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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: Good morning everyone, and welcome to Brookings. I'm Mike O'Hanlon with the Foreign Policy program, and here to welcome you to a discussion about possible war time scenarios with Russia and/or China.

This panel has a lot of expertise on these subjects, and I'm going to briefly introduce folks in just a minute, and then hand the baton, so to speak, over to my good friend and colleague, Jung Pak, who will be our moderator for the discussion. And she'll pose questions to the panelists, we'll talk amongst ourselves for about the first half of this 90-minute event, and then go to you.

The panelists have all be kind enough, as well as Jung as moderator, to allow me to use my new book, "Senkaku Paradox, Risking Great Power War over Small Stakes," as the springboard for this discussion, but only the springboard, and the conversation will range much more widely.

But let me just say a brief word of introduction to the subject before introducing them, just so you know at least where our starting point is in this project and this conversation today.

I think back to something that my good friend Lieutenant General John Wissler said in 2014 when he was the head of the Third Marine Expeditionary Force based in Okinawa. So he was the Senior Marine, and one of the most senior American military officers based in the Western Pacific. By the way, General Wissler, now retired, sends his regards and regrets. He was going to be on this panel and then had a conflict.

But nonetheless he is still here in spirit because he was asked by a reporter at a forum in Washington where he was visiting from his normal base in Okinawa, "What would the United States and Japan do if one day we essentially woke up and we saw Chinese forces ashore on one of the Senkaku Islands, which the Chinese call the Diaoyu Islands." They also claim, Japan and China both claim them. The US government has no position on whose islands they should be. But we respect and recognize Japan's current administration of the Islands. Whatever it means to administer islands where no one lives and nothing happens.

And therefore we consider the US/Japan Mutual Security Treaty to apply to those Islands. Which means American lives are on the line potentially in defense of those Japanese claims, if

and when the Islands are attacked. And the only plausible attacker would be China.

In other words, we could imagine a path to great power war over uninhabited, worthless rocks, with all due respect to all those who care about the Senkakus for symbolic or spiritual reasons. They're not even big enough to qualify for their own economic zones under the Law of the Sea Treaty. So it really is about symbolism and history. Which is already enough to make the issue pretty potent in Japan/China relations.

And then I got thinking, when General Wissler said "You know what, we could take those Islands back if instructed to, but I could also think of ways we might be able to deal with the problem without landing anyone ashore." And he was sufficiently subtle that he didn't get himself into any hot water. I think he gave just the right answer for an American officer in that position. But he was essentially implicitly threatening that we could bomb the Chinese troop emplacements on a Senkaku Island in order to deal with that threat.

And this then raised the general question of how do you deal with Russian or Chinese attacks against small, in themselves more or less insignificant pieces of territory? Could even be a tiny farming town in Eastern Estonia or Latvia. That's majority Russian speaker, but still within the Estonia and Latvian territory where Russia fabricates some kind of a threat to its own native fellow Russian speakers and then goes into protect them with little green men. And then its real goal is not that town or that particular defense of those Russian speakers, who probably don't even want the help because they like to live in Estonia and Latvia rather than Russia, thank you very much. But the real goal is to disrupt and even threaten NATO by making the allies debate internally how to respond to this threat, not knowing whether any kind of a military response would be in order, even though it would seem that the NATO Article Five Pledge would require a military response.

And so if Russia or China are intent on disrupting US alliance systems and global order, what better way than to do one of these small, probing, provocative attacks and then put us in the dilemma of having to draw first blood in great power war.

So there's the question of deterrence, there's also the question of what should we do if deterrence fails and we wind up in a war?

Now let me finish this intro and segue to the talent on the panel, because a lot of people here have thought and written about these kinds of questions. And we feel as a group that it's time to kick start these debates into a little higher gear at a time when the U.S. National Defense Strategy says that competition with Russia and China are our top national security concerns. And yet we haven't really had a very detailed conversation about how war with Russia or China could really happen. That's plausible, and that addresses, I think, the most concerning scenarios.

So we're going to work down the row. Jung Pak will have her own order for how to perhaps ask questions of the panelists, but I'm just going to work from my right.

Tom Erhard is a retired Air Force officer, and one of the best thinkers in the country on where military technology and operational planning intersect. How you use current and future concepts and weapons of war to plausibly win conflicts, if you wind up in them, but ideally, of course, to deter them before they begin. He's done a lot of this work inside the government. He was an important player in many of the debates during the Obama years on the so-called third offset, which as many of you will remember was sort of the precursor to the Trump administration's National Defense Strategy, try to put conventional and great power deterrents back on the forefront of American National Security Policy after it had fallen off that forefront for the first 25 years of the post-Cold War Era.

Just to Tom's right is Caitlin Talmadge, who after education at Harvard and MIT, was sent to Brookings for remedial work. And we got to know her about 12 years ago as a post-doc fellow. And then she moved on to academia and is now at Georgetown University as a professor there. She is one of the finest defense scholars in the country. I would call her one of the finest young defense scholars because she is young, but she no longer needs that qualification in terms of where she stands in her contributions to the field. Her book "The Dictator's Army," has been one of the best books written in security studies and most widely recognized in the last few years. In the last two to three years she's been focused a great deal on the question of possible escalation in wars that could begin as limited skirmishes involving the United States and China in the Western Pacific. So delighted to welcome her back to Brookings.

Rush Doshi is indeed a young scholar, but one of the most talented for understanding

Chinese thinking on great power conflict, in the original Mandarin. He has just finished a Ph.D. in recent years, going back to these documents and understanding a lot of Chinese thought over the years, including current thought, on how they would wage war, how they see the future of great power competition and the kinds of ways they might respond to anything we do, or might initiate conflict themselves in a war in the Western Pacific. As you know, we'll think about both Russia and China today, but Rush's particular expertise is on China.

And then Frank Rose, my colleague here at Brookings. What I'll say about Frank is he was hired into a job that many of us think of, or at least historical have thought of, as sort of one of the arms control positions, or the main arms control position at Brookings, but that's not really how Frank thinks of himself. He thinks of himself as a strategic planner. I think it's fair to say where arms control is an element of American strategy, one tool in the tool kit but not the only one. And the best way to underscore that that I can think of, is to point out that Frank is one of the few people in Washington who's been knighted in the country of Romania. And you might ask why? And it's not because he helped kill, you know, Transylvanian ghosts back in some battle, unless he has even more of a rich repertoire of past accomplishments than I'm aware. It's because he was instrumental in the missile defense arrangements that we built with the Romanians in earlier administrations in this century. And so very much a person who knows how to combine the tools of warfare with the tools of arms control, and has been particularly riveted on strategic issues with cyber, nuclear weapons, fiber optic cables on the sea bed, other kinds of central elements of the US military nervous system that are among our most vulnerable and important in this era of great power competition.

Thank you for listening to my long introduction. I am now going to hand things over to Jung Pak, who in addition to being our Korea Chair here, wrote the bestselling or best-visited essay of all at 2018 at Brookings "The Education of Kim Jong-Un." The book on that same topic, I hope with that same title, is coming out next year, and we hope with the movie not long to follow thereafter. At least that's my goal.

And so without further ado, Jung, over to you.

MS PAK: Thank you, Mike. So Frank is also called Sad Man in Korea because he was

responsible for the THAAD deployment to South Korea. So in the South Korean pronunciation he's called Sad Man. Although not always in a good way, right?

And speaking of young, you'd never know that this is Mike O'Hanlon's 22nd book. 22nd book and he's only 35 years old, so it's an amazing feat for somebody of his youth and vigor, and to squeeze all of that accomplishment in such a short period of time.

I would also say that this book, which is great, is conveniently available right around the corner, right by the front door of the lobby at our Brookings bookstore.

So thank you to all of our panelists and thank you, Mike, for including me in this conversation.

So when this event went out, the announcement went out, it sold out very quickly, the room was filled to capacity fairly quickly, and I got a frantic note from a friend of mine across town, and she said "You gotta get me in." And it got me thinking about what is it about conflict scenarios with Russia and China, you know, that is so compelling and so alarming and so able to draw such a large crowd this morning to Brookings on a beautiful spring summer day.

