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GLOBAL CHINA IS CONTESTING THE U.S.-LED ORDER

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P R O C E E D I N G S

FORD: Hi. You're listening to the Brookings Cafeteria, a podcast about ideas and the experts who have them. I'm Lindsey Ford, a David Rubenstein fellow in the Foreign Policy program here at Brookings. And, I am back today for—I cannot believe this—our final episode of the special podcast series we've been doing for Brookings' Global China Project.

If you have missed our earlier episodes, you can go check them out online. We have covered the waterfront over the past year, everything from China's influence on tech policy, disputes with its neighbors in the East and South China Seas, to looking at China's expanding presence in regions like the Middle East. So, go to the Brookings website, check out the whole series as well as all of the papers that informed these discussions.

For today's episode, I really wanted to come full circle, bring back two of the illustrious leaders of this project, like we did in the first episode last year. It's time to talk about some of the lessons learned over the course of the project and to talk a bit about the future of the U.S.-China policy.

I am incredibly lucky to have my colleagues and friends, Ryan Hass and Rush Doshi, here with me today. Ryan, Rush, thank you so much for joining me.

HASS: Thank you, Lindsey.

DOSHI: Happy to be here.

FORD: So, first, I really want to commend you both, along with our colleague Tarun Chhabra, who's not here today, for the work you've done on this project. It has been a tremendous undertaking over the past couple of years. And, how many (Inaudible) as research papers in total as a part of the project?

DOSHI: Lindsey, I think that we are upwards of 70 papers, over 70 research papers that have covered the waterfront of both functional and geographic issues relating to China's expanding global reach.

FORD: That's incredible. The breadth of the research that's been generated over the course of the study is really impressive. So, to start off with, I wanted to ask you both to reflect on the project for a minute and some of the ideas and the recommendations that have been generated over the course of the study.

Are there any specific debates or findings that really stand out for you in terms of ideas that surprised you or maybe raised your awareness on an issue that you think needs to be better understood or talked about more by U.S. experts and policymakers? Ryan, let me come to you first.

HASS: Thank you. I think part of the richness of the project has been that we have had such a diverse and eclectic group of authors taking a look at China from the perspective of their own areas of expertise.

And, so, this really isn't a collection of papers by China experts. It's a collection of papers by experts on the Middle East and technology and the Pacific Islands and Russia. So, we're able to see a little bit on the receiving end of what China's actions and efforts are and what implications they're having.

For me, I've really walked away from this exercise with three big takeaways. I think the first one is that, taken as a whole, the papers do a pretty good job of highlighting the global scale of China's ambitions.

My reading of the papers leads me to the conclusion that China's not seeking to consolidate the leadership position in Asia and then use that as a springboard toward assuming a greater leadership role on global affairs. It's trying to do both at the same time. It's trying to strengthen its global position at the same time as it strengthens its position in Asia.

The second big takeaway I've had is that economic incentives and disincentives appear to be China's tool of the first resort as it seeks to expand its influence and gain acceptance of its ambitions. Whether we're looking in Central Asia or the Pacific Islands or the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, the storyline seems (Inaudible) about China using economic muscle to advance its interests.

And, you know, military hard power has been an important aspect of the story as well. I think Josh White's paper in particular does a good job of talking about how China is trying to strengthen its military position in the Indian Ocean region. But, it's not always—or at least not yet—at the foreground of China's efforts to expand its influence outside of its immediate periphery.

Then, the third takeaway I have is that it's not a foregone conclusion that China's strategy is going to deliver on all of its aspirations. Viewed collectively, I don't think the papers fall on one side of this debate or the other. They're sort of scattered across the spectrum. But, I don't leave the reading of all these papers with a strong conviction that China's on a glide path toward achieving all of its stated ambitions.

I think it's clear, through the papers, that China's power in influence and reach is growing, rapidly in some areas. But, so too are some of the concerns about the impacts and implications of China taking on a greater role in different parts of the world, whether it's really (Inaudible) capture or environmental issues or labor issues, et cetera.

