, the government, as you have yourself acknowledged just a few minutes ago, was democratically elected. And this is one of the things that they wanted to do, that part of their reform of the judiciary is to do with correcting overreach and corruption they allege.

It's very easy to destroy democracy. It's very difficult to gain again democracy.

And we see the processes in many countries where democracy was prevalent and then was destroyed by people who were elected in democratic way. But they never stated that they want to change the system. In this case, we are facing a process which intend to change the system. They want to take control all over. That's something which is unacceptable. We continue to resist as long as we can. We are fighting for our freedom.

And that was Dan Hallott talking to Razia Iqbal. A couple of weeks ago, the family of the Hollywood star Bruce Willis announced he'd been diagnosed with dementia at the age of just 67. Now his wife Emma Hemming Willis has pleaded with paparazzi photographers in Los Angeles to leave him alone.

This one is going out to the photographers and the video people that are trying to get those exclusives of my husband out and about, just keep your space. I know this is your job, but maybe just keep your space for the video people. Please don't be yelling at my husband asking him how he's doing or whatever, the woo-hooing and the yippee-ki-yay. Just don't do it. OK?

Well, Charlotte Gallagher heard more about what Emma Hemming Willis had to say from our correspondent in Los Angeles, Peter Bose.

Well, she has a quite simple message she's saying back off and show some understanding of the position her husband is in. And she explains, she says, if you're someone who's looking after someone with dementia, you know how difficult and stressful it can be to get them out in the world and to navigate them safely. And she says it's clear that a lot of education is needed. She says photographers and video people that are trying to get these exclusives of her husband just out of just her, keep your space. And she says her goal is to raise awareness around dementia.

Is it surprising she's having to do this? All photographers there, do they have free reign to do what they want? I mean, you think shouting at someone with dementia, nobody would do that?

Well, the paparazzi, paparazzi photographers are allowed to take photographs of anyone they like in a public space in Los Angeles and indeed much of this country. The law tightens, of course, when photographers trespass onto private property. But she is clearly referring to something that happened in public outside a coffee shop. Is it surprising that she feels that she has to say this? Well, probably not. Because I think some would say it's simply a sad reflection on the lack of understanding by the paparazzi in this case about the impact of all of the shouting that it could have on her husband who has clearly been, I think it's fair to say, a magnet for the paparazzi for much of his life. There's nothing new there. But now he's in a very different place. Someone with this kind of dementia, which affects the part of the brain that's associated with language, they are very much more likely to be upset by a stressful situation like this and someone who is entirely healthy. And she asks people in similar situations to send in any advice on how to cope. And it's interesting in the comments to her post, many people are praising her for her honesty and attempts to raise awareness of the disease.

Peter Bowes in Los Angeles talking to Charlotte Gallagher. A Canadian brother and sister born at 22 weeks gestation have been certified as the world's most premature twins. They were born 126 days early and spent six months in hospital. Andrew Odcheng reports.

Joy and celebrations greeted parents Shakena Rajendra and Kevin Nadaraja when their twins were finally discharged from hospital six months ago. Now, Adia and Adria have celebrated their first birthday and Guinness World Records has certified them as the world's most premature twins. It's rare for a hospital to attempt to save a baby born this early. Shakena said that when she began labor at just 21 weeks and five days, she feared the worst. But luckily, the couple were able to move to Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto, which has a specialist neonatal intensive care unit. Even then, the timing had to be perfect. At Mount Sinai Hospital, the team informed us that if the babies were born that day, it would be death sentence for the babies if they were born before 22 because they did not have the capacity to resuscitate babies before 22 weeks either. It was experiencing a lot of bleeding and I didn't know if I could hold the babies in until they got to the 22 week and zero mark. But I knew that I had to hold the babies in because if I didn't, they wouldn't be alive. Amidst all that scenario of being told that the chance of survival is pretty much zero percent, the chance of disability and that too significant disability is really high. We were just clinging to our hope and faith, trusting in God.