And, you know, I'd like to start off and ask the panelists, you know, there is a sense of urgency and alarm given what Mike said about the National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy and how American military power is eroding while Russian and Chinese capabilities are improving.

So I'd like to kick it off and ask our panelists to unpack why this issue has been taking up so much space and energy and a lot of scholarship on this particular issue. Could I ask Frank, Sad Man, first?

MR. ROSE: Well thanks very much, Jung, it's great to be here and great to be with the colleagues on the panel.

Fundamentally I think we are at an end of an era. I just read an article in the Financial Times, the two 1989s, looking at Berlin 1989 and Tiananmen Square in 1989. And what this article was saying, 30 years ago we thought that Berlin was the future. But 30 years on down it looks like that Tiananmen was the key pivot point.

And I think we are in an era of great power and competition. I disagree with the Trump administration on many things, but this is one where I think they get the diagnosis correct. And, you know, more importantly, and I think a lot of people in the U.S. strategic community have not come to terms with this, the US overwhelming conventional superiority that existed in the 1990s and 2000s is eroding. Russia and China have essentially achieved conventional superiority, or parity under some scenarios. And this is something I've been watching very closely. They are development asymmetric capabilities like cyber and anti-satellite weapons designed to undermine America's and its allies' conventional capabilities.

All you have to do is read the DNI, director of national intelligence, annual threat assessment that talks about this. For example, this year Dan Choate said China and Russia are training and equipping their military space forces in fielding new anti-satellite weapons to hold U.S. and allied space services at risk. With regards to cyber, he said "China, Russian, Iran, and North Korea increasingly use cyber operations to threaten both minds and machines in an expanding number of ways to steal information, to influence our citizens, and disrupt our critical infrastructure."

So my bottom line is this. We need to think differently because while over the last 25 years we have been talking about the end of history, the Russians and the Chinese have been watching very closely how the United States and its allies fight, and have been designing specific capabilities to undermine that superiority. So this is a real present threat and we need to take action if we're going to deal with it.

Thank you.

MS PAK: Rush, what do you think?

MR. DOSHI: Hi, everyone. Thanks again, Mike, for the invitation to be on this panel.

And I'm glad to be joined by such distinguished colleagues.

I completely agree with what Frank said, and I'll just put a little bit of detail on some of the China specific elements of it.

So I think three things have really changed in recent years. One is US awareness that great power competition is here. The second is China's own sort of sense of, you know, its own

capabilities. And finally, China's own sense of ambitions. And all three of these changes together brought us to this kind of specific moment.

Beginning with the very first one. So, yes, we have this kind of meme or cliché now, and it's of course in our strategy documents that great power competition is back. But the irony is of course for China great power competition never really ended. So going back to 1989, one of my favorite quotes by Deng Xiaoping, who is, you know, quite positive about the United States before 1989, but quite hostile in his rhetoric after 1989. I wonder why? Was that, you know, the Cold War had ended. He said this. But two Cold Wars had begun. And he sort of said essentially that both of those were directed against China. So for China the Cold War, in a sense, one kind of Cold War ended and a second one began and was going to be much more complicated, it was going to involve a mix of economic engagement but also military hedging.

And that brings me to the second point, which is China's capabilities have also changed quite profoundly. And this is not recent, it's only recent that it's gotten the degree of attention that it deserved. But these trends many of us, including many on this panel, have written about for a long time, about this growth in China's asymmetric capabilities and their vocations for the United States defense posture within the region.

Beginning right after Tiananmen Square and right after the end of the Cold War, especially, China realized that it had issues dealing with the US. It realized that it needed to have capabilities that were going to be able to deter the United States from intervening in regional conflicts. And China wasn't the first to come up with these solutions, it had actually studied how others had tried to solve this problem in the past, including the Soviets. There's a rich Chinese discourse on how the Soviets used anti-ship missiles and other capabilities to keep US carriers at risk, and then decided to emulate those capabilities. And that did not happen overnight, it took a long time, but today we are dealing with the full maturation implications of those capabilities.

And the final thing that's changed is China's ambitions have also expanded, right? China's now, by some measures, as of 2014, the world's largest economy by purchasing power, if not by that particular metric. It's almost 70 percent of US GDP. And if you add and you look at every single

major US adversary or competitor going back almost 100 years, no one of them, and no coalition of them has ever crossed 60 percent of US GDP. Which makes the scale of the China challenge particularly large. That's something that the Chinese themselves write about and it's something that underlies their own ambitions, this larger belief that the United States is somewhat distracted and somewhat weakened, and therefore there's opportunities for it not only regionally but increasingly globally. So look forward to talking more about that as the discussion continues.

Thanks.

MS. TALMADGE: Thank you so much for the opportunity to be on the panel this morning and with all of you. I think for those of you who have not read the book, I really commend it because I think it highlights a great answer to the question that Jung Pak posed, which is, you know, what really has changed.

And I think Mike really nails the essence of the strategic problem that the United States faces now, which is that there are nuclear armed great powers that are reengaging in a period of competition, and could end up in a potentially high intensity crisis, or even, you know, large scale conventional war that has real possibilities for escalation, including to the nuclear level, in ways that the United States really has kind of forgotten about from the end of the Cold War.

As, you know, a couple of other panelists have already highlighted, I think when the Cold War ended the United States sort of looked out at the horizon and thought "We're in a new permanent state of affairs where the United States has conventional military dominance and we don't really have to worry about major competitors, including nuclear armed competitors." And from the vantage point of today, kind of looking back at that period, the last 20 to 30 years seem less like a new normal and more just like an interlude. And we really are seeing, you know, I think, a return. Not in an identical form, but a return, you know, in terms of some of the main features of a very real prospect that great powers with nuclear weapons could, you know, potentially get into conflict.

And so that raises some questions that the United States really has had the luxury of ignoring for the last 20 or 30 years. For the last couple of decades the United States has largely conducted military operations all over the world without really having to put much thought into the

question of potential adversary nuclear responses. The United States has conducted military operations exclusively against states that have not had nuclear weapons. And so questions such as how might the United States calibrate its conventional military strategy to control for escalation or to play into a larger strategic deterrents, again have really kind of been off the table. And Mike's book I think really shows how those considerations have to come back into American grand strategy.

And I would just highlight that in particular as the United States thinks about designing its response, you know, to crisis situations or even to conventional wars, it really has to think about the prospect that in a large scale crisis or conventional war, adversaries might be tempted to turn to their nuclear weapons. And that could occur in some different ways. I'm sure we'll probably talk about some of those today.

But just to give, you know, two quick examples. One that I've highlighted in my own work, is that large scale US conventional military operations do have the potential to threaten the security and survivability of adversary nuclear forces. And this is because US conventional capabilities can undermine the command and control of adversary nuclear forces and can also undermine the conventional forces that support or enable and protect adversary nuclear forces.

And this is made all the more difficult by the fact that adversaries such as Russia and China actually intermingle components of their conventional and nuclear forces which make it make it difficult for the United States not to, you know, pose some infringement on those forces in the course of a conventional war. So would that lead to escalatory pressure on those states? I think that's a really important question.

I would also just note that if we're going through our Cold War playbook and thinking about, you know, what might be relevant from that era, we obviously don't want to overstate that. But we should remember that, you know, in the Cold War the United States itself, in NATO, when it faced unfavorable conventional circumstances in Europe adopted, through NATO, a strategy of explicitly threatening coercive first use of nuclear weapons in the event of a Warsaw Pact Red Army offense into Europe. And I think, you know, although China has a No First Use Policy today, Russia does not. And, you know, it's I think quite plausible just in terms of strategic logic that an adversary facing large scale US

conventional military operations might see nuclear weapons as a way out of that problem. And we need look no further I think than NATO's own history to see why that may be the case. So I'm sure we'll get into that more today.

But those are the things that I think Mike's book really highlights in terms of Jung Pak's question.

