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IS THERE ROOM FOR US-CHINA COLLABORATION IN AN ERA OF STRATEGIC COMPETITION?

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INTRODUCTION

RYAN HASS

Senior Fellow, The Michael H. Armacost Chair, Chen-Fu and Cecilia Yen Koo Chair in Taiwan Studies, John L. Thornton China Center, Brookings
Nonresident Senior Fellow, Paul Tsai China Center, Yale Law School

KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

ANDY KIM

Representative, D-NJ, U.S. House of Representatives

PANEL DISCUSSION: BALANCING NATIONAL SECURITY AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES:

JUDE BLANCHETTE (moderator)

Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS

JENNIFER LIND

Associate Professor of Government, Dartmouth College

MICHAEL J. MAZAAR

Senior Political Scientist, RAND Corporation

LILY MCELWEE

Fellow, Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS

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RYAN HASS: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to those of us who are with us in person and those who are joining us online from around the world. It's great to be with you for today's event, which serves as the official public launch of a new Brookings-CSIS joint project, Advancing Collaboration in an Era of Strategic Competition. This project is made possible by generous funding from the Gates Foundation and the Hewlett Foundation, and this long term project, which Jude Blanchett, Lily McElwee, Pattie Kim, and I are helping to co-lead, aims to examine how the United States can manage inescapable competitive dynamics in the US-China relationship in ways that preserve space for collaboration on shared challenges. And as a first case study for this project, Nellie Bristol has examined lessons learned from the United States and Soviet Union's efforts to eradicate smallpox at the height of the Cold War. I highly commend this case study to you, which is available online at the Brookings and CSIS websites, and there will be more similar case studies to come.

But now to get to our program this morning, we will divide our time into three parts. The first will be a keynote address by Congressman Andy Kim, who is with us this morning. He's kindly agreed to participate in a fireside chat after his keynote address. And then after he departs, we will have an all star panel which will look into the core challenges of our time today. In the interest of time, I'm going to be deliberately brief and introducing my friend, Congressman Andy Kim. I will simply note that he represents the Third District of New Jersey. Prior to joining Congress, Congressman Kim served under both Democratic and Republican presidents, at USAID, at the Pentagon, at the State Department, as well as at the White House National Security Council, where I had the privilege of serving alongside of him. He is currently a member of the House Armed Services Committee, the House Foreign Affairs Committee, as well as the House Select Committee on Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party. In other words, he is one of the Democratic Party's leading thinkers and rising stars on China and on foreign policy challenges facing our country. So we're very fortunate to have him with us today. With that, I will turn the floor over to you, congressman.

ANDY KIM: Good morning, everyone. I realize what that introduction that I'm standing between you and an all star panel that I'm here to be the warm up act for. So I'm grateful to have this chance. But I look up as we do have this panel of experts that are here and a project that is being unleashed, I didn't want to go too deep into the minutia of the challenges that we face, but I wanted to give you a sense of how I try to think about ways in which we can frame it and understanding why this is important for us to explore. For me, I see this moment right now, and there's no doubt that we are entering a new global era, that we are firmly moving past the post-9-11 world and we're entering this new era. But yet this new era has yet to be defined. It's still one that's taking shape. And the decisions and the actions that we're engaged in right now are feeding into that and helping us understand what's to come.

Now, with all new paradigm shift moments, all new errors that we've seen in the past, this one is the same, which is that in the early phases of this era, there is a tremendous amount of fluidity, a lot of dynamics that are being unlocked. And that is the point of this new era that we're in right now, this early stage where we experience this tremendous amount of fluidity. Now, what we recognize is that in these early moments of a new era, this is a chance for tremendous opportunity. We've seen in the past how this and this fluidity has been able to create new structures, whether it be the U.N. or Bretton Woods or NATO. But we've also seen the fluidity, the great destabilization and conflicts and wars, as the question is, is how do we navigate this process and what do we do to understand how to be able to move this from one of fluidity to one of stability? And that dynamic between the two as well as understand how do we try to have this era stabilize in a place that is in our favor as close to our favor as possible? So when we think this through, we look at the tools that we have available to us. We think about collaboration and cooperation as we will be talking about today. There is competition, there is deterrence, there are questions about innovation or demographics that are interplay. And each and every one of these merits deep analysis and discussion and a lot of understanding the interplay between the two.

Now, one thing I also want to throw out there is that these are tools and oftentimes these tools are talked about as if they're mutually exclusive. And that's something that I think is important for us to look into and often recognize that that is not the case, that collaboration does not preclude deterrence or preclude competition or vice versa, that it doesn't have to be the case. And that way, in fact, oftentimes they can be mutually supporting. So the question now is how do we determine how best to be able to use these tools and

how we can build them? And this is something where we recognize what it is that we're trying to build towards. And that's something that I'll be honest, we don't have a conversation enough about, certainly on Capitol Hill as well as in other places. I believe we have a lot to gain by looking and starting with this question of what do we want the U.S. relationship, the China to look like in 20, 30 years from now? To try to think about where we're trying to drive towards, where we're trying to build towards. I'll be honest, so much of the conversation on Capitol Hill is very reactionary in terms of how we're responding to the latest issue or the latest headline, whether that's the spy balloon or TikTok. I've seen very little space in the committees that I'm on to be able to think about this more strategically and to understand where we're trying to go to. And I think that that's a place where all of you and this project and other things can really have value added is for us to understand that this is the most complicated bilateral relationship our time. And it's not something that we can just back into that, you know, we have to understand that that there is a tremendous amount of value in approaching this with that kind of foresight and understanding in some simplistic terms. I try to think about it personally in terms of what kind of America, what kind of global foreign policy order do I want my five year old and my seven year old to grow up into? You know, as we push this out 20, 30 years, this is going to be pushing them in there into their adulthood and understanding what kind of stability or instability their them and their generations are going to have to inherit.

As we think about this in that kind of context, what does strategic success mean to us? It helps us place the U.S. relationship to China in the broader context, understanding how it intersects with so many other national interests, whether that or the challenges of our time, an increasingly multipolar world, climate change and spiraling inequality, global health, emerging technologies and that impact of that technology on the human condition and agency, among other critical issues. And when we look at that, we often recognize that China intersects, interacts with every single one of those issues, which is why it's so important for us to think about this in that type of context as we try to figure out how to best calibrate this going forward and that we have to be honest with ourselves in terms of what actions and what agency we ourselves have. And to think about this in terms of the private preservation of our national interests.

Now, as I said earlier, we should do deep dives in all of these different tools and efforts. But I'm going to zoom in on this one in particular as we talk about the possibility of collaboration and cooperation. Now, what I would say is that I encourage us to not start from a first order principle of whether or not it is possible today. But to think about this, first of all, of will we benefit from potential collaboration and cooperation, given the national interests that we outline outlined in the issues that we're focused on? When you think about climate, for instance, we're talking about the United States and China being responsible for approximately 40% of all CO2 emissions in the world. We're talking about our two nations being the leading drivers and actors when it comes to cyberspace or space or other domains. So the question is, do we have an ability to be as successful on these core national security principles if we don't find some ability for engagement, collaboration, cooperation? And so in some ways, the answer seems like it's saying that cooperation would be indispensable if progress is to be made. But while it is indispensable, it is not inevitable.