At birth, the babies weighed less than 500 grams each and videos shared online showed them tiny, frail and covered in bandages. They had other complications and one of them needed more medical attention after the pair were discharged. But they survived. Now their mother, Shakena, has a message for other parents whose babies are admitted at neonatal intensive care units.

I would say to other parents going through the NICU journey, just being there, being present for your

babies makes a huge difference on the outcomes. Speak positive words to them, tell them about how much you love them, tell them about all of the things you hope and you dream for them.

Be present for your babies, be brave to advocate to stand up for what your babies need.

The parents also hope their record will be broken and that their experience will promote a wider debate about how early in pregnancy a hospital should try to save the life of a premature baby. Andrew Ocheng reporting. The head of Japan's space agency has apologised for the failed launch of a new flagship rocket. Hiroshi Yamakawa said he took responsibility and promised a full investigation into what went wrong. In response to this situation as the chief,

I set up a task force to quickly investigate the reason behind this failed launch.

We will inform you about the situation and investigation as required.

The 57-metre rocket had blasted off successfully but its speed then dropped and the space agency issued a command for it to self-destruct. It is the latest setback for Japan's H3 medium lift rocket which was intended to compete with the American firm SpaceX. From Tokyo, Shyma Khalil reports. Japan's new flagship H3 rocket was ordered to self-destruct minutes after it lifted off for the first time. It was carrying a disaster management land observation satellite that was equipped with an experimental infrared sensor designed to detect North Korean ballistic missile launches. This is a blow to the country's efforts to expand its access to space and remain competitive. The H3 has been designed to lift government and commercial satellites into Earth's orbit and to take supplies to the International Space Station. Shyma Khalil. Now for our latest report in the run-up to the Oscars on Sunday.

The film Elvis has eight nominations including Best Picture and Best Actor for Austin Butler. Sophie Long in Hollywood spoke to him and first to the film's director Baz Lerman.

If you're looking for trouble you came to the right place. We had fire, we had flood, then a pandemic, we lost the movie, then the movie came back, then the movie flourishes and then Austin wins the Golden Globe for Best Actor and then we have the sadness and the shock of losing Lisa Marie and so it's been such an incredible emotional roller coaster up and down that all I think about is all the people that have been on the journey with us. That's director Baz Lerman telling me just what it took to get to this point. The sudden death of Lisa Marie Presley who called the film spectacular was felt deeply by all those involved in making it especially Austin Butler who she said embodied her father's heart and soul beautifully. That was the thing that kept me up late at night and woke me up in the morning, three in the morning every day while I was preparing and when I was filming was wanting to do justice

to Elvis and wanted to do justice to his family and then on top of that to then be able to spend as much time as I did with Lisa Marie and just be graced with her presence you know and her love and and her kindness and all those special private moments that we got to spend together I'll just I'll treasure them forever.

All your films have such energy like how do you do that?

Well my energy might be you know slightly dribbling away as the years go on but um they're designed like that they're engagement films they're meant to say come with us on the ride they're meant to challenge you in the beginning they're not keyhole psychological dramas they are participatory cinematic works. There's a lot of people saying a lot of things but in the end you got to listen to yourself. So after years of blood sweat and tears Austin Butler is now just days away from potentially receiving the acting crown for his portrayal of the king. How does it feel? It feels like a dream you know I'm trying to I'm trying to take snapshots in my mind and and really remember these moments because it's I know that the newness of all this will never happen again so I really want to remember it.

Sophie Long reporting. And that's all from us for now but the Global News podcast will be back very soon. This edition was produced by Alice Adderley and mixed by Philip Bull our editors Karen Martin. I'm Oliver Conway. Until next time goodbye.

I'm Robin Ince. That is Brian Cox. My favourite topic we've covered recently on the infinite monospace is black holes. It turns out that it's the one that's listened to most because people

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keep rewinding it. I love the one that we made about spiders because we had guests that were just so passionate about the subject and you got scared when that spider came out. That little squeal was beautiful. There's a spider running wild in Australia. It is one of the most exciting episodes we've ever done. Listen wherever you get your BBC podcasts.