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WEBINAR

GLOBAL CHINA: US-CHINA RELATIONS THROUGH THE LENS OF GREAT POWER COMPETITION

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. MALONEY: Good afternoon to those of you in the Washington, D.C. area, good morning, good evening to those of you watching from other parts of the world.

I'm Suzanne Maloney, vice president and director of Foreign Policy at The Brookings Institution. And I'm truly delighted to welcome you to our discussion today with Senator Mark Warner and the roundtable discussion among experts that will follow.

Today's event will focus on US-China relations through the lens of great power competition. This event is part of Brookings's Global China Project, an institution-wide endeavor to in valuate the implications of China's global reach and America's response.

Our conversation today will examine China's ambitions, the implications for the international order, and how the U.S. should navigate its relationship with Beijing. Recent international developments add urgency to this issue. The Beijing/Moscow Joint Declaration of February 4th, followed by Russia's decision to launch a brutal invasion of Ukraine just 20 days later raises many questions and places a sharp focus on the China/Russia relationship.

How will China continue to respond to Russia's invasion, and how will China's orientation to the war impact its relations with the United States, the European Union, and other world powers? Ultimately what kind of international order will arise from this war? These are of course very timely and important questions, and it's hard to imagine a better person to join us at today's webinar to dive into a discussion around these topics.

I'm honored to welcome Senator Mark Warner of Virginia back to Brookings to engage with us on these questions. We've been privileged to engage with the Senator on several foreign policy fronts over the years, including on China. Senator Warner has been deeply involved in these issues, having represented Virginia in the United States Senate since 2009, and serving as Chairman of the Senate's Select Committee on Intelligence.

Prior to serving as a Senator, Mark Warner served as Governor of Virginia from 2002 to 2006, and before his public service Senator Warner was co-founded of the firm that became Nextel. So, the Senator has a deep understanding of the nexus between business and technology advancements, which are also key issues for the U.S./China relationship.

In just a few moments I'll moderate a discussion with the Senator. And following this conversation I'll turn the floor over to a group of Brookings experts to offer insight and perspective. In putting this event together, we are grateful for the support of the Ford Foundation and for the respect that they have always shown to our research independence, which at Brookings is iron clad. Today's event, as always, reflects only the views of the speakers themselves.

Briefly, a final reminder that we are on the record today and we're streaming live. So please send your questions by email to Events@Brookings.edu, or on Twitter using the hashtag GlobalChina.

Now let me begin the conversation. My first question to Senator Warner really draws on some of your remarks here at Brookings back in 2019 when you spoke at the launch of Brookings Foreign Policies Global China Project. At that time, you spoke about the evolution and your own views on China. Obviously quite a lot has happened in the years since.

I wondered if you could give us a sense of how you assess China and its trajectory today?

HON. WARNER: Well, Suzanne, thank you for having me back. I again applaud Brookings for your approach not only on this issue of our time, U.S. relations with China, but a host of issues and the value you provide for policymakers on both sides of the aisle. Not only here in America but around the world.

And for those who didn't Zoom in back in 2019 let me just rehash a little bit of how I got here. I like to describe the fact that I was part of the Hank Paulson theory of the case around China early 2000. The notion China should come into the WTO, we should further engage. I remember visiting China as Governor and creating collaborations between universities in Virginia with universities in Fudan. A host of things, increasing business ties and cultural connections.

I think that theory of the case maybe was mostly right up until, you know, frankly the ascendency of President Xi. And the dramatic, dramatic changes that the Xi government took place, changing laws, changing rules, changing, increasing dramatically the amount of intellectual property theft that still hits close to $500 billion a year.

And let me make clear at the outset though that this is more than just kind of any political correctness. When I talk about China, my beef is with the Communist Party of China and President Xi's leadership approach. It is not with the Chinese people or the Chinese diaspora wherever they are around the world. Obviously not questioning the loyalty and integrity of Chinese Americans.

And that's not just a, you know, peacey comment, it really is based on the fact that failure to do that, and there are many American policymakers who don't draw that distinction, plays completely in to the CCP's agenda not just in the United States but worldwide.

I was with the Australian American Chamber of Commerce yesterday and I think frankly Australia may have dealt with this issue of the Chinese diaspora in Australia better than we have in America. I think it's really important to make that policy commitment.

And what partially changed me as well as sitting on the Intelligence Committee and hearing issue after issue, technology domain after technology domain, where China suddenly had an organized thoughtful plan that they were investing in at a level that frankly in many areas, was beyond where the United States was. The level of intellectual property, the blind eye, for much of not only corporate America but other business, the turning, frankly ignoring some of the things that were going on. Whether treatment of Uyghurs or more recently things like treatment of the people of Hong Kong, China's expansive military review.

So, starting about 2017 I said this is crazy that we don't at least try to educate business, academia, and others. So, we started this series of always bipartisan roadshows that were classified, that I bring leaders from the Intelligence Committee, I think 14, and between there and 2019. And what happened was, you know, people were listening, some very productive sessions.

I remember some of the sessions with academia where at that point there were 360,000, 100 percent on the dollar tuition-paying Chinese students in America, you know, and there are serious issues around academic freedom that needed to be raised. But there was a willingness to listen, but not full acceptance.