FORD: Thanks, Ryan. It's a really important point to not assume that there is an unalterable glide path for the future, an important reminder there for U.S. policymakers. Rush, let me ask you to come in here for a minute.

DOSHI: Sure. Well, I think Ryan's summary captures a lot of the key takeaways from our effort. We want to pick up, Lindsey, on a question you raise, which is, what are some of the debates that our papers also weigh in on? And, I'll just give a few examples of big debates on China and China's behavior as well as the international system that I think the papers tend to be very interesting on.

And, one of these in particular is the question of just how new is China's foreign policy? In other words, how much of it is really about Xi Jinping and how much of it is personal rather than institutional or grounded in the Chinese Communist Party?

And, our very first batch of papers grappled with this question, and we sort of began with that question. Because, to understand some of China's behavior, we wanted to look inside China's own system. And, a number of them indicated that there's great continuity between Xi Jinping and Hu Jintao in the foreign policy domain.

So, again, rather than personalizing foreign policy, I think one takeaway was it can be useful to see Chinese foreign policy as embedded, to some degree, in the party and its various quirks and world views. Another really interesting area that I think was revelatory, for me, was the degree of consensus on great power relations with China.

So, we had a whole section of our series focused on China and the great powers. And, what we sort of saw from that series was that the gap between the United States and China, on the one hand, and the rest of the great powers, on the other hand, was large and, if anything, growing. And, that has really enormous implications for actual structure, for great-power competition.

Some of our authors indicated that they thought we were approaching what looked a little bit more like bipolarity than multipolarity. That's a very big debate, not only in the United States but also in China and in every major great-power capital.

I think we also saw some of the areas where tensions are greatest. This is the third area. So, as Ryan indicated, there's a question of will China focus on its region or will it go global. And, of course, this is called the Global China paper series, in a sense. So, we're thinking a lot about the global dimension, and the answer is, really, yes, both. It's doing both.

But, East Asia is still a key engine of economic growth and a key area where U.S. and Chinese interests and most clearly intersect and U.S. and Chinese interests most clearly diverge. So, there is still an overweight of nature to the region in the overall question of China's global ambitions.

But, as you see from the scope of our papers, we've spanned everything from technology, nuclear escalation, space, climate change, a number of functional questions that are really global and that can't just be isolated to the bilateral relationship or even the regional picture.

So, those are many takeaways from all of these—almost 70 papers. And, again, I want to underscore, as Ryan mentioned, that this series is not completely about China experts writing about China. Often, or most of the time, it's experts in different areas. And, going forward, one thing we need to see more in these discussions of China is a combination of China expertise with functional and regional expertise. I think that's going to take us to the next level of analysis.

FORD: Yeah, I think that's a great point, Rush. Let me pick up on a couple of things that you guys raised. Ryan, you really emphasized in your point that economic tools have been China's sort of first-use preference in its toolkit.

I want to just ask you, given that that is often times quite different, I think, from how we in the United States have approached foreign policy over the last several decades, honestly, what does that suggest to you in terms of specific areas where the U.S. needs to think about adapting what we're doing in terms of U.S. strategy toward China, recognizing that what they reach for in their toolkit is likely to be different in terms of what we reach for?

HASS: Well, Lindsey, you've sort of put your finger on a profound question. First of all, the Global China project really aimed to build a strong foundation, a baseline for understanding what China was doing where and what the implications of its actions were.

Our hope is that, you know, going forward we can continue to dive deeper into the prescriptive phase of how to respond to what China's doing to develop sort of a policy toolkit or toolbox for responding. So, the question that you raise, I think, is a useful foreshadowing, where we would love to see research develop going forward.

