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>> Vassy: WELCOME TO "QUESTION PERIOD" ON THIS SUNDAY, MARCH 19th.

I'M VASSY KAPELOS.

TODAY, COUNTDOWN TO JOE BIDEN.

>> I THINK HOW WE FUND OUR 21ST CENTURY DEFENCE EFFORTS IN ORDER TO CONFRONT 21ST CENTURY THREATS WILL BE A TOPIC OF CONVERSATION.

>> Vassy: THE U.S. PRESIDENT IS SET TO MAKE HIS FIRST STATE VISIT TO CANADA LATER THIS WEEK. WHAT TOPS THE FED'S AGENDA FOR THE BIG TEĀŠTE-AĀ€-TEĀŠTE AND WHAT WILL THE AMERICANS PUSH FOR?

U.S. AMBASSADOR TO CANADA DAVID COHEN WILL BE HERE IN MOMENTS AND SO WILL CANADA'S AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S. KIRSTEN HILLMAN. PLUS, RAPPORTEUR RESISTANCE.

>> THEY'RE COMPLETELY UNFOUNDED ATTACKS ON DAVID JOHNSTON.

>> IT IS JUSTIN TRUDEAU THAT HAS PUT MR. JOHNSTON IN THIS TERRIBLE SITUATION.

>> Vassy: THE PRIME MINISTER'S APPOINTMENT OF FORMER GOVERNOR-GENERAL DAVID JOHNSTON AS A SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR TO LOOK INTO ELECTIONS INTERFERENCE IS UNDER FIRE FROM THE OPPOSITION. THEY CONTEND HE'S TOO CLOSE TO JUSTIN TRUDEAU, A CRITIQUE THE PRIME MINISTER REJECTS. WAS MR. JOHNSTON THE RIGHT CHOICE?

THE SCRUM WILL DIG INTO THAT POLITICAL DEBATE.

THEN, A DANGEROUS SHOW OF SUPPORT FOR RUSSIA.

CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING IS SET TO MEET WITH VLADIMIR PUTIN IN MOSCOW THIS WEEK.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR THE WAR IN UKRAINE AND ALREADY-STRAINED TENSIONS WITH THE WEST?

CANADA'S FORMER AMBASSADOR TO CHINA GUY St. JACQUES AND FORMER DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS WILL BE HERE TO DISCUSS.

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LET'S START WITH U.S. PRESIDENT

JOE BIDEN'S LONG-AWAITED AND FIRST STATE VISIT TO CANADA. BIDEN ARRIVES THURSDAY AND WILL DELIVER AN ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT FRIDAY AFTER MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER ONE-ON-ONE AND THEN ALL OF CABINET.

WHAT'S ON THE TABLE FOR THOSE BIG MEETINGS?

WELL, THERE'S PRESSURE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER TO DEAL WITH IRREGULAR MIGRATION, ESPECIALLY AT PLACES LIKE ROXHAM ROAD WHICH SAW NEARLY 40,000 ASYLUM SEEKERS CROSS INTO CANADA LAST YEAR. THE U.S. INFLATION REDUCTION ACT, EFFECTIVELY A NEW INDUSTRIAL POLICY THAT SUBSIDIZES THE CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION SOUTH OF THE BORDER TO THE TUNE OF \$370 BILLION HAS THE FEDS WORRIED INVESTMENT WILL FLEE CANADA AND DEFENCE PRIORITIES LIKE THE WAR IN UKRAINE ARE ALSO HIGH ON THE AGENDA.

U.S. AMBASSADOR TO CANADA DAVID COHEN IS WITH ME NOW TO TALK ABOUT MORE OF THAT.

HI, AMBASSADOR, PLEASURE TO WELCOME YOU BACK.

>> GOOD TO BE BACK IN THE STUDIO AND GOOD TO BE HERE FOR THIS INTERVIEW.

>> Vassy: ON THE EVE OF A VERY IMPORTANT VISIT FOR THIS COUNTRY.

I WANTED TO START OFF BY ASKING YOU FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, WHAT IS THE PRESIDENT'S PRIMARY OBJECTIVE FOR THIS VISIT?

>> SO I THINK THERE ARE A FEW OBJECTIVES BUT THE BEST WAY TO CRYSTALLIZE IS TO SAY THAT THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PRESIDENT AND THE PRIME MINISTER TO CELEBRATE THE SUCCESSES OF THIS EXTRAORDINARY PARTNERSHIP OVER THE PAST COUPLE OF YEARS. THE PROGRESS WE'VE MADE AGAINST THE ROAD MAP AND THEN TO HELP TO SET AN AGENDA FOR THE NEXT COUPLE OF YEARS AS WE THINK ABOUT OUR COMMITMENTS TO SHARED

SECURITY, SHARED PROSPERITY, AND TO SHARED VALUES.