Since 2019 we've had not only, obviously, COVID take place and the Chinese regimes non-transparent approach to COVID, both origins and ongoing with their lock-down approach. We've seen, you know, a dramatic number of American institutions that have been penetrated. We have seen literally the intellectual property theft continue. And we've seen China lay out in a more dramatic way their agenda, particularly in the technology domains. And that's where I think really that the conflict and the competition, and China's a great competitor, is really going to take place. I am watching carefully China's military buildup, I'm watching their, some of their traditional initiatives, but where I am most focused is on China's attempt to dominate, literally, a whole series of technology domains. And this first came, again, I think to the public's greater recognition, with the rise of Huawei, where suddenly you had a Chinese company not only setting, you know, leading the world in 5G, but also China flooding the zone on the standard setting bodies around a technology like 5G and its subsequent technology overran.

So, I think post-COVID, in my answer quickly here so we can get on with these other questions. But I think as we've gone to back out post-COVID and sat down, whether it's academia, business, groups that wouldn't even see us before COVID, like private equity. We can't, we're making so much money on Chinese tech investments they didn't want to hear the truth, who are now sitting with us, there is a much greater appreciation of the challenges, threats, and candidly, the focus that China has brought to a whole series of arenas.

And my final last comment will be not only here domestically but in my role as Intelligence Chair traveling the world, I see a much, much higher recognition. I was just in Finland, Latvia, and Turkey around Finland and Sweden's accession at the NATO and every one of those countries acknowledged that the focus now has to be on Russia. But the long-term challenge is China, and it's particularly its technology and economic dominance.

MS. MALONEY: Thanks so much, Senator. I wanted to ask you to go into a bit more depth on what you think the United States and our partners and allies might do about China's technological ambitions. You've been very outspoken on this issue. And as you say, there seems to be more take up and recognition of the threat.

But what is the response, and how do you assess the Biden Administration's approach to date on that particular point?

HON. WARNER: Great question, thank you, Suzanne, for that.

So let me break this into three, at least, categories. First is, and this may end up being a flaw, which is China has been explicitly clear what technology domains they want to dominate. The China 2025 document, the China 2035 document on standards. And, you know, they have gone about executing on them.

We in the United States, let's just start with the United States and we can talk on a more global basis. We in the United States can't even agree on what are those technology domains that we need, we and the Westry at large, need to make sure we maintain technological superiority and investment in very, very important standard setting.

You get one list from the CIA, you get another list form the Director of National Intelligence, you get a third list from commerce, you get a fourth list from OSTP, the Office of Science and Technology Policy. So, one of the things that we need to do a much better job on is, and this is where I hope our committee, and we have the power to convene, frankly, as a last for our American friends and some of the global friends. I modestly claim that the Intelligence Committee in the Senate is the last truly functioning bipartisan committee in the Congress. So, we have some ability to convene parts of the government that even a single Cabinet Secretary can't.

So, we ought to identify which of those domains we need to invest in. And then one of the cases that I think the Administration has moved slowly, and I wish more, is we need to recognize we cannot do this alone. A bipolar world of U.S. versus China will not play entirely to our strengths because our strengths are not only our innovation but our openness and our values and we need to do this in collaboration with an alliance of democracies.

And I would argue with the Administration, they have thought this needs to be a more informal alliance, maybe one in the 5G category, another in the semi-conductor category. I think it frankly needs to be more formalized and not just thought about in the traditional NATO, Five Eyes. I think it needs to include many, many nations in Asia. I think it needs to build upon the good work that's happened with Quad. But because different countries bring different strengths, and we need that collaboration.

So, the first is let's identify what the domains are. And let's also identify who ought to be in this alliance.

The second area is we then have to execute. What China, and I say this with admiration for their model, they could have copied the best of both systems. They have, until recently until Xi has gotten such a shutdown on some of the Chinese tech leadership, but for a number of years they had ferocious startup competition. Candidly, at a level that would even make Silicon Valley blush. Ferocious startup activity.

But as companies became larger there was a national champion selected, Huawei is a prime example but there are a series in other areas. And that national champion then got the full backing of the Chinese regime. Money, power down the road, a host of other ties. So, one of the things we need to do is operate with a counter strategy in how we're going to respond right now. And this has been a failing more of Congress. A year ago, the Senate passed a $52 billion, a series of others, but main investment in semi-conductors that would build 10 new fabrication facilities here in America and increase investor research and development and also move beyond, as an old Telecom guy, the on 5G to what's called Open Radio Access Network. We need to make that investment.

I know it would be called in the previous days a level of government investing that people might feel uncomfortable with. I believe it is what we have to do not by picking companies but by picking sectors where we need to invest in. And the fact that we still haven't gotten back to the President's desk is a huge failing on Congress' part. And if we don't get it by middle of July you're going to see a number of semi-conduct companies that have even announced, Intel even put out something today, even if they're announced additional investment in America, may pull back.

So how do we execute? A part of that execution as well, this is a little nerdy and I don't want to go too deep on this, which is making sure that American government and American business, and again with our Allies, make sure that we show up at the standard setting bodies and engineering conferences and where the rules of the road are being set. Not just in telecom or semi-conductors, but in artificial intelligence and quantum computing and synthetic biology. Domains that I feel like we're going to have to make like-kind investments similar to what we've called the CHIPS Bill.