And that leads us to the second question of if we want to see some type of collaboration, what form would be in our best interests? And I think that that's one where we don't explore that enough oftentimes on Capitol Hill. The two terms of collaboration cooperation are often seen in a very simplistic term as if it's one size fits all. But I think we can do with this process, really try to unpack that and understand the different dynamics that are out there and trying to understand what would be the form that would be best helpful for us.

And then the third question is one that we think about a lot, which is, is this kind of collaboration and cooperation that would benefit us possible now? And that's a very true and important question to ask. And we should be honest with ourselves as we see the challenges that are out there. We certainly see a dynamic right now with President Xi taking actions and efforts to really narrow that scope. We've seen in past years, over the last three decades, failures in this space in terms of how best to be able to shape national behavior of China moving forward through the economy and security means.

So no doubt there are real problems on that front. But if this is not possible now or if we're struggling with it, there's sort of that next iteration of what conditions, if any, are necessary to try to create some possibility of that collaboration and that cooperation. And that's something that, again, I feel like so often is missed in the one in the circles that I'm operating in of trying to think through how we can potentially utilize building as a

global coalitions or building of multilateralism or a strengthening of our own investments in ourselves to be able to mobilize and put additional pressures for us to be able to engage. And when I think about the alternative to this, and we hypothesize in that same way as we hypothesize about what type of collaboration will be useful, to try to hypothesize, what would the world look like if we are unable to have that kind of engagement and dynamic? It really leads us to understand the challenges that you would face if the two most powerful countries in the world don't have some means of connecting, of basically thinking this through of the world in which my kids would grow up and would be one of that just sort of perpetual eternal tensions, the mutually escalating conflicts that we could see emerging and recognizing that those are going to be dynamics that would hurt not just our relationship in a bilateral sense, but our ability to be able to productively engage on so many of the other issues that we talked about in terms of our national interests.

So, yes, what I've always found really exciting about the United States in these new global eras is that we can approach it with realist eyes of understanding what's there, but also recognizing that we ourselves can build an architecture that can bring that stability to be able to overcome that fluidity, but to build it in a way that is in our favor, that we use international institutions and alliances, investments in ourselves to be able to make sure of that. And we've seen how that has changed the world. We've seen how some of the biggest adversaries and greatest advocacy areas of our past have now become some of the strongest allies of our present. We recognize that there is no permanence in the international order, but it takes constant vigilance and purposeful work to be able to shape that. So when we look through how we're going to engage going forward, it's so important for us to think about this on that kind of broader context.

And what I'll just kind of end on here is it's also important for us to recognize, as we think about these different tools of cooperation, competition of conflict and other aspects of this, that a lot of it is also when we think about our strategic competition and our strength within is also about strengthening ourselves, about making sure that we can do the types of investments into our own actions, our own economy, our own innovation to be able to build the kind of global coalition that we know we need that we don't yet have that do these types of actions in a way that would be most beneficial to ourselves. And I think about it in terms of how we dodged this kind of self-inflicted bullet last week when it came to the debt, when it came to our debt ceiling, and while we were able to get past this at this stage, I'll be honest with you, a lot of the, of my counterparts in other countries that I've engaged with over the last couple of weeks have been reaching out to me and talking to me about their perceptions on this and the singular question that I continue to get from some of our allies and partners around the world is this question of, is America still a reliable partner? That question about reliability. When you see the challenges that we face with our democracy, our economy, our ability to make decisions in this new global era, when we see such a fluidity to this moment as I've articulated. But do we have the apparatus and the will and the possibility to be able to be nimble enough to be able to respond to changing dynamics of this velocity? The question is up for question right now, and that issue of reliability is sticks in people's minds, whether that is the the dominance and the strength of the U.S. dollar and whether that will continue given those challenges that we face or whether it is the what the meaning of the American handshake means after we've seen go back and forth on the Paris climate agreement and the Iran nuclear deal and other issues, people are wondering what is reliable. And that issue of reliability goes straight into what I was saying about stability and recognizing what stability we build and what stability we project going forward. And I think so much of this question about what tools we have get back to this issue of what is the architecture of stability that we are choosing and trying to build in this new era that we're trying to build vis a vis a competitor of the strength and the size of China. While we recognize this dynamic of concern that so many have about the instability and the fluidity of this moment. So those are some of the things that I try to think through in unpacking this. I hope that's a useful frame to that which the experts will dive into deeper and talk about more specific areas and issues and sectors. But I wanted to give you a bit of a perspective from my perch of what kind of information be useful for us on the Hill and in government to be able to process this, how we can move ourselves away from this reactionary policy, which I think it can be very dangerous for us when we have such magnitude of issues on the line and how we can try to make better decisions as a country. So thanks for giving me a chance to chat with you for a little bit. I really appreciate it.

RYAN HASS: That's great. Where do you want me, here? So, congressman, I think that was a a fantastic, honest reflection and insight into where the discussion rests on Capitol Hill right now. And I want to try to use the moments that we have together to draw you out a little bit further on some of the points. And I will try to

reserve a minute or two for our our friends in the audience to pose a question to you as well. But you you made a point that the world's two most powerful countries need to have the capacity to communicate, which seems like a straightforward, reasonable point to make. Yet some members of the House Select Committee that you are a member of have been critical of the administration's approach, suggesting that they are too ardent in their efforts to to chase after China for engagement and dialog for dialog sake. Why? Why are they wrong?

ANDY KIM: Well, look, they can certainly have their opinions and this is something worth debating. I wish we could have that kind of debate in greater substance. For me, you know, I think about it a lot in terms of my own experiences working in diplomacy, in my career, and just understanding the importance of connecting when I worked in whether it was in Iraq or Afghanistan or elsewhere, we always had stronger ability to make decisions when we had engagements, engagements, including with people that that wanted to do us harm and wanted to have different interests at stake. And I think that that was something that helped our ability to be able to prepare ourselves as well as think about what it is that we want to do accomplish. The challenge, though, I think, is often that we we think about engagement in terms of and dialog in terms of like a one size fits all kind of approach as if dialog and engagement with China is the same as dialog and engagement with North Korea or Iran or some other actor. And there's going to be a different dynamic. You're going to have a different dynamic based off of the intersections and and and interoperability of our countries, of the types of issues that are at stake. And I just don't see a situation in which we can have a world that is functioning if the two most powerful countries in the world don't have a level of engagement. So often in this town, engagement and dialog is thought about as some type of chip on the table that you can move some behavior by that kind of engagement and in some circumstances that might be valuable with certain types of actors. But when it comes to the major powers of the world, I, for one, believe that there just needs to be a baseline level of engagement and communication, if only to be able to provide risk reduction or to be able to have clarity on misunderstandings or miscommunications. The fact that we don't even have that on a mil to mil level in any type of a reliable way is concerning to me. So I do feel like that some of that rhetoric that is trying to minimize the the efforts on engagement. I find that to be ones that are underestimating the need for diplomacy in this new era.

RYAN HASS: It makes a lot of sense. Another thing that came through in your comments was the need for the United States to become more proactive and less reactive in its overall approach to China. On what issues or themes would you like the United States to exercise a little more proactivity?