MR. ERHARD: Thank you. And, again, thank you very much for inviting me to this group. Michael's book really is what brought us all together because I think we're unanimously grateful that he did his usual comprehensive, synoptic job of kind of giving us all a primer on where this strategic situation has evolved. And I just would like to, as Caitlin did, urge you to seriously think about reading through this book.

Michael, I call it O'Hanlon encryption, which is he writes a book that in DC, it's as good as encrypted because not many people will read it. But the people who would come to this and listen to, you know, a presentation like this, I would consider you different, and you should be different, and that means read it.

And I'll also ask you to read not just the introduction and the conclusion and all that, but he has some very interesting appendices which we may get to, that talk specifically about the military, technical, and strategic technical elements of this world, which we will get to, I think, in the discussion, that make this very different. So we have geopolitical differences, which we've talked about. I'm going to inject a little bit about Russia here. The geopolitical situation is different. The military technical situation is different and very ominous in my view from an escalatory point of view, a crisis stability point of view. And there's just a few things that I want to give as food for thought in our discussion that have to do with why we're here and why a book like this is needed. And why you need to read it.

What I call the pathologies of victory. So on the blue side, on the US side, we are suffering from some pathologies that come directly from the fact that we won the Cold War and we won it rather decisively and rather in a benign way, in a way that just defies logic in many ways about why it didn't go more cognatic. And so it was a beautiful thing but now we're suffering from some of these pathologies.

And let me just list four for you and then go to the red side and talk about their matching orientation that makes this such a dangerous strategic competition.

Our four pathologies, there are many more, but the four I'd like to talk about are Number One, triumphalism. Triumphalism. We're the victors, triumphalism has you patting yourself on the back and doing things that ignore -- we went on what I call a strategy hiatus. We decided to take a vacation from strategy, strategy did not take a vacation from us. Triumphalism.

Number Two, distraction. Distracted by 9/11 in many ways, with counter insurgency and occupation duty and counter terrorism and all that sort of really caused a major distraction in the organization I'm most familiar with, the Department of Defense. And this obviously was highlighted by the National Defense Strategy.

Number Three, a general lack of analytic depth and sophistication when it comes to our major power adversaries, Russia and China. So China, we tried to ignore that for the longest period of time. Russia we just dropped the ball. We had a massive, massive analytical underpinning to our approach toward trying to understand Russia, and it basically hit the floor. Most of the Russian analysts in the IC went to something, the intelligence community went to, you know, counter insurgency or counter terrorism, or they retired.

And so I was given the job back in 2015 by Deputy Secretary Work, to fix Russia. That is to say, fix the intelligence community and the Department of Defense lack of analytical depth, sophistication, and longitudinal learning, right, so that always studying them all the way along, we had about a 15 year gap that we had to fill in. So I set up the duty of doing that. So ignoring red is a big, big problem, and we have people up here who haven't been doing that, so maybe you can avail yourself of that.

Number Four. Number Four, and the biggest problem, the biggest pathology of victory is wishful thinking. When you think you're the victor and when you have triumphalism, you just try to explain everything away through wishful thinking. And wishful thinking just infuses our talk when we're dealing with the rise of these major power competitors.

So let me just give you the other side of those four things when it comes to China and

Russia. Instead of a triumphalism, they're both operating under a humiliation narrative. A very powerful humiliation narrative. That they were humiliated by the West, and specifically the United States, and they're coming back. They're great societies, they're great peoples, they deserve to be on top, and they're coming back. It's a very powerful motivational factor.

Number Two, as opposed to distraction, they have laser like concentration on the US and everything we've been doing. So we've been marauding around during this period of time, showing them all of our stuff, and they've been there watching that like a hawk. So this asymmetry of focus is a bad strategic competitive environment for the United States. Instead of ignoring red like we've been doing, they've been deeply looking into what the United States does, its history, its weaknesses, the nature of the way it competes, and ways to try to untrack our strategy.

And finally, instead of wishful thinking, I generally find them to be extremely pragmatic. As a strategist, many times I find myself wishing I could write strategy for the PRC or Russia because I would be allowed to say things that you have to say, hard things, pragmatic things, things that really typify what the strategic environment entails.

They write like that. They write very clearly and they write very -- they talk about "the enemy," "the hedge man," which is us. And we are left with all kinds of weasel words and kinds of distractions, really, that play into our wishful thinking that cause us to not be as sharp of a competitor as we need to be.

So with that, that's just some of how we got to where we are today and why this book is so important. And I hope we can get to those in the discussion.

MS PAK: Something that I think the other side of the question, and thank you to the panelists, why hasn't anything happened yet, right? Why hasn't something big that Mike has talked -- well there have been some incursions here and there and some aggressiveness. But it seems to me that Russia and China do value some regional stability or some strategic stability with the United States to help them push their objectives forward.

And so I'd like to ask the panelists. They've really clarified and highlighted some of the things that the US hasn't been doing and should be focused on, and how China and Russia have been

focused and have been working towards this grand strategy. But what are their constraints? What's holding them back from doing more aggressive, or taking more aggressive actions? And, you know, I'm thinking, Caitlin, of your book about how these are authoritarian regimes and they value loyalty over competence. Are there fundamental things that are, other than the number of tanks and the number satellites and technical and cyber capabilities, are there fundamental inherent qualities about these regimes that provide a constraint on a, you know, blowing up of aggressive actions in the region and elsewhere?

I'll ask anybody who feels comfortable talking on this.

MS. TALMADGE: I don't mind jumping in. So I think this is a really good question. We do often paint these nightmare scenarios and then forget, well, nothing bad has happened yet so why is that. And maybe some things are working in the status quo.

And I think your point about some of the internal constraints on US competitors is a really important one. I mean going back to the example of the Cold War. Yeah, we don't want to be too triumphalist, but on the other hand, one of the real advantages I think that does impart a count for US victory in the Cold War was the different internal systems of organization between the United States and the Soviet Union. And we have competitors today that I think do face some really significant internal constraints in terms of their civil military relations, in terms of their economies, in terms of domestic unrest, that may in fact be a break on their ambitions or their ability to project power.

Rush in particular, I think, you know, is an expert on China, so I would defer to him on that. But at the same time, I think that even while we don't want to paint potential adversaries as being invincible and 10 feet tall, Mike's book really does point out, and I think we can also just see this in the world around us, that both Russia and China I think are doing things, some that, you know, we haven't even noticed kind of along the way, to probe what the resistance might be.

There have been incidents of limited aggression. And that's actually again what I think this book so usefully illuminates is that, you know, you could get into a great power conflict not with the giant bolt from the blue, you know, it's not going to be the Warsaw Pact coming across with, you know, hundreds of divisions. It could be something much smaller. And this is why it's important to actually deter

those kinds of lower level incidents of aggression because they do have this potential to escalate. And you can do that, you know, not just through your military strategy but also through economic tools, which the book highlights.

But it really speaks to having a deterrence posture and a defense posture that makes that sort of aggression costly. And that speaks not only to changes I think that are needed in US defense policy, but also, and this is another thing that the book really touches on, changes in the defense posture of allies. So that allies are more resilient and, you know, have the resolve to kind of push back against some of these, you know, instances of testing, right, and not let them turn into larger conflicts.

MR. ROSE: Let me just build on a couple of points that Caitlin made. I fully agree that the Russians and the Chinese are not 10 feet tall. They have vulnerabilities in their society as well. But picking up on a point that Tom said, I think the current regimes are very pragmatic. In particular the Chinese have a long-term view of this challenge. I mean we think in the future years defense program or the next election. The Chinese think long term. They have a long-term vision. So what I think we will see is kind of like Caitlin said, not a bolt out of the blue, but small salami slices, South China Sea, Crimea, Eastern Ukraine.

And fundamentally what I would argue is that the Russians and the Chinese understand one of America's great asymmetric advantages. And that is our worldwide system of alliances. And I think if you look at their foreign policy, the objective over the long term is to create doubt whether the United States will meet its commitments to its allies. With the objective, long-term, from the Chinese point of view, pushing the United States out of the West and Pacific, and from the Russian point of view developing a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

MR. ERHARD: And, Jung, just a couple of points. Why haven't they done more? Because they're really scared of the United States. They're really, really scared of the United States. We are scary to our allies, we are scary to our adversaries. We just keep whipping out modern technology stuff all the time that just comes out of nowhere. The Russians and the Chinese think that everything that's been in Popular Mechanics is actually fielded and is out there in some secret base out in the desert someplace, and that we're just waiting to pounce on them.