And then the third area where I think we need to continue to make the case is really on this value statement. Our strength versus the almost Orwellian surveillance state that China has created by the collaboration between Chinese Communist Party, governmental entities, and the Chinese tech companies who feed all this data in to the CCP.

Our strength is our values around transparency, around democracy, around collaboration. And I think we need to live those values in a stronger way. I will say on this the

Administration, particularly in terms of assembling the coalition that was broader than NATO to stand up against Russia. I give them huge kudos there. I think many of those same nation states and others we need to be building that kind of coalition on China.

One last comment just to stir the pot a little bit, you know. I am also Chairman of the US India Caucus, and I am a big, big believer that the 21st Century will be India's century in so many ways. And I'm so grateful that the Quad has been turned into more than a talking point and is actually reality. But I've been incredibly disappointed by the Indian's government's morally ambiguity on being willing to call out Russian aggression. And there's a series of other American allies, Israel, and others, that fall into that same camp. So, when we start living and having a foreign policy that reflects our values, I do think we need to go and try to go a better case of getting the fence sitters off the fence and come in our side because again, a country like India I know is enormously concerned by China. But if they're not showing up when you have the brutal invasion that was made on Ukraine, can they then ask, when we have the kind of border skirmishes, God willing will not develop with China, if we see brutal activity from the Chinese regime against India, they will want the rest of the world to stand by them.

So that last category of values-based foreign policy with allies and others around the world is important.

MS. MALONEY: I want to come to the issue of Chinese/Russian relations and also the rest of the world, and how they are playing.

But I want to read in one question that we got from a reporter who has been watching. Specifically, about the legislation that you discussed just now. And he asked from Inside US Trade. Whether you think the trade titles and the CHIPS Act will be put aside to get the act passed?

HON. WARNER: Let me very clear. My top priority is the $52 billion. My partner on that was John Corman. Getting that passed and then with the tax title so called FABS, alongside it. If there are parts, even around some of the trade title, there's a lot of interesting items in the trade title that I think would be beneficial to our country. But if the cost of working through all those and I think there's been already been a lot of stuff the House added in that was, you know, important, and maybe I would have voted around climate and other issues, but not core to this issue. A lot of that will drop out.

I could very easily see the trade title drop out as well. And part of that is due to the, again, there was a pretty united Republican position around the 301 tariffs and having them removed because that's what the business communities wanted. The fact that President Trump has so vociferously intervened and said let's not remove the 301, it started with the united Republican party. Now it's split and there's already the at least somebody who was still an advocate for trade, which may sometimes in the minority on the Democratic side you also have now a split, you know, on the Republican side so, you know, who's going to be the driving force to keep, particularly something like 301 that could have been maybe also in part an agreement around Trade Assistance Act to workers being displaced, might have been some of the points of trying to find common ground. If there's not that Republican complete approach on trade it again may move this to where we take the things that we can get done and let the other issues, all important, continue in the conference process that so far at least has been, you know, not as efficient as I'd like it to be.

MS. MALONEY: Never is, is it?

HON. WARNER: No. Sausage making is always ugly but on this one -- I would say first though, you know, by definition if you put more than 100 members of Congress on a single conference committee that is a recipe for a slow, slow, drawn-out conference.

MS. MALONEY: Well, let me shift back to the issue of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. As you noted, there is not a unified position around the world, they needed some of our most important partners have essentially stayed as bench sitters. But most importantly of course there's this the invasion followed just after the Joint Declaration, which talked about a relationship between China and Russia that would have no boundaries.

We're four months in. Do you think the boundaries are emerging between Russia and China, and are there ways that the United States and its allies can help that process?

HON. WARNER: Well first of all let me give a shout out to, and I hope I'm not rooting for the part of our government that I have the responsibility to oversee, but I'm going to give a shout out at the front end to the American Intelligence Community. Many times I've not gotten it 100 percent right on this, they got it 100 percent right about the extent of the Putin invasion. And, if you're a spy by nature, you don't like to share information, but I really applaud the American Intelligence Community. By leaning forward and sharing information with the public, with our allies in a very forceful way.

I think back when we said, and I want to give the British their due as well, when we said Russia's going to try to have coup against Zelensky. And the British then said here's the guy they're going to put in. That really helped unify the alliance. And I can remember even as late as the Munich Security Conference a week or so before the war started when many of our European allies still didn't believe it.

And to see where we've come, to see Germany take the lead on inclusion too, to see Germany increase its defense spending, to see Finland and Sweden. And Finland, as I just mentioned, I was just there four or five days ago, want to join NATO. To see even the Swiss come off the sidelines at least in terms of condemning Putin's actions. We have made great progress.

On the other hand, you know, with China, and again you saw I believe the BRIC Conference is going on right now. You have again Putin and Chinese leadership trying to say that we need to work more hand in hand against the sanctions. My sense is a lot of this or international relations are due to what's in your national interest but there is a personal rapport between leaders. And clearly Putin and Xi have that personal rapport. I think there are some in the Chinese, at least economic leadership, that know that following this path could speed up the level of confrontation or the potential for economic sanctions against China. And I think there is more hesitancy on the economic side of the house in China than maybe from Xi's leadership itself.