ANDY KIM: Well, look, I mean, I think across the board, this is something you know, I spent the first part of my career as a career public servant in the executive branch and now working in and in the legislature. I mean, and two of the biggest differences that is there going from being a subject matter expert in that kind of environment to now what is arguably the most generalist job in America. And when you have that kind of shift, what you're right, what you're losing is the kind of sustained attention that is often necessary for taking on big challenges. The hill is not a place for strategic thinking. It could be, but it's currently not. It is a place that is by nature right now very reactionary. People are living sort of one day at a time, one headline at a time, one tweet at a time. And that is not a conducive environment that was supposed to be set out in Article one to be able to come up with an organization that can have that kind of strategic planning. So when you lack the ability to build metrics and have a strategic plan so often on the Hill, the default measure of metric of engagement and progress is that is the dollar sign, which is why we measure our security based off of the dollar sign of our defense budget rather than actual metrics to see whether or not we are safer or not. This is why our engagement when it comes to technology or climate change is measured by what are we in the hundreds of billions or tens of billions, rather than thinking about in terms of how much of the problem of CO2 and carbon or other issues that we engage on. So it is a systemic problem. I, for one, believe it doesn't have to be that way. And I'm trying to find ways to be able to unravel that. But especially when it comes to China, especially when we come up with a competitor that does have different way of engaging different tools, a type of mil civ fusion and things like that that are different. I don't think that we can live through the potential and do what we need to do if we are just driving backwards.

RYAN HASS: So Congress has the House Foreign Affairs Committee, which you are a member of the House Armed Services Committee, which you are a member of. There's hep-C, which looks at intelligence

matters. There also are a variety of of commerce related committees. Why did Congress need a House Select Committee to look at China?

ANDY KIM: Yeah, well, I can at least tell you why I decided to join it. And is that and my hope of what it could be. One is that I told you that that that expertise on the Hill is a struggle when we have such a short attention span out there in terms of the different issues we're engaged in and the dynamics of the job. I often maybe it's because of my dad. I've been often saying this kind of line, which is let's not play Pee-Wee soccer where we all just chase the ball. You know, we have different things that we're good at, different issues that we can do. And so with the Select Committee, what I've kind of been thinking through is how do you kind of build that type of expertise within and focus it in that kind of capacity. I'm also on the Armed Services Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee. But in the same vein that I worked at USAID, State Department and the Pentagon before my career, I've certainly seen the challenges in terms of siloing and in terms of fragmentation of our foreign policy in that kind of mindset. So there is value in having something that is sitting above the day to day dynamics of the different bureaucracies in terms of how to question that, how to engage on that. I always found it very frustrating on the Armed Services Committee that we couldn't have a conversation with the State Department about what they were doing in that same country, oftentimes in a way that was intersecting with our own military, which is why I joined the next Congress on the Foreign Affairs Committee as well, to try to see if we can have that. So that is the value that an institution like the Select Committee could play. Has it achieved that yet? No. I still am hopeful that we can engage in a way that can look comprehensively. I think everyone in this room can agree that we need to have a comprehensive approach if we want to tackle this issue of the relationship between the United States and China. We don't have that as a country. We certainly don't have that on Capitol Hill yet. But my hope is that we can push in that direction.

RYAN HASS: One of the outputs of the House Select Committee has been a report on Taiwan; "Ten for Taiwan," I think is the the way that it's referred to. You were the only member of the House Select Committee that did not vote to support it. Help us understand what you're thinking was and what informed your your decision.

ANDY KIM: Yeah. No, look, I thought about that a lot. You know, certainly have a lot of concerns about what's happening when it comes to the Taiwan Strait. And certainly security and military plays a role in that, an important role. But when you talk about the top ten things that we should focus on when it comes to Taiwan, if you're telling me that nine out of those top ten are about defense and security, I think we're not doing our justice on this Select Committee, in that same vein that I told you about this comprehensive approach. You know, we didn't have a single ambassador or a member of the State Department or USAID or DFC or any other component come before us prior to the writing of that document. I don't think that that is a process that meets the moment when it comes to what is arguably the most volatile and hotspot situation in the world. Yes, I get it that, you know, we we have looked at a lot of the security related issues, but I don't want to rush to produce a product, again, on a topic of that magnitude. And, you know, we're, we're, what, four months into this Select Committee? To think that four months without a formal hearing at that point, even on the topic, without talking to our diplomats, that we have enough information to produce something. I think that I was uncomfortable with that. And I feel like there was more rigor, more effort, and more time that was needed to be able to produce something of the measure that I think this country deserves, speaking from the the legislature branch. Since that vote, you know, I've certainly had conversations with other members of the Select Committee, and I think that there is a growing understanding that we do need to be comprehensive, that we need to make sure that we're reflecting – because those documents, they are interpreted by people in this room and people around the world in terms of where the United States is putting bandwidth, or at least where the Congress is putting bandwidth, and certainly what reaches the threshold, a level of what could be considered bipartisan, I think that we have to be very careful about that in terms of how we engage. So those are some of the reasons why I decided to be a to vote against that document at that time.

RYAN HASS: Well, I commend the rigor and thoughtfulness of your approach to all of these issues. And as a father of four kids who play soccer, I fully embrace the [inaudible] out there. Now, we have a few minutes left. I want to make sure that our audience has an opportunity to pose a question to you. If you have a question, please raise your hand. I see this gentleman here will take two questions, perhaps one from a male

and from a female, if there is one. But this gentleman with the blue shirt, why don't you stand up and just let us know?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: [Off-mic] Many of them accusing each other for being too soft on China. I was wondering, as a Congress member, also as a former diplomat, what are your thoughts on how do we deal with like diplomacy? And we talk about collaboration when this relationship as US-China relationship is so intertwined with the domestic agenda in both countries when, like the relationship became so toxic that if China tries to be friendly with the US, the Chinese people will complain about it. And if the U.S. tries to engage with China, then the voters will complain about it.

RYAN HASS: Thank you. I think there's a question about domestic political factors driving issues around Taiwan. Can we take one other question? And then we'll give the congressman the final word.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hello, Pavlopoulou. I'm a European resident and I currently became a U.S. resident. As I am researching for European grants, I was researching for that. A problem that I think has to do with the commercial side is there is a huge competition about the plastic waste management now. And back in 2018, China decided to stop receiving waste and this created a huge problem for Europe and U.S. So they they decided that unilaterally. And then there was Bangladesh, other countries, continued. What? What? Why not, you know, prosecute the extended producers' responsibility? And that means at the collaboration stage and also at the competition stage, because a lot of things come from China and they have this waste has to be treated in other countries. So I think this is.