When you read the writings, it's difficult to contextualize it for Americans because they're so pathologically fearful of surprise attack. When you look at their history and you look at their, you know, their system, their authoritarian system, this all makes sense, but they're very, very scared of us.

And I think two things. That's an advantage for us on the one hand, but on the other hand it's a very bad escalatory environment. So from a crisis stability point of view, this fear that they have drives them, and drives them to overcome, I must say, the one thing that overcomes bureaucratic inertia is fear. They've reconfigured their national security organizations from the bottom to the top. Like it's really amazing if you look at either Russia or China, and we could go through like a long list of the things that they've done, that for this country would just be impossible. Because they are very, very scared of us.

So we've given them reason to be scared, but it also impels them, and it also creates environments where it's very risky because of that fear and because of their feeling of inferiority, that, you know, that crises could really bounce out of control quickly.

MR. DOSHI: Thanks. I agree with everything that's been said. One of the benefits in terms of Mike's book is the focus on the economic question. So I think there at least may be two or three reasons why we haven't seen things go completely off the rails yet. One is luck, so, okay. But that's good. Let's make a note of luck.

Number two is of course the fact that if you ask ourselves what does China want? The better question is what does the Communist Party of China want? And one of those things is party stability. And it wants to make sure the party remains in control.

And so undermining the economic basis of the party's legitimacy is pretty dangerous. Because then all of a sudden, you know, maybe the party won't be around much longer. And if you look historically, when the economy tanks that's when you get most protests.

So one of the reasons that China was reluctant to really force the issue on some of these questions was simply because it recognized its economy dependence on the United States and on the system of, you know, liberal trade, something the United States erected, and on the peaceful flow of commerce across waters near China. And realized that if it rocked that boat the party could lose power.

So that's one reason, and one leverage point the United States uniquely has.

In fact, there's often a cliché that, you know, maybe western countries can't take economic pain as well as authoritarian countries because authoritarian countries can redirect resources, and if we see this kind of in the discourse about the trade war. But a flip side of it is that democratic countries are somewhat more politically resilient. And that's something that China is very concerned about, that if it has economic disruption it'll suffer.

The second reason why there hasn't been an issue is because China's doing pretty well. They're, you know, from a certain perspective they believe time is on their side and there's a lot of discourse on sort of when time will decisively be on their side. But in general, they believe the trends are moving the right way.

And there's a discourse also on this strategic period of opportunity, or period of strategic opportunity that you see the Chinese write about. And what that means is that they believe the United States is fundamentally distracted by challenges in the Middle East and other parts of the world, and that there was a unique moment for about 20 years where China could just continue to develop capabilities without forcing these issues.

It is interesting now that the discourse is suggesting, unofficial, not official, that that period is coming to an end, and therefore we might see more turbulence going forward.

And the last thing of course is capability. China didn't have the capabilities, to Tom's point, they were nervous, they were afraid, they don't know what we're going to pull out of the blue. And, you know, they think well it might be a sort of a web, and then all of a sudden we have an innovation they're not aware of and it's different. So there's a fear there.

And it's important to note, and this is the final thing I'll say on this, that as we're thinking about these conflict scenarios, China did not invest in the capabilities to do a lot within it's periphery until about 10 years ago. It didn't have landing platform docs, it didn't have amphibious capabilities, it had a very limited marine expeditionary capability. All the investments that are necessary to project or control, sea or territory, those are now being, they're now coming to fruition. So in some ways capability is the third reason why we've been lucky.

MR. ROSE: I just want to come back to a point that Tom made that the Russians and the Chinese fear US technology. I think there's a lot of truth to that.

And let me just illustrate that with an example. As Mike mentioned, I was very involved during the Obama Administration in missile defense. And we did a lot of discussions with the Russians to try to convince the Russians that US missile defenses were not directed at Russia. It seemed like a good idea at the time I guess.

And I remember back in 2012, a senior Russian delegation was in town. And a very, very, very senior Russian General made a presentation during that meeting. And it showed US fleet ships in the Baltic shooting down Russian ICBMs, intercontinental ballistic missiles. And in response to the presentation I said "General, that is a fascinating presentation. Can you tell me though, how fast you are attributing the interceptor on each of those ships?" And he looked at me with a straight face and he said "Ten kilometers per second." And for those of you who aren't missile defense gurus, nobody has ever created a rocket with a velocity burnout of 10 kilometers per second. So I looked at the General and I said "General, if you can find me a company that can develop a sea based missile defense interceptor with a velocity burnout of 10 kilometers a second, let me know, because I want to buy stock in that company." But he looked at me and he said "You'll get there."

And, you know, that may seem irrational to us, but I think the Russians really do believe that point. They look at us, they look at the innovations in Silicon Valley and they don't have that. And it is a concern, and it does drive a lot of their defense planning.

Thank you.

MS PAK: I know you said triggered something. So 10 years ago when you talked about when China made the change, right. Ten years ago was a financial crisis. And other panelists have talked about how our adversaries think that the US is fundamentally distracted by the Middle East, but it was also economic. And this is something that the book brings up, and the panelists have as well. And Rush talked about some of the three changes that had happened and why we're talking about this and why this matters.

And two of those points was about how China viewed itself, right, and its view of itself

and its view of its capabilities and ambitions. The flip side of this is how do our adversaries see the US, right? And I wonder if I could glean some insights from the panelists? You don't all have to address this, but would we be having the same conversation three years ago, given the Trump Administration's views, or the President himself, his views about alliances, about the transactional nature of it, a decreasing focus on human rights and values based on diplomacy and engagement. So if, you know, do the panelists have thoughts about how Russia and China perceive US ambitions and US capabilities?

MR. DOSHI: Sure, I can start us off on that question. So, yeah, the 2008 financial crisis, this is a controversial argument in some academic circles, but I think there's increasingly more evidence for this. This is something I'm writing about as well in a book I'm putting together. But I think the 2008 financial crisis was pretty important for China's perceptions of the United States and for its own self-assessment.

So when China assesses itself, that assessment isn't purely absolute. It's a relative assessment in many respects, it's an assessment of its capabilities relative to the United States, it's economic power relative to the United States, it's comprehensive national power, that's a term China uses, relative to the United States. And so in many ways China's views are sort of, when thinking about itself is not just thinking about itself, when it's thinking about us it's not just thinking about us.

The crisis inaugurated a discourse that was, you know, not necessarily always official, kind of a semi-official, you know, think tanks, etcetera, places like this, except of course in China they're all within the Communist Party's orbit. But basically the conclusion was that the United States had, this was the beginning of the end of sort of uni-polarity and American hegemony, that America would be more distracted going forward, and that as a result China had an opportunity to be a bit more assertive.

And so some of the discourse in China that changes is with respect to the term multipolarity. Now when they use the term multipolarity, we think of it from maybe an international relations context as being a situation where there's lots of countries that are kind of equal, all competing. Think like, you know, Europe 200 years ago. But for their perspective that term is much more focused on the United States. So when they say multipolarity they don't mean a stronger India or a stronger Japan or a stronger Brazil, they mean a weaker United States relative to China. And that discourse suggested that

multipolarities, that trend was coming, was accelerating, and that there were less concerns about the endurance of the hegemony, which previously had been something that was really far away.

That's one major turning point that leads to what I think is a much more assertive Chinese foreign policy within Asia. We're now maybe a second turning point in the last few years. The Trump Administration has taken a tougher line on China than a lot of other administrations have taken. And in China's view that's collapsed this idea that the sphere of strategic opportunity still exists. Increasingly Chinese writers, not official ones, semi-official ones, say, you know, really this thing might be coming to an end. The Americans have really woken up to the fact that we're here. And the next 10 years are going to be very stormy. But, after 10 years, sometime after 2030, they'll be less stormy because the Americans won't be able to do anything. They'll be a spent force.