And how this plays out over the next few weeks or months I think is something we need to pay a great deal of attention to.

MS. MALONEY: You talked earlier about the kind of competing priorities, obviously both on many issues. But for U.S. national security there's been a tendency to describe China as the pacing threat and Russia as the acute challenge. Do you think that gets it right? Do you think that our focus is moving in the right direction?

HON. WARNER: Well I think, again, and I applaud Brookings for looking at this to the great power, conflict of great power competition. You know, I think most of us would agree, regardless of party again, that we became so focused on the counter-terrorism threat and the extremist threat that we took our eye off the ball, and not just us but others, with Russia and China. We know with Putin, in the tail end of his career, his almost megalomaniac approach of trying to rebuild the old Russian Empire or the Soviet Empire, that he was going back. And they clearly are willing to act real time. Obviously, the performance so far of the Russians, I think we maybe overestimated their military ability and underestimated the Ukrainian's willingness, although I would point out that even a few weeks out we were not sure whether, you know, we were hoping that Zelensky was going to be Churchill, not Gianni, but there was some question. We were concerned that the Ukrainians were not mobilizing their forces, moving around their air force. They have obviously more than exceeded expectations.

In terms of China, Russia is a military threat and maybe on some level an ideological threat. It was never an economic threat. It has an economy that's smaller than Texas with a declining birth rate and a population that has a death rate that is way beyond anything in the rest of the kind of first world.

China though I think, and this is maybe the last, China is one of the few issues where you can still probably get 90 votes in the Senate to agree that China is the long-term threat. It is an economic powerhouse, it will soon equal the size of our economy. It is investing in military and there's a great deal of question about that military capability. I would not bet against that capability. And again, I'm coming back to my theme that I had from your opening question.

I think the 21st Century is going to be a competition for technology demands. I don't think a conflict with China is going to play out with traditional naval engagement or the kind of slugfest, artillery slugfest that's playing out in the Donbas right now. A conflict with China will play out in the cyber domain, it will play out in overhead, it will play out in, you know, if a country has the kind of artificial intelligence capabilities that drives, you know, to take those powers and use them for destructive forces. It could play the power of a conflict in the biology domain, and we are I think on the cusp of synthetic biology changes that have been promised for years but are about to come.

And it's why, you know, I think that that competition and that kind of notion that maybe America and the West have, you know, we were going to run the show in technology development even if we didn't invent here we would get to set the rules and protocols and procedures, that that is in the rearview mirror and it's why again this notion of technology alliances, investment in key technologies is not just an economic but it's a national security imperative.

MS. MALONEY: We have just a minute or two more but let me slip in one more quick question because it comes from one of our Trustees, John Thornton, who asks about the view of the rest of the world of this U.S./China rivalry. And you've already spoken to that to some extent, but I wonder if you could perhaps speak to how the rest of the world can play into a successful strategy?

HON. WARNER: Well, John, thank you for the question. Nothing would be worse for, I believe for American interest than if we allowed this to become a bipolar, old-school choice, you gotta choose China, you gotta choose America. And we have to make this, because the intellectual property theft, for example, is not just directed against America, it's directed against Japan, it's directed against Europe, in an area like 5G.

It was frankly our Japanese friends who first pointed out to America the threat of Huawei and the fact of what that could mean national security wise in terms of some of the architecture. So I think this idea of rallying democracies, I think this idea of, you know, a freedom of the press, a freedom of expression, the ability to agree and disagree, the ability to have your votes truly counted in countries around the world, even some of the countries that may not make the pure democracy checklist, but who we hope will still aspire to be democracies, we need to spend that time and effort.

And I think, and I'll close with this comment, that I think for all of us, I think about the fact that, you know, how much has changed since we did this opening session back in 2019 and it's been a pretty rough road. I mean, you know, where I work is sometimes viewed as dysfunctional and is sometimes dysfunctional. I live, we lived through January 6th when we saw something that I never thought would happen, an attempt to overthrow the government in the United States. We lived through COVID. And through that period we saw the rise of these authoritarian regimes and frankly it appeared, you know, China was moving ahead, Russia, you know, obviously trying to reassert itself. And I think maybe all of us, and I think one of the reasons why these programs are so important is that, you know, can the notions of liberal democracy actually succeed in the 21st Century.

And in my mind the clearest message so far, and we need to build upon this, is that at least the people of Ukraine have decided to vote with their lives, to say they will give up their lives to try to have the kind of system that we enjoy in the United States and much of the West and we take for granted every day.

I don't think much of the rest of the world wants to turn over that kind of freedom for something, you know, the kind of, again Orwellian surveillance state the Chinese Communist Party has created. That would make even the Russian Regime look less repressive.

So, I think there is an opportunity here for us to build on that, but it's going to take forward leaning, active, diplomatic, collaborative technology, not an American-only approach. And I think that's what I'm trying to set the Intelligence Committee on a bipartisan basis moving forward. I think that is the goal of the Biden Administration. I think we should hopefully move him a little more aggressively there.

So, I commit this, I hope clear eyed, but also optimistic that this kind of collaboration can take place.

MS. MALONEY: Well, thank you so much, Senator, for your time and for your insights. That was incredibly powerful as a conclusion and I'm so grateful that you've come back to Brookings for this conversation. We look forward to welcoming you back again.