ANDY KIM: Thank you. Oh, I see what you're saying about the production side of it and the waste that that's created. Yeah. Okay. Yeah, that's interesting. I'll be honest with you. I don't know too much about that specific dynamic, but I'll, I'll learn more about it. But just writ large, what I'll, I'll just kind of speak to this o,n is that, you know what you kind of raise is something that we all have to think about here is that it's easy for us to often talk about this in terms of, what are we going to do? What are we going to do? But what we also have to recognize when you come with this question about a bilateral relationship is the other side has a vote in terms of what they do, and we have to be prepared for that. There's a certain amount of resilience that we need to build into our system, whether that's on supply chain or as you raise when it comes to waste, when it comes to different actions of this, we need to think through that thoughtfully and carefully. So, you know, I think what you raise is something that we should be thinking about on a number of different issues of just trying to understand what to anticipate, what are actions that that China might take, in the same way that they're trying to understand what actions we might take. And that's, you know, a really important issue of it, but also kind of get to the issues about potential areas of collaboration or at least engagement. What you raise there is an issue that is not necessarily one that would reach the threshold of of national security per se, but still something in which we can have a conversation about that actually might create areas of dialogue that won't necessarily intersect with some of the core challenges and and the most volatile types of issues that we're dealing with. So thank you for raising that.

On on the broader context, you're right that domestic interactions with foreign policy are real. One thing I will say as someone who's now spent a substantial amount of my career in both branches of the, you know, Article One and Article Two branches of government is that when I was in the executive branch, I thought there was a stronger firewall between foreign policy and domestic policy. But I've come to understand that that doesn't exist, and that it would have actually been helpful for me in the executive branch if I had a greater understanding of how some of the domestic intersections occur in that capacity. We see this kind of come out in some of its worst forms. During the spy balloon incident, for instance, there was a lot of rhetoric that was happening from Capitol Hill before we even knew what was happening, that I felt mischaracterized what was going on. There was a chairman of a different committee that even went as far as to say that, on TV, that perhaps there's a biological weapon flying over the United States. That is unhelpful, untrue and reckless. So those types of things we have to be very careful about in terms of how we're engaging. What you also hit on is something that I think all of us should be more mindful about going forward, which is how does the, how is the American people receiving and interpreting this information right now? I've now done 64 town halls in my time in Congress, and I often talk about foreign policy issues. And when we talk about China in my district, in my community, it's very different than it's talked about here in this town. And there's a lot of information that if our country does actually want to engage and posture in a certain way, we should be much

more transparent with the American people about where their resources and potentially the lives of service members and their families might be on the line. Those are things that we need to be really mindful about as we talk through this. But I will also just end by saying, you know, you raise a lot of important points in terms of how we look at this through that kind of, those kind of realist eyes of – understand, I'm not saying that this is going to be easy. I'm not saying that we have someone on the other side of the table that is going to be open to a lot of these types of engagements and dialogues. As we know, that's actually not the case right now. So, yes, we have to be very clear-eyed about this and recognizing that there could be real challenges and threats looming as we've seen real dangerous actions already. But that doesn't mean that that is dooming us to a certain trajectory. I still believe that with this fluidity in the system that there's still a chance to be able to change it. So thank you, I appreciate it.

RYAN HASS: So congressman, agree or disagree, I think you've set a standard for clarity and seriousness of thought and purpose in the way that you approach these questions. And I really, I thank you for sharing your thoughts with us today. Please join me in thanking the congressman.

ANDY KIM: Thanks, everybody. Thank you, I appreciate it.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: Well, now that the opening act is over, we can get to the substantive part of the discussion. No, just kidding. Thanks for everyone for sticking around. And also, I thought that was a great way to to prime the pumps for the second portion of our discussion here, hopefully taking forward some of the comments that Representative Kim laid out. But also, more importantly, we've got three fantastic experts to help us think through this topic. And just to add a few additional points to what Ryan mentioned at the outset, as we explore this project between CSIS and Brookings, just a few principles. And this is also where I'd like to make sure that folks understand this is a in the the communist spirit of of opening up to the masses, we would like this, as we go over the next few years working on this to get feedback and input from everyone. As you read the research coming off the assembly line, as you attend events like this, this is really a chance for us to take a few years to sit, to listen, to do some research, and to think in an innovative way about how do we try to pursue some of this coordination, collaboration, or alignment, even as we, as Ryan said, have to navigate some inescapable and potentially even necessary rivalrous or competitive dynamics with the People's Republic of China. So this is just the first part of this project, and we are not anywhere near having any conclusions on this.

I've got I've got my order mixed up here. So to my immediate left, I've got Lily McElwee, who's a fellow at the Freeman Chair in China studies at CSIS. Mike Mazarr, who's a senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation, and Jennifer Lind, who's an associate professor of government at Dartmouth College who has been up since two this morning taking the, I don't know if there's a red-eye drive, but she did the red-eye drive down from New Hampshire, so she wins the medal for for achievement for today.

What we want it to do is think at a high level and start from first principles, start to understand some of the dynamics of how we think of security, how that interplays with cooperation, how should we think about the China, which of course has agency in this discussion and will have as much of a vote, if not more. And then also, I wanted to ask the panelists some questions about what is expected of the United States and of China from allies and partners. This is oftentimes I get the sense we we still think it's 1993. We're in a unipolar moment where the United States can do whatever it wants. But of course, the geopolitical landscape today necessitates that the US think coalition really as as much, if not more, than it does unilaterally. And that will intersect with this today. So Lily, why don't I just go down the line actually first and ask for any comments or reflections on Representative Kim's remarks. What struck you? What did you agree with? What did you disagree with?

LILY MCELWEE: Mm hmm. Thanks, Jude. So I really enjoyed Congressman Kim's remarks. I think he made the first point he made really struck me, and that was that as the US dynamically adjusts its relationship with China, we have various tools that we can use to adjust that relationship, and some are competitive and some are cooperative. And these tools, he said, are not mutually exclusive. And I think that that is a point that is underappreciated in Washington, certainly, and Beijing probably as well. The extent to which. The parts of our relationship that we need to cooperate on are actually parts of our relationship that will advance our competitive advantage and our advance our national interests and advance our national security. So, you

know, an example is we can go into examples later, but AI enabled autonomous weapons. We can make decisions on that by ourselves, which is a clear sort of national security concern, but without cooperation from the Chinese side. We don't preclude sort of an AI enabled, enabled national security disaster cat of catastrophic proportions. So I would just say that there are examples, there are clear examples where our our national security interests can be advanced by cooperation. And I think that that's underappreciated and we can get in later just the mechanisms by which we could potentially elevate that conversation. But I'll stop there.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: Mike.

MICHAEL J. MAZARR: Yeah. So I thought two things the congressman said were really interesting. One is the fluidity point. I think that's something really useful to keep in mind. You know, if you look back at the beginning of the Cold War, we tend to think of the Cold War as this undifferentiated whole. But it took several years to figure out exactly what Soviet intentions were, what we meant by it. I mean, in 1949, the United States, even the Defense Department, had made the decision that neither Korea nor Taiwan, then Formosa, were significant to our security, and we came a long way from that. So this idea that understanding that things are changing and we're figuring out how to live together, what does that mean for strategy? Does it have any implications for choices we make? And then the second point he made was about the goals and objectives, sort of not enough focus on what we want a future world to look like, what we expect the future US-China relationship to look like. Jude, as we've talked about, there is a theory around that actually, you don't need to do that. You shouldn't even do it, that you should sort of play the brakes for a while at least and see how it works out. Maybe because it's a fluid era. That's what that suggests. But I do very much agree with him that if we don't have an idea of a world we're trying to create that is going to make for a strategy that's just not coherent enough.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: Jennifer.