So that is an increasingly important discourse we're seeing in China, reflected with pretty well connected think tank folks and others. And I think some elements of it are percolating into the official discourse, which means its gaining official and premature.

And so I'll leave it at that for now, but, you know, I'm happy to talk more about that.

MR. ERHARD: I could talk just a bit about Russia. And, you know, you talked about would this be the same. Well really your question is what's been the impact of the Trump Administration on Russian views of this competition.

There's a couple things I think that impact that. Number One, Russia, there's an inference, there's a statement that Russians make to each other quite often. They say "It's no accident that," and then they'll say "It's no accident that there was good weather today when we were just about to have an X, Y, or Z." The point about that is that they believe things are directed. There's an inference, there's just a basic inference that things are directed.

So the United States goes through a major financial downturn and then magically discovers petroleum and vaults to the top of the world petroleum production. They don't see this for what it actually was, which was an entirely low emergent behavior on the part of not even big oil or anything else, to end fracking in the United States. But they see it as a strategic initiative by the United States to dominate the oil market because that's where they get the majority of their money.

So the point is that the Russians believe there's a deep state. And the deep state in the United States hates them and wants them to go away. And so for them, they see, it's hard for them to see a difference between the Obama Administration and the Trump Administration when it comes to this inexorable set or measures that the United States continues to seem to take when it comes to dealing with Russia. Number One.

Number Two, they are more fearful of our military than our political leadership. So when they look at NATO or they look at US political leadership, they think to themselves, "Well, you know, it looks like things ebb and flow, but these American military senior officers are implacable, they've wanted the same thing since they were young, and they still want that same thing." So they're very, very fearful of the US military and what it does.

And what happens, the way we enable that or sort of extenuate that in their mind, is that the US military is all over the world doing lots of things. I remember one time on my Russia tour, you know, General Ben Hodges was the US Army Europe Commander. And he said to me "Tom, I don't think anything, we're so weak now that I don't think anything we do even makes a difference with Russia." And I said to him "On the contrary, everything we do down to the smallest detail, they look at it and they see bad intent. Everything we do, every time we fly a bomber someplace." One time we flew bombers on Putin's birthday and he was mad for five years. I can't tell you what he did, but it wasn't good, you wouldn't like it, and he did it for five years in a row because he was mad and he thought it was a personal thing that we had done to them. We did it because the bombers got cancelled, they got cancelled, then this got backed up and they had to go home, and this happened and this happened. Then it just happened on that day. It was very innocent in that regard. And I would call it ignorant strategically.

So the American military is all over the world doing a lot of these things, and this gets to what Michael's, you know, what Michael talks about in the book. Is that there are these escalatory, let's call it culture, let's call it inferential understanding that's handed down, that gets to an escalatory environment that can be quite dangerous.

Caitlin's written a tremendous, done some tremendous work on this about how

inadvertently escalatory things can be. And so we have to look not just at our senior leadership, which we obsess about a lot, but look at how red, in this case Russia, sees it and how they see, they see evidence everywhere of this implacable sort of desire to do Russia in. And they tend to see everything we do in that light.

MS PAK: Thank you. Caitlin.

MS. TALMADGE: So I think this is a really important question. You know, I think in a lot of respects it is tempting to sort of look out at everything that's going wrong and say it just started going wrong three years ago, and kind of infer backwards causality from that. But I think it is so important, and your question raises this, to recognize that a lot of the issues we're talking about today have structural causes. They are much bigger than this administration, there are, you know, recurring tendencies, I would argue, over hundreds and hundreds of years in international relations for concentrations of power to provoke resistance.

And that's exactly what I think many students of international politics would have predicted the long-term results would have been after the end of the Cold War, that eventually when one state has such a tremendous concentration of power, other states will try to counter that. And I think a lot of things that the United States has done actually since the end of the Cold War, and Tom was kind of getting to this, supported and fed into a narrative that the United States was trying to propagate its own power at the expense of other states. If you think about NATO expansion, if you think about the expansion of US alliances and strengthening of those alliances in East Asia and Southeast Asia, all of that I think from the other side of the hill looks like efforts to keep the down, keep them weak. And those, I think, regardless of the 2016 election, we're going to have some of the consequences that, you know, Mike is talking about in his book. Where I do think 2016 forward has been significant is in how those structural challenges are actually managed by our government.

You know, one of the, I think, take-aways from this book, I think two big ones. One is that clear signaling is really important for trying to have an effective deterrent, you know, your potential adversaries really have to have a firm understanding of how you are going to meet probes and limited aggression. And I think that's an aspect where maybe our current policy has been a bit wanting, there's

confusion.

The other thing, you know, there's confusion, I think there's unpredictability and ambiguity, and not in a good way. Not strategic ambiguity, just ambiguity.

And I think the other big take-away from this book, and again, you know, I think it just really lays this out very nicely is that we don't want to be in a situation where a crisis arises and we're in a completely reactive posture, saying "Oh, my God, you know, what are we going to do? This is a crisis, this is something we didn't anticipate." We want, the United States should want in advance to be thinking about what are the full set of tools that we really want to have in our back pocket to prevent these things from happening and to responding early on before they escalate further.

And to develop those tools and think strategically you can't just be reactive, you have to be thinking long term. And when I look at the, you know, most kind of recent period in US history, I think what comes to mind is the phrase "Opportunity costs." You know, strategic thinking that maybe hasn't been done that we could be done because we're distracted with a lot of other things. And that's where I think, you know, recent events maybe have made a big difference.

Thank you.

MS PAK: I want to leave plenty of time for questions and answers. But let's do 30 second down the line, what's the top thing, what do we need to do? And think about it in terms of what needs to change in US policy, what needs to be tweaked, and what needs to be created anew?

MR. ROSE: Two things. One, we need to reestablish the centrality of US alliances. We are in a great power competition and the US system of alliances is our asymmetric advantage. So we need to do a couple of things.

First, we need to improve interoperability with our allies. Indeed, one of the biggest problems to increased interoperability with our allies is not technical, it's US internal policies and procedures. The iron majors in the Pentagon. I remember when I was in the Pentagon during the Bush Administration, I had to get a British liaison officer on one of our computer systems. And we had a directive from the President of the United States to make this happen. And I was fighting with the bureaucracy saying "We have this directive from the President of the United States." And the response

from this GS-13 was "I don't care." So that's what, we're going to need to do that, Number One.

But Number Two, we need to enhance the resiliency of our critical infrastructure. What keeps us glued to our allies at the technical level are a number of key systems, space, undersea communications cables, cyber. So we have to ensure that we have resilient networks that can withstand cyber attack as well as anti-satellite attack. So the allies are the key, both from a political perspective but also from an operational perspective.

MR. DOSHI: Thanks. So I know the question was for two, but I'll just take one of Frank's. We need to do more to shore up our alliances, both politically as well as militarily. So I'd add the political component as well because when we're waging trade wars with some of our allies it's very difficult to coordinate on other issues.

The second point though, and this goes to Mike's book, which kind of discusses this in detail, is we need to strengthen forms of leverage short of actual kinetic conflict of war, right? We need to strengthen our economic tool kit to some degree. And what that actually means, very realistically, is avoiding abusing the use of economic sanctions by basically applying them to everything at all times when they don't need to be.

When we apply economic sanctions frivolously we create massive incentives for other parts of the world to work together to bypass the US dollar based financial system. And that's happening already. Europe has gotten together to continue to trade with Iran with a special vehicle for this very purpose. China and Russia were ecstatic when that vehicle was formed. And so I think that that's going to be one of the most important things going forward.

If we want to have a tool, and this is what Mike's book talks a lot about, that doesn't involve war, the best piece of leverage we have is basically the reserve content is the dollar and the kind of networks that emerge around it that we can sort of cut people off from.

And so I'd say maybe the most important thing, aside from what Frank's already discussed, would be maintaining of economic advantages with respect to finance.

Thanks.