HON. WARNER: Well, thank you, Suzanne, and I apologize to all those viewing that I was talking this quickly. There's a lot of subject matter here, and I hope you have me back again.

MS. MALONEY: Thank you so much Senator, wonderful to see you.

HON. WARNER: Thank you.

MS. MALONEY: I'll now turn the floor over to my colleague, Jim Goldgeier, who's a visiting Fellow with the Brookings Center on the United States and Europe. He'll be moderating a panel discussion among a truly phenomenal group of Brookings experts. Jim, over to you.

MR. GOLDGEIER: I'm coming. I'm going to start the intro while I'm getting my picture up here.

What a great conversation that was between the director of our Foreign Policy Program, Suzanne Maloney, and Senator Mark Warner. Lots to chew on. And I'm delighted to be joined by three of my colleagues in the Foreign Policy Program at Brookings.

Angela Stent, who is a nonresident senior fellow. Constanze Stelzenmuller, who is a senior fellow and Fritz Stern Chair on Germany and Trans-Atlantic Relations. And Ryan Hass, who's senior fellow and Michael H. Armacost Chair.

Ryan, let's start with you. There was a lot there and Senator Warner talked about something that he's talked about a lot before, which is the technology competition. He referred to China's thoughtful plan, as he put it. And focused in particular on the challenges that we face in identifying the domains and the disagreements across agencies in the United States. And then also this idea of figuring out how to build an alliance so that this isn't just U.S. versus China and going beyond sort of the kind of formal partnerships and alliances that we've had in the past.

How do you reflect on that idea of a thoughtful plan from China and what it would take for the United States to have a thoughtful plan here?

MR. HASS: Well, Jim, I think that that's really the core of the question. And as I reflect back upon the Senator's comments, which were very thoughtful I think, there were three things that stood out to me and one that didn't.

The first was that the Senator really seemed to demarcate between competition that we face with China today and previous eras of our competition. If you think back, World War II, the United States and its allies were able to prevail on the battlefields in a great power competition against axis powers. During the Cold War the United States was able to prevail over the Soviet Union through the Soviet Union's collapse.

He seemed to suggest that neither of those playbooks or options are available in this current competition with China, which is going to be a lot more of a drawn-out long-term competition which may be centered on technology. Which was the second real issue that stood out in the Senator's comments to me.

I think what he was saying is that, you know, we can't expect to be able to contain China or compel the class of China, we are going to have to find ways to collaborate more effectively with our allies and partners if we're to outpace, outperform the Chinese over time. And that was a very notable statement that came through clearly, I think in the Senator's remarks.

The third comments of the Senator's that really jumped out to me was his comment that he believes that the 21st Century will be India's Century. And in a sense, it sounded like the Senator was sort of trying to steal the shadow of the future from China and apply it to India.

The Chinese, as we know, are very fond of trying to project an image that this century is their century and that countries would be foolish to miss out on benefitting from China's rise by challenging them in any way. And so, I thought the Senator was subtle but very effective in trying to, you know, challenge that notion a little bit.

The one thing that was not evident in the Senator's remarks, and this is the final thought that I will put on the table, is any hint of optimism about progress in the U.S./China relationship. That was not a part of any of his comments.

And to editorialize for a second, what I think this suggests is that, you know, the U.S./China relationship may be heading into a period of managed stalemate for a while. Neither the United States nor China is enthusiastic about the current state of the relationship. But it would be costly for either to try to break the stalemate, either for the better or for the worst.

If either side was going to try to pursue a significant improvement to the relationship, I think that they would face domestic headwinds, political headwinds, they would be perceived as naïve or overly optimistic. On the other hand, if either side were to intensify frictions in the relationship they would risk type of runaway escalation. They would also be problematic.

So even though neither side is especially enthusiastic about where we are, the cost of moving either up or down in the relationship may cause both sides to stay within this frame.

MR. GOLDGEIER: Well, it's interesting, your point about the prospects. You just talked about his remarks about China were centered on President Xi. You know there are a lot of people who talk about how, you know, we were wrong to pursue an engagement strategy earlier, and that that, you know, didn't work. His argument was it wasn't wrong to pursue what he called Hank Paulson's theory of the case. But what happened was President Xi became President and that that has led to a lot of increasing frictions in large part because of President Xi's approach to the domestic sphere.

And, similarly, Angela, in Russia we face a Russia led by Vladimir Putin. And the Senator talked a little bit about the Xi/Putin relationship, perhaps some differences in China about the virtues of being so close to President Putin.

How do you see the importance of the China/Russia relationship for each of those countries and the impact of that relationship on U.S. foreign policy?

MS. STENT: Well, thank you, Jim. So first of all, I would say that the war in Ukraine has really strengthened the Russia/China partnership. It's made Russia more dependent on China. And then we've seen China much more explicitly be very concerned that Russia not lose this war.

Today it was already mentioned, there was a BRIC summit. Both Xi and Putin said we're going to work closer together. We've had various phone calls and speeches by Xi and Putin in the last week or two that again have reinforced this.