But, briefly, to answer your question directly, we need to understand the nature of the competition. And, it's not just a China story. There are recipient countries that have a lot of agency in these relationships as well. And, we need to do a better job, the United States, of meeting the demand that is there, and building strong linkages between the United States and countries throughout the world, particularly in Asia, which is, as Rush was pointing out, going to be the engine of economic growth for the world for the foreseeable future.

So, I think that we can be flexible and creative in the way that we do this, but the goal needs to be to try to move the United States in the direction of strengthening rather than attenuating some of these lengths, whether they be trade, investment, or people-to-people lengths that exist between us and some of our partners.

FORD: Rush, picking up on something that you talked about as well, you mentioned sort of this debate over China's goals, both within the region of East Asia but globally, and how those may be similar or how they may be different. So, I wanted to kind of follow up with you on that point—one, where do you think China's goals and its strategy in East Asia are different from the ones it may have globally, and what, again, from a U.S. strategy perspective, does that suggest to you about how the U.S. might need to think about or adapt its policies going forward?

DOSHI: Thanks, Lindsey. I have a few personal thoughts about this, and I think some of them are formed by the papers that we have from our series which provide so much rich contextual information on how to think about this. It does look a lot like, both at the regional level and at the global level, that what China's contesting is ultimately order. It's contesting U.S.-led order, whether that's regional, again, or global.

The goals of that kind of station are somewhat different. You know, at the regional level there are questions of sovereignty. There are questions of territorial disputes. There are questions of transnational linkages between some of China's regions and other states, whether they be in Central Asia or Southeast Asia. There are all kinds of other considerations that are—you could argue almost geographic in nature.

And, at the global level, the competition is not necessarily over some of those more narrow geographic and security-driven considerations. They're actually over some of the substructure of the international system. As you've seen some of the papers, it includes issues related to currency, includes issues related to technology. It includes issues related to what some identified in our paper series as a competition of systems, that is, whatever we may perceive China system to be versus liberal democratic capitalism as a potential alternative.

It's also going to pertain to who controls the commanding heights of space, which is so important for those regional contingencies in the security domain, but also for just the functioning of global information flows. So, while one arena is primarily, I think, a mixture of geographic considerations that have everything to do with security and economics, another is much broader.

But, I'll just add one other thing. And, I think Ryan's point about economics being so fundamental to U.S.-China competition and to China's own ambitions really is important. And, in our series, we have a number of papers that unpack what that means, what that means for currency, what that means for financial flows, what it means for the Belt and Road. Just how developed are China's economic coercive and consensual tools in each of these areas? And, I think you'll find a lot of interesting commentary in all of that from our authors.

FORD: Thanks, Rush. So, on the economic front, one of the groups of papers that we had in this series looks specifically at technology competition between the U.S. and China. Obviously, it's in the news right now. It's basically been at the top of the news cycle for the last few years.

So, I wanted to kind of drill down on that for a second, because, you know, we had a variety of papers that looked at things like how do you best protect U.S. tech advantages in areas like semiconductor technologies, how do you think about access for foreign technology researchers, including from China, whether they should be able to come to the United States, and how much the U.S. needs to be prioritizing research funding of its own to compete with the massive amounts of funding that China's throwing at research priorities like artificial intelligence.

So, I wanted to ask you both, just to start here, where do you think the current administration has gotten it right or wrong when it comes to the tech policy competition? Ryan, why don't I come to you first.

HASS: Well, I was hoping to draft off of Rush, but I'll offer a few thoughts that Rush can build on. I think that the Trump administration has helped raise awareness of the risks and vulnerabilities of overdependence upon supply chains from China. I think that they have raised awareness helpfully on some data security concerns. And, I think that they have helped elevate awareness, not just the United States but around the world, on the important role that 5G likely will play for overall global competitiveness going forward.

I think that the Trump administration probably has been stronger at diagnosing problems than delivering solutions. And, so, the goal for the next administration, whoever that may be, isn't to just sort of unwind everything the Trump administration's been doing but to try to pick up the baton and carry the relay race forward. And, I think that the papers on technology in this series provide a pretty rich menu of ideas for ways that the United States can really strengthen itself in its competition with China.