JENNIFER LIND: Thanks. Yeah, I was really struck, first of all, just by his his his plea that this is something we need to focus on. We've been hearing so much out of Washington in terms of a much more hawkish kind of policy and a much more narrowing in terms of the defense lens, the security lens with which to look at China. And so so hearing him first say, we need to get this right, we can't afford not to get this right, We have so many things we need to cooperate on. That's just a really refreshing reminder, I think, for all of us. And then also to say in terms of getting things right, well, what are what are the things? What are the issues? What are the areas? And there are so many beyond just the defense realm. And our our allies around the world are partners around the world. They keep urging us, for example, to take more of a lead in the region on economics, and we're getting more and more focused on the defense plans. So I think that in itself was a really important contribution. And then another point that I really liked was toward the end, which he said, we also need to remember when we're talking about the American people, we need to know what they're signing up for here in terms of the Capitol Hill or Washington security competition with China. That's one vision and it extends to certain issues and it might take certain positions. But do those issues overlap with the issues that the American people care about with respect to China? And do the positions overlap? Are the American people as willing to fight and die for the, you know, the autonomy, independence, whatever it may be, of Taiwan? And so if they're not, then I think this is something we need to figure out sooner rather than later, as the U.S. is kind of moving deeper and deeper into this security competition.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: Jennifer, maybe I may stick with you for a minute. I want to unpack this. What oftentimes, although Representative Kim said it and Lily, you highlighted it, the idea that we shouldn't necessarily or definitionally think of cooperation and security as mutually exclusive. You know, one of the cheapest comments you can make here in Washington is saying, you know, but we have to cooperate with China on climate change. It's it's both true and to me now becomes so utterly banal because the question isn't for sure. The question we're wrestling with is how? And how do you balance that with, you know, sometimes China can use, you know, the prospect of talks as a way to delay, as a way to try to push the United States off of some more competitive approaches. We've seen this time and time again that's real. I don't think we can avoid that. So we keep coming back around, I think, to this this vexing challenge, while theoretically these aren't mutually exclusive, talking about the realities of policymaking, oftentimes they feel like they are. You spend almost all of your time thinking about security. You've been doing a lot of writing,

including on a recent book about how China is a peer competitor who in many ways transcends beyond some of the ways we've conceptualized its power. So someone who is squarely realist about the challenge China presents, can you tell me either as a personally or as a scholar, how do you conceptualize this, these two concept of security and cooperation? Do you see tensions? Where do you see the tensions? And I think a subsidiary question is, as Lily mentioned, sometimes we only put the sort of warm, fuzzy topics in the cooperation bucket, but we could as much be thinking about dynamics on sort of managing nuclear escalation, right? So it doesn't always have to be about, you know, public health or climate. So anyway, that's a lot. But let me just shovel all that your way and see if you have any thoughts.

JENNIFER LIND: Yeah, I mean, as somebody who regularly teaches cooperation under anarchy, right, this is something I think about all the time. And the way we talk about this in political science – sorry to get all professorial, but, you know, you invited me -- so as we talk about under anarchy, particularly the kind of more realist view of the world says that you're going to have a lot of security competition because countries fear for their survival and cooperation will be limited. Opportunities for cooperation will be limited. Why is that? Because states fear defections by the other side. They fear the other side's going to cheat on agreements and they fear relative gains. They fear that even if we both gain, the other one might gain more. Right. And so those pressures limit cooperation. And I think, you know, as as pointy headed as I'm getting here, I think it still provides a useful frame for thinking about US-China relations, especially when we get caught up in the day to day. Right. Like, oh, maybe if it wasn't Xi Jinping, maybe we would have a better relationship. Oh, Donald Trump is wrecking everything. And if we had Biden, that would be better. Right. And we see these deep structural pressures that make cooperation really challenging. And I think it helps us think about the engagement policy, too, which is when we look back, we now are kind of kicking ourselves and saying relative gains. China gained a lot more than we did. Defection. China defected on so many areas like intellectual property theft and so on. I mean, I'd also point out that China might be kicking itself a little bit as well, right? Like the Chinese nested themselves technologically within this global supply chain that was very much dominated by the United States and its partners. And they're paying for it big time. Right. I mean, they they have been knocked a major blow because we defected from from that kind of a policy of trading together and so on. So so again, both sides are probably viewing the past through this lens of we we cooperated too much. So. So that doesn't bode well for the future in which we're looking at a more competitive relationship. But again, I would just underscore the importance of we number one, what are the areas that we really need to figure out at least a civilized relation working relationship on? And it would be things like climate, it would be things the the the non fuzzy things like we want to do our best to slow nuclear spread. And China in the past has been able to help with slowing the spread of nuclear weapons and various nuclear technology to North Korea. We'd like to see more help in that direction. And we've we see some I think China to be criticized a lot for for actually not, you know, reining in the North Koreans in the way that it perhaps could have exerted more pressure on other areas. I mean, just the events of this week, obviously military confidence building measures and protocols for avoiding collisions at sea and these sorts of things are just things we have to keep working together on. And, you know, if we if we have to keep battering our head against the wall, let's just keep battering it until maybe there's an opening or something. And the strategies that we'll use, I think we can look historically, and I love this project that Brookings is doing for the historical lens that it's going to use. But then also we have to remember this is a very different relationship from the Soviet one excuse me, that maybe gives us more opportunities for cooperation because we have more interaction. And so I'll I'll end on that hopeful note.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: Mike. Same question to you, but I wanted to add a bit of a twist, which is picking up on some of Jennifer's later comments. There We are, of course, talking about cooperation with a living, breathing nation state, which has its own separate set of interests, has grown significantly in comprehensive power over the last several decades. We're in a moment right now where it feels like Beijing is saying you can't pursue a competitive strategy and expect to get cooperation. So we often say cooperation is in a nation's own self-interest. Beijing seems to be challenging that by saying we're going to withhold some of these discussions on on mil demand, on crisis management, communications, even we saw last year that Beijing cut off some of the traditional channels they had, including on on climate. So I wonder if you can hit a moving target, which is both thinking about that dynamic between security and cooperation. Sure. They're not mutually exclusive unless the other the other party says they are.