THAT'S WHAT'S DEFINED OUR PARTNERSHIP AND OUR RELATIONSHIP, AND I THINK, BASICALLY, EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS IN THE VISIT CAN BE BUCKETED IN ONE OF THOSE THREE PLACES.

AS WE RECOMMIT OURSELVES TO GROWING OUR ECONOMIES AND MAKING OUR COUNTRIES AND OUR HEMISPHERE AND THE DEMOCRACIES AROUND THE WORLD MORE SECURE.

>> Vassy: I WANT TO START WITH THE BUCKET OF SECURITY.

BECAUSE I WAS THINKING BACK TO WHEN A PREVIOUS PRESIDENT WAS HERE, PRESIDENT OBAMA, AND HIS ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT, AND ONE OF THE LINES THAT GENERATED A LOT OF HEADLINES IN THAT ADDRESS WAS NATO NEEDS MORE CANADA. AND THAT WAS SPECIFICALLY AROUND THE PREMISE THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD HOPED CANADA WOULD SPEND MORE MONEY ON DEFENCE AND IT WAS INTERESTING BECAUSE IT WAS AT A TIME JUST FOLLOWING RUSSIA'S ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA AND ADVANCE OF A MEETING OF WORLD LEADERS IN POLAND.

IRONIC ALL THESE YEARS LATER WE'RE FACING THE SAME ISSUE MAYBE TO AN AMPLIFIED DEGREE. DOES JOE BIDEN WANT CANADA TO SPEND MORE MONEY ON DEFENCE?

>> SO I'VE LEARNED A LONG TIME AGO THAT I WAS AT MY PRINCIPAL SPEAK FOR HIMSELF OR HERSELF.

>> Vassy: DOES AMBASSADOR COHEN WANT CANADA TO --

>> I'LL GIVE YOU MORE THAN THAT. I THINK THAT WE NEED TO WAIT FOR THE LEADERS TO HAVE THEIR CONVERSATION BUT THERE'S JUST NO DOUBT THAT DEFENCE IS AT THE TOP OF THE AGENDA FOR THE UNITED STATES.

AND I BELIEVE AT THE TOP OF THE AGENDA FOR CANADA AS WELL. WE'RE FACING, THE LAST MONTH HAS SHOWN, WE'RE FACING 21ST CENTURY THREATS.

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT A BALLOON WOULD CREATE ALL OF THE NOISE AND CONCERN THAT THIS BALLOON FLOATING OVER CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES, THE ARCTIC CREATED?

SO WE'RE FACING 21ST CENTURY THREATS.

THAT REQUIRES 21ST CENTURY SOLUTIONS.

THAT REQUIRES 21ST CENTURY FUNDING.

SO I THINK FUNDING OF DEFENCE IS IMPORTANT, IMPORTANT FOR THE UNITED STATES.

IT'S IMPORTANT FOR CANADA.

AND SO I THINK HOW WE FUND OUR 21ST CENTURY DEFENCE EFFORTS IN ORDER TO CONFRONT 21ST CENTURY THREATS WILL BE A TOPIC OF CONVERSATION.

>> Vassy: IN THE PAST, THERE HAS BEEN CONCERN FROM PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATIONS, SUCCESSIVE ACTUALLY, ABOUT THE LEVEL OF SPENDING AS A PORTION OF GDP, THAT COMES VIS-A-VIS THE AGREEMENT OF NATO COUNTRIES TO TRY TARGET 2% AS THE NUMBER THEY'RE AIMING FOR.

SO FAR CANADA HAS FALLEN SHORT.

IS THERE A CONCERN IN THIS ADMINISTRATION FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE ABOUT THE LEVEL OF DEFENCE SPENDING HERE IN CANADA OR HAVE YOU SEEN, DURING YOUR TIME HERE, A PIVOT IN THAT?

>> SO I DON'T WANT TO ANSWER THE QUESTION BASED UPON THE FORMULA AND BASED UPON THE WALES COMMITMENTS WHICH I WILL POINT OUT, BY THE WAY, IT WAS AN AGREEMENT BY NATO COUNTRIES, BUT CANADA AGREED TO SPEND 2% OF ITS GDP ON DEFENCE.

SO THIS IS NOT SOMETHING UNITED STATES OR NATO OR ANY OTHER COUNTRY IS SEEKING TO IMPOSE ON CANADA.

IT'S SOMETHING CANADA AGREED TO DO.

I'D RATHER FOCUS ON THE OVERALL THREAT POSTURE, WHAT THE WORLD LOOKS LIKE TODAY.

AND ON WHETHER UNITED STATES,
CANADA, THE REST OF NATO
MEMBERS, REST OF DEMOCRACIES
AROUND THE WORLD ARE INVESTING
APPROPRIATELY IN DEFENCE, ARE
THEY DEPLOYING -- AND ARE THEY
DEPLOYING WHAT THEY ARE SPENDING
IN AN APPROPRIATE WAY?