Now, part of that will be trying to put sand in the spokes of the wheel of the Chinese tech engine, but a big part of it is going to be what we do, if we are able to continue to attract the world's best talent, if we can find ways to ensure that we have a competitive environment in the United States, if we can pool efforts with allies and partners, and if we can efficiently allocate capital, including by increasing support for basic research.

Because, what we're seeing, I think, is that a lot of R&D spinning in the United States is being driven by commercial entities that have profit motives. And, I don't begrudge companies wanting to make profits. That's their job. But, there's a gap that has opened up in basic research and it's going to need to be filled for the United States to continue to sustain its competitive position.

FORD: Thanks. Rush, do you want to jump in here?

DOSHI: Sure. Yeah. I do have a few thoughts on this. I think our papers capture a wide variety of important areas related to technology competition. And, in general, they kind of help paint the following picture for thinking about U.S.-China tech competition, that there is a defensive side of it and offensive side of it.

The defensive side is about stewarding American technological advantages and making sure they don't flow away, for example, to China. And, the offensive side is about reinvesting in the foundations of American technological competitiveness.

And, I think you could argue the Trump administration has raised the issue of defensive economic and technological competition, that is, what can we do to protect some American advantages? And, we see that in the discussion about decoupling, in the discussion about visas, in the discussion about regulating Chinese investment into the United States, perhaps more aggressive CFIUS involvement, particularly after the passage of legislation from Congress that strengthened the CFIUS process.

On the other hand, however, there's probably been inadequate investment on some of the offensive aspects of the U.S.-China tech competition, that is, what the U.S. needs to do. And, on that set of priorities, I'd advocate for a few things.

Number one is more investment in basic science research, which, as a (Inaudible) of GDP, the federal investment in basic science is probably lower than it was before the Sputnik shock. In a second immigration policy—and this is an area where sometimes our defensive efforts interfere with our offensive objectives.

We know from data—and one of our papers discusses this—one of our authors goes into detail—that a lot of the folks that come to the United States to study in electrical engineering PhD programs, computer science PhD programs, the overwhelming majority want to stay in the United States for the rest of their lives. They want to stay here for a long time, including those from China.

So, sometimes, by cutting off some of those people, the people flows—we actually reduce our own competitiveness, right. So, there's an important tradeoff there that we need to be better about. Other efforts are going to be purely domestic, right.

There's been much more discussion on antimonopoly policy to make sure we have a more robust, competitive economy in the tech sector as well as careful applications of industrial policy, to make sure when we're competing with state champions in key sectors, our companies aren't completely without the support they need to be effective. And, some things the market simply can't accomplish, as some of the discussion on supply chains now shows.

But, again, when you want to get specific on different areas of tech competition, whether it's the big picture—we've got papers on the superpower marathon with China, or more specific, whether it's payments, Chinese military innovation, 5G competition, global surveillance exports from China, tech talent competition. There are so many papers in our series that can get you those facts, which I think have been helpful for me and will be helpful for others.

FORD: Thanks, Rush. You know, what's interesting is I think this point that you raise, thinking about the offensive and defensive aspects of our policy, it's actually a common question, I think, a challenge for the United States across the different realms of competition that we're talking about.

We addressed some of these same issues in the military sphere, now probably in a different way than you're talking about, and we probably get the balance a little different on the military front than on the economic front. But, thinking about both of those aspects of our policy, I think, is an incredibly important point.

So, we were talking a little bit earlier about China's relationships with its neighbors. Since we all work on East Asia, this is something I wanted to talk about for a second with you guys. Because, we just had recently a meeting of what we call the Quad, the foreign ministers from the United States, Japan, Australia, and India. And, I wanted to talk about this for a second.