So, I would say for both countries it's very important. Putin wouldn't have invaded Ukraine if he couldn't have counted on Chinese support even though I'm sure China didn't think that five months into this war would still be going on. I think China, like Russia, thought this was going to be over quite quickly. But rhetorically at least, right, the Chinese repeat all of the Russian narrative about the West being responsible for this, about neo-Nazis in Ukraine, they, you know, they repeated the propaganda about U.S. bio labs in Ukraine, they've questioned who committed the Uyghur massacres. So rhetorically they have been completely on the Russian side.

But if you look at what they've done. They have not supplied Russia with any weapons. I think it was also made quite clear to them that if they did, this is by the West, there would be problems. And they really haven't done anything economically to support Russia either. And we understand that Russians have been complaining about this, China's stakes in its economic relationship with the West are much greater than they are in its economic relationship with Russia. By the way Chinese exports to Russia have fallen 40 percent since the war began.

And so, the Chinese do not want to evade any of the sanctions, and they've done, in fact they've pulled back on some of the technology exports to Russia because of that.

So, it's somewhat of a mixed situation. But I mean from the Russian point of view if China is essential for Russia to carry on what it's doing now, it's his partner in pushing back against what they see as an unfair global system created by the West.

But for China to, and for Xi Jinping in particular, and here we come back to the personal relationship, it's very important that Russia not lose and that Putin stay in power. Because the nightmare for the Chinese regime would be a post-Putin Russia where you have a leader who might reassess what Russia's real interests are and might rethink, you know, coming back and having much more of a partnership with the United States. It seems incredible to us now that that would happen, but 50 years ago that's exactly what the situation was. So, I think, you know, the Chinese have long historical memories.

So, what this means for the United States is that we will see this partnership continuing, enduring. The Chinese are going to do nothing to put pressure on Russia to end this war and will continue supporting it. And I think those in this Administration who thought at the beginning of the Biden Administration, that it might be possible to persuade Russia in fact to rethink its relationship with China, I think they've come to realize at the moment and for the foreseeable future, at least as long as Putin's in power, I'm not going to speculate about how long Xi Jinping will be in power, I think that would be very difficult.

MR. GOLDGEIER: Yeah, excellent point. And, you know, for all those people who, you know, have been talking in recent years about the reverse Kissinger and pulling Russia away from China. I mean people forget that the U.S. opening in China took place in a context in which China and Russia, China and the Soviet Union had already split. We were just taking long overdue advantage.

MS. STENT: Sure.

MR. GOLDGEIER: Constanze, Senator Warner used this phrase "getting fence sitters off the fence." He was talking about India, but there are a lot of people who have been concerned about sort of European fence sitters when it comes to recognizing the challenges that China poses. And we have a number of really important meetings in Europe taking place, starting today, over the course of the next week, the European Council Meeting, the High-Level Conference on the Western Falklands, the G-7 Meeting, and then the NATO Summit at the end of next week.

Clearly a major focus of what's going on right now in Europe has to be the Russian war against Ukraine. But there also will be some kind of China component to these conversations.

What are you looking for from these meetings with respect to China? And how do you see European views evolving with respect to the kind of challenging threat that China poses?

MS. STELZENMULLER: All right. Thank you very much. I've really enjoyed listening to the Senator and being on this panel with Ryan and Angela and you.

I'm not sure that there are that many fence sitters on China in Europe anymore actually. I think it's worth reminding ourselves that there have really been two levels of development on European/EU China policy. You'll remember the official European/China Policy published in 2019 which said, you know, there was a triad. We have a triad type of relationship with China, partnership, competition, and systemic rivalry.

And the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and China's taking sides or the declaration of limitless friendship of February 4th with Russia, and including of course the crackdowns in Hong Kong, the threats against Taiwan, all of that really has made Europeans and the EU leadership see, sort of reorganize this triad, not on the level of equal goals but with everything being filtered through the lens of systemic rivalry.

And the reason for that of course was that also it's become very clear to everyone in Europe I think that the Chinese see everything through the lens of systemic rivalry, including their activities in Europe.

The famous Wolf Warrior Diplomacy, which I think backfired on them far more than they had expected or even imagined, you know, the aggressive competition in international organizations and in technological (inaudible).

There was an EU/China summit in April which was, to quote observers "a disaster." That was just a complete, remember the Foreign Policy Chief, Josef-Areal, referring to it as a summit of the deaf. And an observer, whom I talked with earlier this morning, said, Orsola Fundaline (phonetic), President of the Commission, was so angry at Chinese behavior that she was trembling when she gave her Summit Statement. Trembling with anger.

The other thing that happened of course is that the Eurasian securities sphere is increasingly fusing with European's perceptions of their interest in the Indo-Pacific. And that Taiwan and the security of Taiwan has become a genuine topic for European security policy. One because it's in a very similar situation as Ukraine, then also because of semi-conductors. Also because of our deep and longstanding trade relationships with Asian democracies, like South Korea and Japan.

So, I think what I perhaps wouldn't expect in those four meetings next week is sort of a very public declarations of we want or don't want China to do. I'm not sure that that would be diplomatically intelligent, but I think there will be a lot of things to read between the lines.

China will crop up everywhere and I think one thing to watch for for example at the European Council will be the international procurement initiative, which essentially would give Europeans a possibility to put a lid on Chinese unfair procurement practices in Europe.