CANADA HAS CERTAINLY STEPPED UP
IN ITS SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE IN
TERMS OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT,
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE.

SO I'D RATHER LOOK AT CANADA'S
CONDUCT AND WHAT IT'S ACTUALLY
DOING AS OPPOSED TO ANY FORMULA,
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN THAT THIS
WON'T BE AND SHOULDN'T BE A
TOPIC OF ON-GOING CONVERSATION.

BECAUSE -- BECAUSE WE DO NEED
MORE DOLLARS FOR DEFENCE, AND
I'LL JUST FOCUS ON NORAD.

I MEAN, NORAD HAS REAL NEEDS.
AND THERE ARE ONLY TWO MEMBERS
OF NORAD.

CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES.
SO IF NORAD HAS ADDITIONAL NEEDS
FOR EQUIPMENT, FOR
INFRASTRUCTURE, TO SUPPORT THAT
COMMITMENT, IT CAN ONLY COME
FROM CANADA AND THE UNITED
STATES.

>> Vassy: DO YOU ANTICIPATE OR
DO YOU HAVE ANY IMPRESSION THAT
THE NEEDS OF NORAD COULD EXCEED
THE RESOURCES ALREADY ALLOTTED,
ALREADY PROMISED, I SHOULD SAY?

>> SO I'LL BE HONEST WITH YOU,
I'M NOT SURE -- NOT SURE WE
UNDERSTAND WHAT RESOURCES HAVE
BEEN PROMISED OR ALLOTTED.
THERE HAVE BEEN A LOT OF NUMBERS
FLOATING AROUND OVER A VERY LONG
PERIOD OF TIME SO I'M GOING TO
TRY NOT TO DO THIS, BUT I'M
GOING TO QUOTE SECRETARY AUSTIN
IN A BILATERAL MEETING THAT HE
HAD WITH DEFENCE MINISTER ANAND
AT THE HALIFAX SECURITY FORUM
WHEN THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT THE
NORAD MODERNIZATION EQUIPMENT
AND WHAT SECRETARY AUSTIN SAID
IS WE'RE VERY APPRECIATIVE OF
THAT COMMITMENT, WE NEED TO HAVE
SOME CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE

SIZE AND TIMING OF THOSE COMMITMENTS.

>> Vassy: SO IS IT FAIR TO SAY THAT THE U.S. WOULD LIKE SOME MORE SPECIFICS?

>> I THINK THERE'S ON-GOING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE SPECIFICS OF IT.

I THINK, IN THE NORAD CONTEXT, THERE MAY BE MORE OF A FOCUS ON TIMING THAN THERE IS ON DOLLARS BECAUSE THERE'S AGREEMENT, FOR EXAMPLE, ON THE NEW RADAR SYSTEMS AND CANADA'S AGREED TO PAY FOR THEM.

THE QUESTION IS WHEN ARE THEY GOING TO BE AVAILABLE?

WHEN WILL THEY BE READY?

AND I THINK THAT NORAD HAS A -- HAS A PERSPECTIVE AROUND THE THREAT POSTURE WHICH WOULD CALL FOR AN EARLIER INVESTMENT THAN THE CURRENT PLAN BY THE CANADIANS.

>> Vassy: ONE MORE QUESTION TO YOU AS IT RELATES TO SECURITY. AND THAT IS AROUND THE BALLOONS. CHINA, OF COURSE, IN THE U.S. POSTURE TOWARDS CHINA, THE CANADIAN POSTURE TOWARDS CHINA IS A VERY LIVE DISCUSSION RIGHT NOW.

AND I AM WONDERING, FROM WHERE YOU SIT, IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT THE ALLEGATIONS, I'M SURE YOU'VE READ ABOUT, THAT CHINA'S INTERFERING IN CANADIAN ELECTIONS.

>> SO YOU'RE TALKING TO SOMEBODY WITH A LOT OF YEARS OF POLITICAL EXPERIENCE.

AND OUT OF THOSE YEARS HAS COME A CERTAIN LEVEL OF SKEPTICISM AND THICK SKIN.

SO MY ASSUMPTION FOR AT LEAST THE LAST FIVE YEARS, MAYBE LONGER THAN THAT, IS THAT CHINA AND RUSSIA HAVE BEEN INTERFERING IN DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS AROUND THE WORLD, INCLUDING IN THE UNITED STATES AND IN CANADA FOR A LARGE CHUNK OF THAT PERIOD OF TIME.

I ALMOST THINK THAT IT'S, THIS

MAY BE CONTROVERSIAL, I KNOW
IT'S A VERY HOT TOPIC IN CANADA,
BUT I ALMOST THINK IT'S NOT EVEN
WORTH ASKING THE QUESTION ABOUT
WHETHER THERE'S INTERFERENCE, I
THINK THE BETTER QUESTION IS