The Quad is a hot topic among Asia experts and it is you love it or you hate it. It's like the cronut of Asia policy. It's incredibly controversial. People can't decide where they stand. And, I think for some folks, they see this grouping as potentially an incredibly important way for the U.S. and some of its closest allies and partners to align in how we address China and align our China policies.

For others, I think people would critique it as sort of all bark and no bite. So, I wanted to ask you guys where you come down on this debate. Where is the Quad relationship heading? What would make it most effective going forward?

HASS: Well, Lindsey, I promise I will not duck your question. But, I do want to just take one half step back, which is to think for a second about how we got to this point, because, I think it's an important story that's sort of illustrative of what we've been discussing.

My sense is that for a long time Beijing was very self-aware rising power, and Bob Kagan talks about this a fair bit, too, how the Chinese leadership had studied the lessons from Imperial Germany, from Meiji, Japan, from the Soviet Union, and had vowed not to repeat the mistakes that the previous rising powers had made in alerting other countries to their rise in ways that aroused antibodies. But, yet, here we are.

In recent years it feels like China has forgotten many of the historical lessons that previous leaders had internalized. And, part of that reaction to China's increasing assertiveness, nationalism, and in some instance just belligerence has been creating a more permissive or fertile environment for groupings like the Quads to come about.

And, this is the type of outcome that previous generations of Chinese diplomats worked deciduously to avoid, but here we are. And, there's plenty of logic for four democratic, likeminded countries and Asia to come together around common challenges.

My point is simply that China's behavior has made it much easier for these four countries to feel comfortable doing so now. And, where I come out on the Quad, I guess, is that I'm good with these four countries working together, finding common agendas to advance shared interests, but I don't think that we should exaggerate the importance of it.

In other words the Quad is a piece of a puzzle, it's not the solution to a problem set. And, if the Quad helps us move in the direction of sort of a more integrated, dense web of relationships in Asia that strengthen and support for international rules and norms, then that's great. But, I think that we should think of the Quad as a building block and not necessarily a solution.

FORD: One tool among many. Rush, let me come over to you.

DOSHI: Sure. You know, I don't have much to add there. I think the main point I would echo is that the Quad is often an indicator of how maybe things are moving with respect to organizing a coalition to push back on Chinese assertiveness. Rather than a tool, it's a useful indicator. And, when Quad cooperation is stronger or proceeding a bit more naturally and with fewer political obstacles, that's a sign that many of the most important countries in the region are increasingly concerned about Beijing.

And, to Ryan's point, China has long feared the steady creation of a countervailing, balancing coalition, particularly within Asia but now increasingly globally, with Europe part of it, potentially. And, the question we have to ask ourselves—and I'm not sure we completely get to an answer in the series, but there are various hints of the answer in different places—is, why is China willing to take this risk now? Why is it willing to sort of spur on this kind of encirclement?

And, I think one answer is that perhaps it doesn't see the risks of encirclement is as high as it used to, and therefore it's more confident about being able to overcome them. Another possible explanation is that this isn't about China's calculation of the international correlation of forces but rather it's the reason domestic circumstances pushing more nationalistic foreign policy with Xi's administration just unable to really course correct, because there's been so much consolidation of power and so much fear about upsetting the person in charge.

But, ultimately the Quad's development—these recent developments that we saw are, I think, quite positive. The pace of interaction is increasing, and it's definitely interesting to think about what India's growing involvement of the Quad means for U.S.-India cooperation going forward.

So, I'll end here with a plug for our colleague Tanvi's paper. Tanvi has written some of the most incisive analysis about the Quad. And, her paper on U.S.-India ties is really quite helpful and thinking through how New Delhi navigates the relationship between Washington and Beijing, a relationship much more complicated now after that recent border clash between India and China that resulted in the deaths of roughly 20 Indian soldiers.

HASS: Lindsey, you've also written a lot about this and thought a lot about this. Can you share your thoughts?