MS. TALMADGE: I would echo the point about alliance, and in particular emphasize that

I think it's not just that I think we need to have, you know, stronger alliances, but I think we need to encourage changes in allied defense postures that make them more resilient, that strengthen their resolve so that adversaries cannot accomplish a fait accompli, that they can't come in and think that they can conduct a low cost operation that's going to cause an allied to militarily collapse quickly or to economically or politically give in to coercion really rapidly. And I think that there are some specific ways that we could do that.

We often, you know, over the last 10 years, for instance, have heard about China's anti-access area denial capabilities, their ability to prevent US power projection in the Western Pacific. But we should remember that in a lot of the scenarios that we're worried about, including some of the ones talked about in Mike's book, it would be China that would be trying to project power. And so I think it's our allies who need to have anti-access area denial capabilities to make Chinese aggression more costly. And I think there are some, you know, specific ways that we can do that.

The other thing I would just highlight is that I think we need to continue to integrate our thinking about strategic deterrents, both the conventional and even sub-conventional aspects of our military forces all the way up to strategic and nuclear forces, and how all of these different elements of military power can actually contribute to deterrents to a bunch of different types of potential adversary actions.

I think there are a lot of really smart people who are thinking this way, but we're still kind of rusty, you know, this is still a type of thinking that is kind of, it's very old to the point where it's almost new again. And so, you know, breaking down some of the silos where we, even organizationally and bureaucratically where, you know, the people who do nuclear weapons are over here and the people who plan conventional military operations are over here, and never the twain shall meet until we're in a war. That's a problem.

So integrating our thinking I think is something we can affirmatively do.

MR. ERHARD: Okay. This is fantastic because it's a long list. And I would just reinforce everything that's been said before. So to try to add a little bit of flavor. Two things.

Number One, we need to dramatically increase the depth and sophistication of our

understanding of China and Russia as strategic competitors. This goes across the board, economically, socially, culturally, and militarily. We are at a dramatic deficit when it comes to that and we have to increase it. And this time, unlike the Cold War, there's two, not one, and this is more than twice as hard. So I can comment at length about some of the lack of depth and sophistication that we have now, but we just got to start clawing ourselves back.

Number Two, and this is more along the lines of getting to operational concepts and actual war fighting and deterrents and crisis stability with the military, but we really need to focus on command and control. Command and control is a bit of a neglected part of our military capability, and we've been lazy with command and control because of the last 20 years of distraction. And both of these adversaries, in their strategic, very clear, pointed strategic writing, say that our command and control is the number one object of their military strategy. That is to say not only the retention of their own C2, which we worry about a little bit, but the attack and the disabling of American C2 is their primary focus. If that's their primary focus, I'm going to try to win there.

That's all I can tell -- as a strategist I see your primary focus and I need to address that primary focus. It's very hard for institutions to deal with C2, our C2 isn't integrated like it needs to be, at the national inter combat and command level. We've had stovepipe combatant commands now ever since Goldwater-Nichols. And now it's two global threats that require the integration of all those command and control elements in the commands. It's a very big issue, Michael talks about it in the book to some degree.

And so not only at sort of every level all the way down to the tactical communications, the technologies of communication and the concepts for globally integrated communication need to come back in the Department of Defense in the national security community.

MS. PAK: We have people with microphones, right? We'll take three questions at a time. I would just ask that you keep the questions brief and make sure they are questions and not comments.

Purple over here, yellow tie over there. And anybody in the back for number three?
Anybody?

MR. MALONE: I'm Karl Malone, I'm on the Atlantic Council. I am going to make a comment. Mike, I'm glad to hear you're 35, I hope you file a primary against Donald Trump, and I'll give you some money if you do.

I want to provoke the panel a bit with two observations that are very brief.

First, I would argue that the United States has not faced a competent enemy on the battlefield for 55 years. And so this notion of military superiority is nice, but I think we have to look at it much more carefully in terms of opposition.

Second, if you compare how long Russia, USSR, the United States, and China have been engaged in war or military operations, the last 69 years since '50, 1950, the United States has been engaged for 33 years. The other countries five or six at most. It's something to think about.

As you know, and my question really gets back to the National Defense Strategy. When Mattis conceived this he was concerned about the two (inaudible) in the Balts and Taiwan. But the strategy talks about global competition and deterring and defeating. I've not heard anybody in the administration or elsewhere define what we mean by competition and where the military is meant to compete.

I don't know where we're going to deter, certainly in terms of Russian active measures or China both militarizing the South China Sea Islands or Belt and Road. And if you're talking about defeating an enemy in a war which could be nuclear, it seems to me since we don't have enough bullets vis-à-vis China or Russia, you're talking about a war that could only be won with 400 or 500 equivalent megatons. So I'd like the panel to talk for a minute, or answer, what do you mean by global competition, where does the military fit in. And what do we deter against and whom, and if war comes, how do we win?

MR. CARL OCDOLOVAN: Hi, Carl Ocdolovan, domain reference anidealliveson.net. One general and one specific question.

Generally, as a D confliction scenario, what's the potential for the US/Russia/China and others to meet in a geopolitically neutral place, say Reykjavik, and discuss a new Bretton Woods Agreement which would defuse the perceived threat by many of dollar hegemony.

A specific question as to Russia. The book *The Controversy of Zion*, by once international renounced journalist Douglas Reed, dealt into the twin and intertwined roots of both Bolshevism and Zionism. And interestingly along those lines, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, in one of his last books written was "200 Years Together." And my question for the panel is, that book, is it not an accident, I should say, that it's never been translated into English. Perhaps into German and French, but Solzhenitsyn's "200 Years Together," a very important book to understand Russia and its perception of external threats.

MS PAK: We have one more right there.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Hi. I'd love to hear you talk about what you think C2 looks like in cyberspace because that's an area where China is ahead of us. Oh, command and control.

MS. PAK: Okay. Right. So I have how do we win on the battlefield, how do we define global competition, is there a potential, any possibility for de-confliction, having some sort of trilateral conversation and understanding, how do we really understand Russia and it's perception of the threat, and how do we deal with C2 in cyberspace.

Not all the panelists have to address all of these things, but if you have a particular insight, please.

MR. DOSHI: I'll just start with the first questions. It's true that China's very aware that it hasn't fought a conflict in a long time in any meaningful sense. And so as a result, military writings suggest that that's a weakness that they have. And as a result of that determination, there's a focus in China on peace-keeping operations and other efforts to basically get some degree of operational experience.

And so, you know, that kind of addresses the question to some degree of, you know, are they a competent adversary without experience? They seem to think that they need more experience and they're working to get it.

On the question of competing where. I agree with you and others that the major theatre of competition remains the fait accompli situations within Asia. But I think it's worth expanding, you know, looking more to the Indian Ocean, not necessarily in terms of conflict scenarios involving the military, but

in terms of questions of Chinese access throughout the region. So there's a long standing discourse in China going back 20 years about how they need to have more Indian Ocean access. There's top level folks within China in authoritative discourse saying we want to have more Indian Ocean facilities in the future going forward because all of our resources flow through it so we need to secure it.

So when we think about global competition with a military dimension, it doesn't always have to be about war fighting scenarios, sometimes it's about access.

And then finally, on the larger global question of what the competition looks like. I would just say that increasingly it's hard to say because competition is also touched by actual state of affairs but intentions. In other words there are certain behaviors taken because of competitive logics or parochial logics and so increasingly we tend to see things as having competitive logic, likes Belt and Road or Fall way. So we're thinking a little bit more about that because if they do have competitive logic and they are strategic, that's how the competition becomes more global.

One last question on Bretton Woods. I would just say I'm not sure it's a good idea to have a second Bretton Woods with China which eliminates dollar hegemony because dollar hegemony is one of the reasons we might be able to prevent actual kinetic conflict.

MR. ROSE: Harlan, to your question, when I think about competition I think our colleague here at Brookings, Tom Wright, really hit the nail on its head in his recent book *All Measures Short of War*. And he says the United States is in competition with Russia and China for the future of the international order. And what he means by that is that there is a struggle between the authoritarian versus the democratic model.

And I tend to agree with him on that. At the same time I also believe we need to maintain lanes and channels of communication with Russia. Because as we've talked about this morning, all three nations are armed with nuclear weapons and the possibility for miscalculations is high, depending on the scenario.