MICHAEL J. MAZARR: Yeah, So it's a great question. And I sort of started thinking in similar ways about it in the sense that in theory, security and cooperation go nicely together under certain approaches of great powers in history. Every ordering project is kind of based on the idea that by cooperating, we promote each other's security. But what I think is happening, and partly because of the the way that and look, obviously there's many people in the room would know a lot more about China than I do. But just watching them as kind of a national security generalist, watching their behavior, their statements, I think we may be in this fluid. Era. A big characteristic of the post Cold War period was this sense, a generally shared sense that you promoted your security in a rule based order. That was the way to go about it. I think there's a lot of truth to that, and I think China and Russia are both seeing the price of moving away from that. But I think that China just doesn't see it in that same way. And I've increasingly started to think that this sort of security versus cooperation or competitive coexistence or this binary way of conceiving of it, let's preserve areas for cooperation, even as we compete, is going to disappoint us, partly for the reason that you say, because in my observation of this competitor, of this rival, they're a fairly egocentric, great power at the moment with a very clear sense of their rightful outcomes. And cooperation for its own sake isn't as much part of the agenda. So this theory also of sort of bottom up cooperation, right? You start with small things and build momentum and work up to the bigger things or stabilize the relationship for the bigger things. You get the sense that they almost think about it the other way round If you don't resolve the bigger things. We're not interested in making progress in the smaller things. So for all those reasons, I think we're going to need a much more complex sort of frame than sort of we're competing and we're cooperating. And one sort of intervening possible category is sort of areas of grudging mutual toleration and restraint, which are not explicit cooperation, but on particular issues, ways that we both take enough actions to say, okay, we we understand that they're trying to stabilize the situation. We've taken these actions. We don't think of it as cooperation per say, but we are willing to recognize the others and tolerate the others actions, statements, positions in this area. They're going to tolerate ours. And it's sort of a limited degree of coexistence in that sense. But, yeah, I mean, just as you say, I sort of feel that the the the real crux of the U.S. strategic challenge with China, I have come to think, is that we're not dealing with a great power that is thinking in terms of just a classic sort of Bob Jervis rational. How do I approach cooperation to enhance my security way? They've got certain outcomes, particularly now, particularly under Xi Jinping, that they are determined to get, and that is their priority and trying to deal with that at the same time as we're, you know, stabilizing the overall situation. That's our challenge.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: Well, Mike just poured cold water on this entire three year project. So I think that saves us that frees up right now to work on other things. I want to say, you know, Lily, I wonder if you can pick up on where Mike left off, because, of course, what actually Mike laid out is the entire reason behind this project, which is that's the conceptual geopolitical space that we inhabit now. But I think everyone understands that the alternatives to attempting to pursue whatever it is, collaboration and cooperation, grudging acceptance in key areas could potentially be disastrous for the United States and undermine our own interests. But you spend a lot of time thinking about China, looking at China. I wonder if you could push this forward a little bit. How do you think of China's view of this? Where do you see, even if it's at a high conceptual level space where we might find or be able to convince China or have the leverage over China to get them to be aligning, cooperating, competing, pick your adjective, a verb.

LILY MCELWEE: So I'm actually thinking back now to the case study that Nellie Bristol did for us on Parks cooperation amid the Cold War. And actually, one of her interesting findings was that cooperation didn't come out of a sense of, oh, we've just got to cooperate for the sake of cooperation. It came out of a competitive dynamic. It was the Soviets who proposed in this initiative, in the W.H.O., on the basis that they were concerned that the US was gaining too much influence in the WTO. So it was really about diplomatic influence that this cooperative endeavor came about. And I actually think that when we think about China, we don't have to play to a kindhearted sense of, you know, needing cooperation. We can play to their national interests. We know that China is concerned about its global influence and particularly its influence in the global south, where. Part of parts of the world that are really affected by some of these shared challenges that we're talking about. So I think that the best thing we can do and it comes back to something Jennifer said is stay at the table. Invite China to come to the table. China has these various initiatives that its come out with Global Security Initiative, Global Development Initiative, offering to play a role in the provision of of global public goods. And I think the best thing we can do is hold China's foot to the fire feet to the fire and say, that's great. You know, if you're trying to build influence in the Global South and more broadly, let's

see the action. And I think that there's a chance that some form of collaboration and cooperation on those issues could come out of China's own self-interest in terms of building influence, because cooperation can really be a force multiplier in terms of impact.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: I was going to go on to the allies and partners piece, but let me just linger for a second because you mentioned Cold War. Jennifer, Mike, any thoughts or comments on other comparative angles of attack we can take on this, whether this is I know, Jennifer, you said this is different from the original Cold War, but nonetheless, are there other competitive relationships that you all have seen, historical or contemporary, that yield some of these minor insights like the one Lily just mentioned? Sorry, not to say your insight was minor, just to say that, you know, one of these sort of small initial insights. In other words, you don't have to think of this as Kumbaya. And actually in a competitive landscape, you know, you can both navigate into territory where you're avoiding, you know, worst case outcomes. Mike, any anything that comes to mind to you first? Yeah.

MICHAEL J. MAZARR: I mean, you know, I think it's it's not sort of an agenda of issues for cooperation, but we did a study a few years back at RAND on stabilizing great power rivalries, and we looked at a bunch of historical case studies up through including the Cold War, trying to find the the characteristics and variables that determined the ultimate kind of stability of a relationship. And in assessing them in the then current U.S. China relationship, it wasn't that optimistic, but it could give sort of opportunities for thinking about particular initiatives to pursue that address some of those variables. If you you know, you want to sort of stabilize the relationship, look for areas of cooperation that meet some of those conditions and and and put things in place that are designed inherently to kind of stabilize things. And, you know, there's a number of historical cases, obviously, that that show ways in which even bitter competitors can achieve that level of stability and kind of stabilize or have a kind of status quo that they both are committed to. So I think that there's a rich historical menu of particular examples and again, sort of sources of stability and relationships that would give good clues as to the kinds of issues that might be helpful.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: Jennifer.

JENNIFER LIND: Yeah, I think this is again, this is why I think this project is so, so cool, which is I, I do think that there is going to be a really rich menu, as you say, of, of different historical cases between like during times of security competition in a multipolar context. Also even even like during the Cold War where you have this really severe bipolar security competition. I think we are moving into that kind of an era, at least a bipolar era. And so what I mentioned before is, I think the Soviet era, that that's a pretty high bar ripe for for cooperation is to try and get cooperation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union at that time. That that's almost the hard case. And so I hope we're not going to be in that situation with China. And like I said, I hope we have opportunities for because we have more opportunities for interaction that might confer more inroads for cooperation. I will say something, though. I guess it's my turn to throw cold water, which is I was thinking about what are some interesting case studies and the like. The public health and epidemiology is a really interesting one, but it got me thinking that that, you know, we had been cooperating with China for a few decades in epidemiology, public health. We basically our CDC helped build their CDC and COVID hit. And because of the nature of domestic politics, because of the nature of the regime, that government could not cooperate in the way that it should have and needed to and ethically, morally, globally, in every sense. And so, again, it reminds us that these solutions won't necessarily always work because of the political context. And so we we have to examine them from that angle as well.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: I want to sort of change the angle slightly. You know, we've been thinking this in a purely or discussing this in a purely bilateral structure, the US and China as the key decision makers. And prompted by Fareed Zakaria is column most recent column about the rise of or the increasing importance of the rest of these other actors in the international arena who increasingly, you know, are seeing growing elements of power, state sophistication, rising nationalism is making this a much more complex geopolitical landscape for the United States, too, and Beijing, too, to navigate. Lily, you mentioned how Beijing is often vying for influence in in the global South, and so is the United States. The United States, such as the reality of of trying to shape or maintain international order. So I wanted to ask the three of you slightly different lenses. What do you think the expectations are from some of America's key partners and allies in this space? I think, you know, Jennifer, maybe I'll start with you and ask you to think about the sort of Northeast Asia

lens. I know you're doing a lot of work in Korea. On Japan, of course, is where you've spent a large amount of your career. Japan, of course, is a defense ally which shares a lot of our diagnostics on challenges that China faces. But I sense we'd like something of a stability in the bilateral relationship between the United States and China. Does Japan no good to have massive amounts of instability? What do you think some of the discussions are in Tokyo about expectations for what in the just narrow lens, a sort of lane of our discussion today on this sort of collaboration, coordination, cooperation bucket. What do you think some of our Northeast Asian partners and allies are hoping for?