FORD: Oh, you guys are turning the tables on me. I'm supposed to be the one asking the questions here. Look, I think you've both raised really good points. Ryan, I wholeheartedly agree with the point about the Quad, I think, being one piece of the regional architecture and not a be-all and end-all solution. I think that's just the reality of how Asian architecture will be in the future. I also think that actually this is probably a reality that is increasingly facing us in the global stage as well.

There are a lot of conversations about, say, a D-10, which is almost like a global version of the Quad, essentially. It's how do we sort of gather the right players to address some of the concerns that countries have about China and the challenges, I think, that there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution to this problem.

And, from a policy standpoint, that becomes a lot more complicated, because, since there's no single coalition, it's how do you sort of bring likeminded countries together on the various different issues where you need to address China policy, and how do you come up with coherent policy when you have that many sort of disaggregated groupings?

And, so, I think for the U.S. that's one of the key challenges that's out there. It's how do you work within all these different settings and hopefully make that add up to a coherent whole?

DOSHI: And, if I could just add one quick thing, I commend to all our listeners Lindsey's paper on China's efforts to shape regional architecture. Because, the question of regional architecture isn't just what do we want, what does the Quad want, but also what is China going to do to shape it actively in a direction it favors. And, I think Lindsey's paper really gets at some of China's thinking on regional architecture. So, I highly recommend everyone read it.

And, I would add also that, with the question of a D-10 that's now out there, what is China going to do in response? If the Western industrialized world starts grouping some of these key aspects of global governance and democratic coalitions, what will China do? And, I think some indication and an area of future research beyond our series is going to be in this question.

And, a lot of Chinese authors are suggesting that the solution, however implausibly, might come down to the Belt and Road or autocratic coalitions. And, we do explore some of the themes in the series. So, I think there's a lot more research to be done, but certainly our series gets a start on some of the big-picture questions that'll be key in the next year.

FORD: Yeah, it's a great point, Rush, and thank you for the kind plug for my paper. I would say that I do think we need to think about China's coalition-building efforts of its own. I mean, we often think that China is just terrible at building coalitions, and they probably are in some respects, but it doesn't mean that they won't have successes in some areas.

And, I think in particular that you can see, particularly within Asia, a shift on the Chinese side toward minilateralism that mirrors what the United States is doing, and thinking about what that means for U.S. strategy is going to be really important going forward.

So, let me just turn to one final question for the two of you. And, I wanted to wrap with a bit of a sort of what's next question, and just ask you both—we have an election coming up. At some point we will know the outcome of that election, and whether that is a second term for the Trump administration or a new administration under Vice President Biden, they're going to have to figure out where they want to go in terms of China policy.

So, let me ask you two what you see as a couple of the most important decision points, whether it is President Trump or whether it's a President Biden that they need to address right off the bat on China policy. Rush, why don't I come to you first.

DOSHI: Sure. Well, let me just offer a few quick thoughts, and then I could just suggest some areas where we need more research to kind of think through a long-term strategy.

So, I think some of the big areas that are going to be important for any future administration, whether it's a second Trump term or a Biden term, are basically related to, first, the military domain. So, to what degree should U.S. military policy prioritize questions relating to deterring China, particularly in a Taiwan scenario where in South China Sea or the East China Sea, versus other historical goals of U.S. military strategy in the region which, in the past, really emphasized questions of privacy.

So, what does a deterrent strategy look like? What does it mean to compete with China asymmetrically in the military domain, and how can we get our allies and partners in the region to be a part of that effort?

In particular, we know the rough military capabilities that we're going to want them to have, whether it's the ability to sort of launch long-range cruise missile strikes against Chinese vessels or having investments in mine warfare, maybe in some cases for more sophisticated allies and partners of bigger under-sea (Phonetic) force. But, there's just so much about implementing this vision that's going to be very difficult.

But, the bottom line is deterrents. What does it take? Beyond the military domain and the economic space, there are so many questions. What does the global economic structure need to look like in a world where China's mercantilist policies are really putting other countries' industries out of business? How do we sort of cope with that? Is that through the WPO process, or is it through transnational trade agreements that are more ad hoc? Is it through even smaller coalitions like the D-10 or the tech 10 the people have recommended?