But it's also true that, you know, there are a lot of really very difficult questions. For example, Western Balkans/EU bids, just to end on this, to give you an example of a question that is incredibly difficult to resolve for the Europeans because, yes, there are individual European natives who have very strong use of this and who do not want certain involvement with Asians on a closer membership path to the EU, and that kind of division, if it becomes very obvious next week, is an entryway for Chinese meddling in Europe.

And I'll stop there.

MR. GOLDGEIER: Great, fantastic. Ryan, Constanze mentioned Taiwan. There are a couple questions that came in from audience members about Taiwan. Halle Smith asks what are your thoughts on Xi Jinping using Putin's invasion as a test case scenario for Taiwan. And Kevin Hernandez, who is a student at Georgetown, said what are the military lessons that China will take away from Russia's war on Ukraine with respect to Taiwan.

MR. HASS: Well, Jim, those are good questions. I'm not sure if we're yet in a position where we're able to answer them. But I think that there are important similarities between Ukraine and Taiwan that we should treat seriously.

In both cases there are strong powerful authoritarian countries that covet weaker, smaller neighbors. It's clear that China is purchasing the option in the future of using military force to try to achieve its political objectives.

That said, there also are pretty important dissimilarities between Taiwan and Ukraine that we probably should not lose sight of if we're going to have a clear eye assessment of the situation.

Taiwan is a fundamentally different actor than Ukraine in the global economic system. Taiwan is a consolidated democracy in a way that was not evident in the case of Ukraine. Taiwan is separated by a 100-mile moot in ways that Ukraine was not. To put that in perspective, that's between two and three times the width of the English Channel, which we all know in our imagination from D Day movies, was a pretty formidable geographic obstacle.

And China does not, you know, have the maritime lift of asking now to be able to launch a Minute Man straight across the Taiwan Strait.

And so, I think it's important that we not let the narrative or our imaginations to run too far because there are still some pretty formidable obstacles to the use of military force. And China also is not passively standing by. They are, as they are building up their military capabilities, they're pursuing a strategy of coercion without violence. Trying to wear down over time the psychological will of the people of Taiwan to push them in the direction of concluding that resistance is futile and the only path to peace and prosperity runs through Beijing.

And so, if we put all of our attention on trying to forestall a military conflict and take our eyes off of this more insidious pernicious long-term strategy, I think that we'll be doing a disservice to our longer-term goals.

On the specific question that you raised, Jim, the reason why I say I think it may be too early is because a lot will depend upon how the situation in Ukraine shakes things out. If Russia grinds it out and achieves its political objectives through military force over time, even if it takes longer and costs more than anyone expected it would, well that will teach Beijing a certain lesson. But if they are prevented from achieving their political objectives than I think Beijing will take a different lesson.

So that's my way of sort of associating with the comments that Constanze and Angela were making earlier that what happens in Ukraine matters significantly. Not just in Ukraine, but also in the Taiwan Strait.

MR. GOLDGEIER: Well great to have those insights. And I think for Angela and Constanze too we might as well talk a little bit about sort of what the meaning is of different ways that this war might end, how it effects, you know, Russian foreign policy, how it effects the way the Europeans are looking at the situation.

And, Angela, I also wanted to ask you. You mentioned before about Russia's growing dependence on China because of the war and the reaction of the West and so on. Even if there are, you know, sort of so many obstacles to the idea of sort of a Russia that, you know, splits from China, wants to pursue a better relationship with the West, there must be people in the elite in Russia who are nervous about an increasing dependence on China. Can you say a little bit just about that and then, you know, maybe your views on sort of the meaning of how this ends. And then, Constanze, we'll turn to you on sort of the impact on Europe.

MS. STENT: Yeah. Well thank you for that. I mean Russia really made the choice in

2014 when it annexed Crimea and then began this war in the Donbas which of course has been going on for eight years. And China stepped in and supported Russia. You know, they signed the $400 million Power of Siberia natural gas deal, China of course didn't pose any sanctions on Russia. And ever since then, I mean the people around Putin have realized that China really has been their savior in this.

The West wanted to isolate Russia in 2014. Well, it couldn't because China was there. And of course, the other countries that we already heard Senator Warner talk about that, that also haven't condemned or sanctioned Russia, India and many places in the Middle East, etcetera, etcetera.

So, from the point of view of the people in the Kremlin, you know, they have now bought into apparently Putin's idea of raiding Eurasia. This is Russia's future. They'll be great in Eurasia, there will be a Russia/China partnership, and this is where the center of gravity in this new Martin Polo world will shift.

But I was just reading today something by one of the Russian commentators who has never been openly critical of Putin, that I think reflected, and I've seen other things from the rest of the elite. I mean the Russian elite is very European, they've been Europeanized. What's happened in the last 30 years is they've bought homes in Europe, they send their children to be educated in Europe, and they like being in Europe. They like being Europeanized Russians. And for them it is not natural to look to China as a partner.

I mean China and Russia are not natural allies. Russia is, I mean its culture is European, it's a complicated European pal but it's still a European pal. So, I think to make the transition from centuries of Russia kind of looking to Europe with a complicated relationship to suddenly throwing its lot completely in with China and with Eurasia, however you define it, I think that's very hard to imagine that that could actually happen. And there clearly would be resistance to this.