That's why I have been one of the few people, and I would say I proposed this before Donald Trump did in a February article, is the need for a trilateral dialogue. Because when you look at the key strategic nuclear questions, whether it's the INF Treaty or the future of arms control, it is a

trilateral discussion. And while I don't think that this Administration had done a good job laying the groundwork for a trilateral discussion, I fundamentally believe that over the long term we need to have an arms control or strategic stability system that brings China into the discussion. Because fundamentally I don't think it's either politically or strategically viable to have China, the United States' major strategic competitor, sitting outside a future strategic stability regime.

And furthermore, and let me just end on this point. I think arms control can play a role in managing this competition. But it needs to be a different type of arms control than we've practiced in the post-Cold War period. During that period it was fundamentally about reducing the role in numbers of nuclear weapons. I think we need to have a new paradigm for arms control focused on maintaining stable deterrents in reducing the risk of nuclear use.

MR. ERHARD: Part of the purpose of this panel, you know, we were going to talk a little bit about war fighting scenarios or the deterrent, and so Harlan I'm glad you asked that question. And the C2, I want to bring those two questions together.

Again, interesting appendix, especially Appendix II in Michael's book, talks about modern technologies and how they might contribute. And he leaves open the question of how a particular nation might take those tools and apply them in some kind of operational concept.

I do a lot of work in that area in trying to figure out how to anticipate new and disruptive operational concepts that might stem from first of all the problems that each one of these countries are trying to solve. Which, remember, Russia and China are very steeped in US motivations for their operational concepts and all of that. We tend to be ignorant of theirs.

So they, for instance, focus a lot on peripheral wars. For instance, yes, the United States is very intimidating to them, but they only, Chinese talk about it in terms of how do we keep those out so we can conduct a local war? Like the local war is the thing that they're focused on. The same thing goes with Russia. And when it comes to C2, when it comes to command and control of those things, the technology, your question about cyberspace, the answer gets to sort of three big changes that have occurred over the last few years that matter a lot.

Number One, the electronic warfare has changed dramatically. And this is normally off

the lay person's radar screen, no pun intended, but the electronic warfare changes, and when it changes in step function fashion, it just doesn't sort of evolve. There's new things kind of emerge a lot, and normally they're in special access areas for the United States and that it's hard to understand some of those things.

But there's sort of a battle over whether you can keep your command and control system secure, whether you have reliable data in it, and whether or not it can be located. Because in a precision environment if your command and control emitter can be located, it can be struck. So there's a big competition going on right now at the highest levels of electronic warfare technology to try to secure your ability to do command and control.

And the second thing is sort of the most troubling of all, is that because China and Russia believe that we're ready to strike in a moment. So bolt out of the blue is so last year for us, it's so Cold War. Oh, you guys in Strategic Air Command worried about bolt out of the blue. We don't worry about it anymore, we're going to see it coming a mile away. That's US. China and Russia think it's right around the corner waiting to pounce on them at any second.

So they're motivated by time. They want to be able to make, they want to be able to assess the environment and make rapid decisions. And what does that drive them to? Automated methods of doing command and control, which exist in cyberspace, which are driven by algorithms, not humans. There's no time in there for humans to think about what it is that they need to do when it comes to command and control. At the highest level all the way down to the tactical level.

As authoritarian governments, they tend to like automated command and control because it takes human judgments that they don't necessarily trust, out of the intermediate levels. I'm worried about that because C2 systems in the 21st Century are like the train schedules of the early 20th Century that led to World War I. The capacity for the C2 system structure itself to be a catalytic environment in escalation dynamics in the 21st Century is very high. And when you inject cyberspace into that, the chances for it to be manipulated for, for instance, the green light to attack to go on when it shouldn't go on. We saw that during the Cold War, some notable moments when a human intervened into an automated system and stopped a real disaster from happening. In Russia I'm thinking of in particular in

the early 80s.

And so I'm concerned about the electronic warfare implications of it, the kind of degree to which C2 has become a quest for speed. And I will just tell you from the DOD point of view what I hear all the time is because of the adversaries' quest for speed, we want more speed. So it's just everybody's just going for rapidity. And rapidity means taking humans out of the loop, and that is all very problematic from my point of view.

MODERTOR: I'll take two more questions. Are there any questions in the back? We hit the front quite a bit. Two questions in the back. I see a red blouse back there. And gentleman in the back in the blue.

MS. PEARLMAN: Thank you very much for a very interesting panel. Diane Pearlman from the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason.

You mentioned a lot about fear and reactivity to fear. So wouldn't it be more helpful to work on reducing fear, increasing diplomacy, reassurance, and also analyzing what is the underlying conflict about and trying to address some of the underlying causes, including also track two diplomacy and possibly having some intention to work towards reconciliation?

MS. PAK: Great. Thank you. Second question back there.

MR. ROPER: Dan Roper from the Association of the United States Army. I'd be interested in your views on the current force posture of the US Military and the balance of four deployed forces versus increasing the reliance on rotations and the dual edged sword of -- is that enhancing deterrents or is that actually undermining deterrents?

MS. PAK: I'll take one more. Yes. Up front here.

MR. HOROWITZ: My name is Elliott Horowitz, I want to thank the panel for an excellent discussion.

Mr. Rose, I have a question for you, please. Without getting too much into the current political situation, you mentioned a trilateral discussion between our President and between President Xi and Putin. From my point of view that would not work out very well. Thank you.

MR. ROSE: It may not.

MS. PAK: Really good questions. I think the last question and the first question could be together. Let me ask one final question. And that is Xi Jinping is going to Russia to attend a major Russian investor forum in St. Petersburg. And he had said last year that no matter how international situations change, China and Russia always firmly support each other in defending their respective core interests. And he added "Putin is my best, most intimate friend." So in addition to the questions about how to reduce the fear, including reassurance and dialogue, what is the force posture?

But, please, what is your sense of how worried are you about a China/Russia partnership?

MR. ROSE: Do you want to just work down the aisle? These are our last comments? So I'll make one quick one.

MS. PAK: Frank, do you want to address the trilateral discussion issue?

MR. ROSE: I agree with you that trilateral discussion amongst leaders is probably not all that helpful. But if you go down a couple of levels, a trilateral discussion on strategic stability issues I think makes a lot of sense.

Because you can't think about strategic stability in purely a bilateral setting. China is impacting that significantly. For example, in the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty, even if the United States had been able to bring Russia back into compliance, you still had this problem that China had over 1,000 medium and intermediate range missiles. So what I was saying, in the context of these strategic arms control issues, you can't treat it as a bilateral issue. You need to find a way to bring China into that discussion.

With regards to the question on diplomacy, I think the member of the audience is absolutely right. Whereas the administration got the great power competition correct, they don't have a diplomatic strategy for great power competition. And if I were to make one recommendation, the State Department needs to work on that. They need to develop the resources.

I don't know if there will be a reconciliation between the United States, Russia, and China because I fundamentally believe we are in a competition for the future of the world order. For me, the objective is managing that competition in a way that reduces the risk of conflict.

MR. DOSHI: Thanks. So on the first question, basically about whether or not there could be some reassurance, more track twos and reconciliation. I think those things are certainly good to attempt, and I think that there could be probably more robust, to Tom's point and Frank's point, more robust crisis management mechanisms and more thinking about crisis escalation, and this is what the book is supposed to get us to do in part, and thinking about ways in which we can build an institutional structures between the US and China that can manage that. And there actually might be a lot of good that we can do there while remaining fully cynical and skeptical about each other's motives, intentions, and long-term interests. So there's room below the level as there is some competition for some good to be done.

That being said though, I kind of agree with Frank that the competition increasingly is becoming viewed in both countries as zero sum. And so that means that it's getting difficult for each side to trust the other. And I think intentions are seen in the worst possible light. Part of that is amplified by systematic differences in regime type.