JENNIFER LIND: I think in Tokyo, they're feeling this dilemma very intensely as well. I think if you look back over the past few decades, you've actually seen more of a convergence in the U.S. and Japanese views of China, but it diverged for a while there. Like in the early nineties, we were starting to hear in Washington and particularly like in the DOD space. China is a threat. China is emerging as a threat next peer competitor of this kind of thing. And the Japanese were just absolutely not there at that time. And the Japanese were seeing the benefits of trade and and investment and educational exchanges and research exchange and technological exchange. And so they were they were hooked on engagement, and they wanted to keep going with that. And this this sort of sour note about an emergent great power competition does seem kind of out of the blue to a lot of the the mainstream foreign policy community folks in Tokyo. I remember going to a talk in I think it was 2010 and it was basically, oh, we have great relations with China. This was in Tokyo. We have great relations with China. There are partners. You know, there was no mention of any sort of threat. And I remember just being flabbergasted. And in Q&A, I basically babbled something like, Aren't you really scared just because I couldn't like like they don't like you very much just reading the kinds of things that the the Chinese are teaching their children and the educational system and this sort of thing. And so that's how a lot of Japanese views were as recent as ten or 15 years ago. And I think what we've seen is a definite shift toward recognizing that there's been a big increase in Chinese military power and also China's willingness to to wield that power to squeeze other countries economically, to project influence, export authoritarianism and all the things that we're we're reading about. And so I think Japan and the US have have converged more in the sense of needing to look at China as a more of a security competitor. But but also, I just again, I want to underscore that all along the Japanese have had such a fruitful trading relationship with with China and feel as keenly as we do that the need to cooperate and the benefits of cooperating. I will say that I think there is still a divergence with respect to Korea. And here everybody tells me, Oh, you don't understand. In recent years, there's been a big change in the Koreans or. A lot more worked up about China than they used to be. That may be true, but I think we still see in terms of when the rubber meets the road, we see a lot more significant action on Japan's part. And I think the U.S. ROK Alliance remains one aimed at North Korea. That is not an alliance about China. And the Koreans keep trying to tell us that in a variety of ways. And this is going to be extremely important because Korea is such a linchpin in this export control regime that the United States is trying to keep going against China in the semiconductor realm.

JENNIFER LIND: Mike, thinking about the importance of U.S. partnerships and alliances for U.S. interests, but also U.S. influence and U.S. ability to shape global order. How do you think about just purely cynically, what pursuing coordination, collaboration, cooperation with China might yield for strengthening our position with our allies and partners? It seems like right now both China and the U.S. are vying for the narrative that they are the responsible power.

MICHAEL J. MAZARR: Yeah, and we have the problem that, you know, after sort of the end of the Cold War and in the post-Cold War period of unit polarity, now people are starting to sort of pay more attention to these underlying thoughts all along about American hypocrisy in the international order. And so it's hurting our. I mean, I would actually think of it a different way. I mean, I think clearly a lot of allies, partners, other people want two contradictory things. They want our reliable commitment to help them when China messes with them. And they don't want us to be too belligerent and create unwanted tensions. And so, you know, the administration is doing, I think, you know, a reasonably decent job of trying to balance all that. But I would almost I mean, and one thing I would say and this sort of echoes something that Representative Kim said about the ten for Taiwan piece, I think part of the problem, at least in the Indo-Pacific, is that our rush to address the Taiwan issue is putting a certain cast on a lot of these relationships. And what we want from people and what we're asking that sort of imbalances, relationships. I actually think that the U.S. relationship with China and partners and allies would be better served rather than building our cooperation as, look, we are trying to address this U.S. foreign policy has become about countering China. And I think we desperately

need a real broader agenda for American foreign policy that is designed at least in part, in significant part, to address the concerns of these third parties, you know, a development agenda. Obviously, climate is part of it. International health, variety of other things. And if we technically have that, we talk about it. But it really goes into the background in terms of the U.S. trying to compete. And I think if we had a better formed agenda in that sense, first of all, it allows us to more legitimately say to these third parties were directly, you know, working on issues of concern to you. You've talked told us forever that our economic instruments were inadequately funded. We're doing better now, all that sort of stuff. It gives us stuff to invite China into. I mean, to Lily's point earlier, I agree entirely. And you could have a number of examples of here's our initiative. We're going to be working with these countries. We'd love for you to join. Kind of the same tone as the administration took over the Iran Saudi deal. You know, we're happy to have China involved when it's constructive and ends up creating a situation that's more stable. So to me, that's the key that unlocks a lot of stuff, is to have a broadly understood, coherent vision for U.S. foreign policy that is about creating a world and that and that sends a message to a lot of these partners and allies that they can sign up to. And then much as you're saying, it's sort of like we're happy to have you involved China, but you got to play according to these rules. And if you're not playing, then it really advertises who's being responsible. I just think the more we dig ourselves into this hole of being the guardians against China's influence as real thing is that is we have to do the more we're going to end up with counterproductive dynamics with a lot of these really important third parties.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: I know this isn't what you were saying, but just so I can anticipate the angry person on Twitter who's now typing out isn't this the engagement strategy? Isn't this what we did with the WTO? We essentially said, here's a set of rules, come and join it. Why is that? Why is it.

MICHAEL J. MAZARR: Oh, it's a good question. I wasn't aware. There are angry people on Twitter, by the way. It's news to me. But so to me, it's different in the sense that you're not trying to build a new rule based order. You're not trying to say, let's have the New Bretton Woods, you know, let's do the new. We're all going to agree to the same standards for international debt relief and we're going to do under the whatever. You're not assuming that China is going to go along with that. You're making your own vision for this is the kind of world we want to create. This is what we're going to invest in it. And, you know, so therefore, we're going to do these projects in Kenya or Indonesia or whatever as we're doing them. We want to have labor protections. We have environmental things like that, that there are standards of the way we want to offer things that you would say we would expect any participant to kind of play by. Which is I think now in the process, China is going to say, we don't want to jump on board and be the junior partner to America's agenda. Of course, that's going to happen. But in some cases, I think it would create a space for doing what little he was talking about is finding bits and pieces of areas where they would join in because maybe they're so concerned not to be part of something. But more broadly, it's in our interests and it creates the image of American foreign policy that I think both in dealing with China and in dealing with others is the thing that's going to be the winning agenda.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: I mean, this is something for us to explore in later efforts, but I completely agree with that broad strategy. The challenge you face is when do you when, when does a marginal infraction by the Chinese, when should that elicit the the the step, the punitive step to kick them out and I think or to sort of punish them. But I think, you know, going back in time that the challenge wasn't the problem, wasn't allowing China into the IPO, It was sort of the suspension of, you know, scrutiny for for too long until it just became, you know, a bit too late. But even thinking through that dynamic, when was the moment what additional unit of state capitalism from China would have been the one where you would have started politically, realistically levying punitive actions? And that's easier said than done.