And, those same questions apply to the bilateral relationship, to some degree. In particular, how do we approach decoupling? How do we do that? There's a consensus that aspects of decoupling need to proceed, but how do we manage that process in a way that doesn't undermine or isolate the United States? And, really, that's not an ideological question. It's a pragmatic question that's going to vary industry by industry.

In the values competition, kind of third area, there are a lot of questions as well. We have a very insightful paper in our series by Sheena Greitens which explores to what degree is China exporting its surveillance system abroad as part of a larger effort to explore its model? There's a big debate on that question, and I think that debate needs to proceed.

But, you know, even as that debate does proceed, there are implications for democracy, as you've written, Lindsey, as well, that if these technologies are exported, just how robust will democracy be in countries where governments have an incentive to use digital technologies to lock down their populations when there's the first sign of unrest?

And, I think that values question and the best way to respond to it is tough, but here, again, as in so many areas, like in the economic area and the technological area, even in the values area competition might, in some ways, begin in part at home, which is, what is the U.S. solution to a world that's confronting the intersection between technology and democracy? We don't necessarily have an answer to what that means for social media regulation or what that means for public opinion. What does that mean for counterterrorism or a wide variety of other efforts? So, we have to put forward an affirmative solution.

And, finally, I think the other big area of focus is transnational cooperation. The U.S.-China relationship can't only be about competition, although that's going to be at the center of it going forward. That's just a fact. But, it also has to be about cooperating on everything from climate change to global poverty to, as we're seeing right now, the pandemic. That's an area where we could have seen more cooperation.

How we structure cooperation and competition together. That's an enormously important question. And, I think part of the answer is going to be about knowing about both countries willingly agreeing to try to set aside the linkage between cooperation and competition, that is, even as things look grim in some areas of competition, we have to just both agree that we won't cut off cooperative efforts.

And, we know for a fact that the U.S. and Soviet Union were able to do this at times in the past, for example, whether it was in space or on combating certain diseases like polio. So, overall, those are the four big areas—military, economic, and tech competition, values, and, of course, cooperation.

FORD: Thanks, Rush. Ryan, let me give you the final word here.

HASS: Rush provided such a nutritious answer. It's tough to be additive to that. But, let me just try to do so by maybe taking a step back to look at sort of the bigger picture. You know, I think that whoever wins the presidential election, when they take office in January of next year they're going to need to take stock of what are the main challenges and opportunities that the United States faces both at home and in the world, what are the next administration's top priorities, and where does China fit into those priorities?

My guess is that a Trump 2.0 administration or a Biden administration would approach that question from a different viewpoint. And, I think that in its simplest form a second Trump administration would keep China within its bullseye, and I think that there would be a continuing effort to promote an America First approach to the world, a real emphasis on state sovereignty, in trade and in alliance relationships, a real focus on making sure that the United States is winning and is not being treated as suckers.

In a Biden administration, I think that, as Rush was describing, there would be much more of an effort to focus on shoring up these sources of America's strength, its global leadership and prestige, its alliance relationships, its domestic dynamism, and then using that strength to outpace and outcompete China.

So, I think that both the Trump and the Biden administration would approach their relationship with a clear-eyed awareness that competition will sort of be at the core of their relationship, but they would probably use different points of entry into that competition that would look and feel different and potentially lead the relationship in different directions.

FORD: Thanks, Ryan. Well, you two are two of my favorite people to geek out with. I could sit and talk policy shop with you guys all day long, but we will wrap this up. So, thank you, again, to both of you for joining for today's episode. Congratulations, again, to both of you for this fantastic project. And, again, I hope everybody will go check out all of the papers online. And, with that, we're going to wrap up. Thank you guys for listening to our series. I'm Lindsey Ford and this has been another episode of the Brookings Cafeteria.

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