I mean still at least before the war if you look at where both the Russian and Chinese elite send their children to study, it's not to each other's countries, again, it's to Europe, it's to the United States, in the Chinese case it's too Australia.

So, I think this increasing dependence on China will probably last for as long as Putin is in the Kremlin and maybe beyond that. But I wonder how much Russia really can completely realign itself and consolidate being primarily an Asian power which it's never been before.

Now, you know, in terms of how this ends, nobody knows. I mean one scenario would be a Russia taking over control of all of the Donbas, which it certainly doesn't have yet, and deciding that it doesn't have the wherewithal to continue this offensive at the moment and therefore having a negotiation with Ukraine and there being a cease fire and of course Ukraine would at this point have to accept the loss of territory. And that's a huge if because it's not clear that the Zelensky government could survive if that happened.

But let's say it did happen. That to me is only a temporary solution. I don't think it would necessarily lead to a lifting of Western sanctions. And I think we would be in a situation where the Russians would regroup and wait. Again, as long as Putin and people like him are in power, and then there would be another offensive against Ukraine. I don't know how much time it would take.

Now another scenario, which is the one that official both the U.S. and many of our European allies talk about, is supporting Ukraine so that it can win. But it's not really clear what win means because it's very hard to imagine Russia completely withdrawing from behind the lines of where it was in February 2014 before it annexed Crimea and the Donbas.

And of course, the Biden Administration has been very careful not to define what it means by win beyond saying Ukraine remains as a, you know, independent state, a sovereign state that can make its own decisions. But nobody's talked about the boundaries of that statement, what the territorial implications would be. I think the fact that the European Council apparently now has agreed that Ukraine is a candidate member is a very important incentive to the Ukrainians. But it's very difficult for me to tell you how I think this is going to end.

MR. GOLDGEIER: Well, I know we, and thanks. I know we can't tell how it's going to end. I think the issue is as you have laid it out, sort of what under different scenarios sort of what that would mean for, you know, U.S./Europe/Russia/China relations.

And Constanze, I mean Angela talked about many members of the Russian elite viewing themselves as European. Can Europeans view Russians as Europeans if they have massive troops sitting in Eastern Ukraine?

MS. STELZENMULLER: I don't think that is seriously a question under consideration anywhere in Europe, honestly.

Look I know there is a very sort of, how do I put this, narrative out there that refuses to go away that all the European leaders are looking for is an agreement which allows them to declare the war to be over and allows them to return to the foreign policy status quo.

Based on my own conversations, I mean I'm sure there are people who think that, but I don't think it is at least the political actors in my own country.

Right now, the expectation is that things could escalate quite quickly and very badly. For example, in the Black Sea or in Leningrad, or on the borders of the Baltics. If you look at Russian overflights in the Baltics, if you look at border violations by the Russians in Estonia, if you look at the heating up of rhetoric over the Lithuanian's stopping transports to Leningrad and the continuing blockade of Ukrainian Black Sea ports, there are a lot of things that could go badly very quickly. And I think that that is the kind of thing that European leaders are thinking about much more urgently right now, at least the ones that are responsible.

MR. GOLDGEIER: Yeah. Good. That's great. I mean it's super helpful to have. Please, go ahead.

MS. STELZENMULLER: Yeah, that's an important thing to realize.

MR. GOLDGEIER: Yeah.

MS. STELZENMULLER: And the other things I want to say is that the youngish, 40 something, leader of the Social Democrats just gave a speech a couple days ago, also the Germany Chancellor gave a government declaration a couple days ago where I think they're made it very clear that from their point of view the world has changed. And that, I mean nobody is talking about a peace in Europe with Russia.

There was an unfortunate remark by the German National Security Advisor three days ago in a public debate that I attended virtually, for which he got hammered in Twitter and the media, saying, you know, you always want to talk about tax, we need to talk about the relationship with Russia. He did not mean a relationship, a partnership. He meant how do we co-exist on the same continent with a Russia that is clearly motivated by totalitarian thinking and imperialistic ideas.

MR. GOLDGEIER: Yeah. Yeah. I think I'm going to be ending this with a question for all of us who are, you know, spent our professional careers studying or working on U.S./European/Russian relations, sort of giving up on the old idea of reaching out to Russia and including it and recognizing that, certainly with Putin's Russia.

MS. STELZENMULLER: But maybe that's one point. What the Russians are doing is voting with their feet, you heard me say this before. So, the Russians who think they're Europeans are actually going on and thinking as Europeans.

MR. GOLDGEIER: Right. So, Ryan, we're basically at the end of time, but I want to bring in one more audience question that you can hopefully answer quickly.

David Owatta asks, the Biden Administration is considering to waive tariffs on Chinese imports to address inflation. What impact will this have on national security? Any thoughts on that?

MR. HASS: I'm not sure they'll have a very significant effect on national security. I don't think it'll have a major impact on the U.S./China relationship at large.

MR. GOLDGEIER: All right. That was a good quick answer when we're out of time.

So, I just thank you so much to Ryan, to Constanze, to Angela. Thanks so much to our audience for watching and for those who submitted questions that I wasn't able to get to I apologize but hopefully we can find a way to follow up.

Thank you all.

MS. STELZENMULLER: Thank you. Stay well.

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