I mean China as an authoritarian system has 30 years, more than 30, before Tiananmen Square it perceived itself as vulnerable to Western liberalism. And Tiananmen Square happened and then, you know, they've gotten 30 years but they're still worried that, you know, just by nature of being who we are and having the system that we do, we'll pose some degree of risk to the party's hold on power.

So it's hard to change who we are. And since who we are is part of what's driving the threat, that's going to be difficult to stop. But I think again, and Tom may have more on this, there's a lot we could do institutionally.

On the other point about China and Russia, it's something I worry a lot about. China/Russia cooperation really picked up in earnest in the early days after the end of the Cold War, so we're talking about really with the Yugo/Slav interventions, the bombings in the mid-90s, you saw China and Russia get together and put out a statement, doesn't get cited much now, together jointly calling for a multipolar order. And in 1999 Chinese Generals meet with Putin, there's accountings of, you can read the transcripts from the memoirs of these Generals, saying we need to stop the Americans in Central Asia

and SCO, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will be our tool to do it. So we see is a steadily degree of intimacy between the two over time, dating back to the mid-90s. So, you know, quite a while. And now I think there's more military dimensions of it in EW actually, I know where there's kind of more training that I heard about. And in addition, of course, you know, the usual arms sales.

So it's something I am concerned about. What I am most concerned about is coordinated strategic actions. So, you know, if we see China do something in the East China Sea and Russia simultaneously do something in the Baltics, then we face a sort of two-front problem. We'll see if that happens.

MS. TALMADGE: I think a lot of the themes that are being raised actually go back to Harlan Olman's question about what actually do we mean by strategic competition. And, you know, an aspect of that that I would just kind of throw into the discussion is that, you know, I think competition is different from outright conflict. If you're already in full blown conflict or war, you know, that may be irreversible, and it's also may be a case where you may have very few mutual interests.

Competition can be a situation where you have a tense and suspicious relationship with a potential adversary or a competitor, but you also have areas of mutual overlapping interest. And we do have those, you know, for instance with China. We have DPRK management, we have, you know, climate, we have economic interests that are in common. And we also have mutual interests in preventing escalation, right? And we've talked a little about that today.

And so it does raise these questions about should we have, you know, dialogue, should we even try to pursue things like arms control or strategic stability framework, even acknowledging that we are in a competition. And, you know, looking back to the Cold War, we actually did some of those things during the Cold War even though we were, you know, definitely locked into a long-term strategic rivalry.

I think it's useful in thinking about, you know, the prospects for this to actually go back to the very oldest kind of definition of arms control from the Cold War, the old like helper and then shelling definition, if any of you remember a little bit of scare at this point. But their point was arms control isn't something you do with your friends because you agree on everything, it's actually something that you do

with a country that may be your adversary, but with whom you have a mutual interest in reducing the likelihood and costs of war.

And so, you know, if we think about arms control from that perspective or strategic dialogue from that perspective, I think there are some contributions to be made, not just to reassurance, but also to deterrents, right? These forums can actually be places to exchange information about, you know, what strategic intentions are on the part of the United States, and I think this also does go back to kind of the C2 question that was asked earlier.

One of the challenges that we face, and one that Mike's book I think highlights nicely, and your question also raised, is there are these new technologies that we don't fully know their effects, you know, with nuclear weapons and the Cold War once you had a nuclear arsenal and you did some tests, everybody kind of knew what the effects of the weapons were going to be. That wasn't the issue, the issue was like would you use them, right? With cyber and some of these, you know, advances in electronic warfare, there are capabilities where, you know, if you reveal them they are no longer useful. So it actually is hard to deter with them because your adversary may not believe what you have or know fully what you have.

And so, you know, we know actually in the late Cold War one of the things the Soviets were the most, you know, you're talking about automation. One of the things the Soviets were most afraid of was advances in electronic warfare that they thought threatened their command and control of nuclear forces. And it actually did lead them to develop an automated system for launching in the event that they lost C2.

And so, you know, there is this question of even when you're in a competition, can you have some dialogue that reveals some of your intentions and maybe sets parameters on some of the potential conflict in ways that might give you an off ramp in the event of a crisis. And I think that's harder today in the multipolar contacts than it was in the Cold War, but probably worth pursuing.

Thanks.

MS. PAK: Tom, very briefly, and then I'll give the last word to Mike.

MR. ERHARD: Yeah. On arms control, we also need to look back at the Cold War and

understand arms control happened after a lot of really scary things happened. And there's no guarantee that those really scary things wouldn't have or couldn't have escalated into actual nuclear exchange. So hoping for really scary stuff is not a strategy.

On the alliance between Russia and China, I'll give my simple calculation on that. Which is everybody talks about we need to avoid Russia and China, you know, getting together on things. I want the opposite, I want us to be able to become so strategically pragmatic and scary that it drives them together. They are really bad friends, they're not good at being friends with each other, they have thousands and thousands of years of animosity that they remember about each other, they're never going to get themselves together. It doesn't bother me a bit. I want to be bad enough that I drive them to that place. And then let's see how they do.

On the Army question back there. Actually there's a tremendous point to be made here and I'll make it right now. And that is his question had to do with specifics about Army rotation versus permanent basing overseas. The problem is our overseas basing has atrophied dramatically as a result of the end of the Cold War. This is part of the strategy vacation we took. Overseas bases are in the irreducible minimum of US global power projection. They just are. That and the Navy, which relies on overseas basing. And it's shrunk dramatically.

And what happens is our domestic politics are such that we have way too much CONUS military basing that's a drag on our program, that is too costly, and we've atrophied our overseas bases in a world with major power competition, with alliances that matter more and more and more all the time.

We need to be aggressively expanding a 21st Century concept of overseas basing and understanding how the rotation of key kinds of US military forces into those places overseas matters a lot to our adversary.

And my last point is, and if we're paying attention to what they say, and they're screaming at us by the way, China and Russia are both screaming, trying to communicate with us and we're not listening. If we would listen a little bit we would understand what types of rotations, what types of basing, what types of activities by those forces that are in those forward bases matters the most to our adversaries. They tell us, they tell us what they're most scared of. So we can either dial it down or dial it

up, depending on how we do that. If, and only if, we're listening very carefully to what they say.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you from me as well to the panel and to all of you. I just want to add a couple of quick thoughts in conclusion.

One, on the China/Russia angle, I love Tom's answer. I would also add however, that one of the concepts in my book is to avoid overreacting to a small scale scenario. Mostly because you don't want to go to escalation and the potential of great power war. But also because you don't want to have all of your commitments in the Western Pacific and then give Vladimir Putin what he perceives as an open invitation to start monkeying around in the Baltics because we're persuaded.

So I want to respond vis-à-vis this China scenario, if that's the one that happens first. Which is firm and resolute doesn't give China carte blanche to start expanding its appetite because you somehow have tolerated, you know, an invasion of a Senkaku Island. And yet it's primarily focused on forward military presence and economic sanctions in ways that are durable. It may not push China off that island for five or 10 or 15 years, but it's still preferable to the idea of open conflict and preferable to the idea of having to swing most of our military forces to the Pacific, leaving ourselves exposed in the Atlantic. So it is that two theatre focus that is part of the logic behind what I'm suggesting.

And then my last thought would be on the issue of diplomacy versus military resoluteness. It just has to be both. And they're not alternatives. And so for example my previous book at Brookings was trying to argue we need a new security architecture for Eastern Europe.

I don't think bringing Ukraine and Georgie into NATO is a realistic or optimal approach, but I also think we need to recognize that the reactions that NATO expansion has caused so far in Russia are not fundamentally our fault. We can debate whether we should have expanded NATO as far as we have. I was always skeptical, but what's done is done. We have to protect existing allies, we can't create a sense that there's a two-tier alliance. We can work hard on trying to think of new security regimes for Ukraine and Georgia provided that Putin will do his share to stop his aggressions against those countries. But I don't think we should expand NATO to those countries. However, that's not going to take away the existing threats to NATO countries that are already in the alliance. So we've got to do both. And that's why I was pleased to have this panel on this topic today.

Jung, over to you.

MS. PAK: Well thank you. We went a few minutes over time, so thanks for sticking with us. Thank you for all of your questions and thanks to our panelists.

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