MICHAEL J. MAZARR: And just quickly, I think a great lesson from the Cold War is that we overcorrected in that sense. We exaggerated the things we had to respond to. In retrospect, we know that we could have been more patient because we were in a strong position. And I think that's the critical point to get ourselves to in this competition is both because of the domestic investments in the sense that as we've talked about, the you know, our domestic society is dynamic. We've got good relationships, we've got this good long term agenda. When China is acting up, they're creating enemies. So we can we can live with that dynamic and we can actually be patient with a lot of low level violations that go on because we are confident of the long term trajectory. I think we are not confident of that now. But that, you know, I think that would actually be a great

piece of your study is to look at some historical examples and say what are the criteria you would use to make those judgments? Because I think you're absolutely right. We're going to need them.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: Final point on this and then Lily to you, any other challenge there is low level violations can degrade confidence in the in the order by other partners. Right. It's sort of why we let in China violate here and there. Although I take your your broader point, but this is seems like one of those that more rigorous thought out as a part of this project, because I agree with the strategy you lay out. It's one of sort of tactically, how do you how do you navigate this? Can I Yes.

LILY MCELWEE: Can I jump in real quick?

JUDE BLNACHETTE: Yes.

LILY MCELWEE: I mean, I think, Mike, I really agree because doing that, doing this all out in the open is also important.

MICHAEL J. MAZARR: Yeah, right.

LILY MCELWEE: So there's no one, regardless of how you feel about U.S. engagement in the past, who doesn't realize that China is an unreliable actor in some way, shape or form? Right. So there's just broader public awareness among allies and partners, but also other countries about China's reliability. So I think if the US takes a proactive stance and says we are open to cooperation, we are doing these things, we welcome you to join us, then it will become very clear to those other actors who are already primed to see China potentially join things and not follow through who the bad actor is. And I would hope that that sense of collective pressure would actually encourage good behavior from Beijing over the long run.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: I want to turn to audience questions in a minute, but I want to ask one final question, which is let me let me flip this a bit. And we're talking now about China joining our cooperative efforts, our order looking for China as a global power. This is not the China of 1995. There's a debate here in Washington, D.C., of course, on whether or not China has hit the ceiling and is about to go off a cliff. I'm going to assume it's not. So we're going to be dealing with it for a while. The United States has shown some skepticism about signing on to Chinese initiated efforts. And I think in many cases, rightly, when we see things like the Global Security Initiative come out and Lilly and I and Sasha and others have done a lot of work looking at it, our knee jerk reaction is to have deep, deep, deep, deep skepticism. Part of this borne out by years of experience of. Of seeing what is underneath the hood when you finally get a chance to look at it. But what are some what are some observation rules of the road or other suggestions you would have about how we should think about engaging with Chinese initiated efforts? Sometimes the start is just a slogan. You don't really, you know, the Global Civilization Initiative or a global development initiative. It's hard to know what the there there is. How do you how should we think about how we apply scrutiny to some of these initiatives so that we're not just dismissing them out of hand, but we're also not just buying hook, line and sinker that some of these Chinese efforts without kicking the tires. Jennifer, let me start with you. It's an abstract question. I know it's sort of we'll know when we see it, but I just wanted to get your your sort of high level thoughts on this.

JENNIFER LIND: Yeah. When you were talking, I started thinking about development banks and the we had the controversy over the China led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. And many people I talked to really think that the US kind of mishandle that situation.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: That was Ryan, by the way.

JENNIFER LIND: Actually it was really well done and brilliantly led. I can't say enough about it. I. Yeah. So basically the argument was, is that China says we're going to we're going to start up this development bank. We know a few things about development. I think they do. I think that we should have given them that praise. Right. That this is a country that has lifted, what, 800 million people out of poverty. And that's remarkable. And in the US, we some of our policies were very supportive. But I hear things like we made China rich and it makes me want to cringe, right? Because these are the this is the the blood, sweat and tears of the Chinese

people getting a lot less sleep than I did last night. Who made all this happen? So. So yeah, China is and can be a development leader and that I think that's something that's an important starting point and show them that respect. When when the bank was floated as this idea, we said we're really skeptical because the Chinese are saying it's going to be lean, clean and green and you've never done anything to CCP in your life that's lean, clean or green. So we're really doubtful of that. But but maybe the Europeans had it right, Right. They said if we get in on the ground floor, we can we can hold China's feet to the fire, we can we can hold them to these promises and then, you know, quit in a magisterial fashion and, you know, self-righteous fashion and say, you know, we have to pull out of this project because of these problems that we've observed that don't adhere to our development priorities and values and so on. But but not joining out of principle seems really problematic. And just another thing was when that controversy was going on, I dug around a little bit, and it turns out that when the Japanese in the late 1950s, early 1960s said, We want to stand up a development bank which would later become the Asian Development Bank ADB. The US was opposed and we didn't want to support them. And and finally the U.S. came around and said, okay. And so that was our partner, right? This is this was our ally. And we had the same kind of reaction of, no, we're not going to let you be a leader. So that that's not inspiring a lot of confidence there. And so certainly I think the US should I don't know. I mean, we can debate engagement and all this, but the bottom line is the regime or the the order that we and our partners created after World War Two to try and make other countries richer and safer and better off had the effect of making so many different countries, China included, richer, more people out of poverty. And that's something we need to celebrate. And also remember that this moment of American dominance in the world right after World War Two was this that was bound to just be ephemeral, right? That that was never going to last. And so it's kind of a natural thing that that more power is going to devolve to these other countries. So to Japan, for example, to West Germany, for example, and then later to China. And let's let's try and and handle that like a grown up. And also, I think this is a really important point in terms of our mindset about where we stand in the world. And if we think we're overtake, we're we're being overtaken and we're broken and flawed and the other guy's just got it going on. I think that does create a much more competitive kind of mindset that we have to do something now and, and and I don't buy it. I don't buy it at all. I mean, I just wrote a book on how we're in bipolarity, but I'm quite bullish on the US. I'm bullish because I sit at a lunch table and debate with Steve Brooks and Bill Wolff, fourth and occasionally Mike Beckley. We'll zoom in and we just go at each other and say, Here's where you're absolutely wrong. And then any one of us can say, here's why our government is stupid and we can do that here and we can have these kinds of projects and study these issues and explain to each other why we've got a good idea and let's do this other thing. We can't do that in China. And it's it's going to hurt them. And a lot of people will say this in this town, but I'll just add my voice. My my money's on the US. So I'll just say again that with that more confident mindset and I think that's a better way to think about cooperation with China, is that we can do it. It's not it's not going to be the deathblow to to our position in the world. And I think that will help our relations with our allies as well.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: If you don't mind me, actually, just go to Q&A because we've only got seven, 7 minutes left. So I use a yellow tie and then third row in in the middle. Next. I'll take two at a time if you don't. If you don't mind.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Okay. Thank you for your comments. My name is Ben Miles with the U.S. Department of Commerce. I guess my question was, how can the US business community and and bilateral trade play into these dynamics that you're talking about? How can they provide depressurization valves, I suppose you could say, for the relationship between the U.S. and China? Thank you.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: And then just a third row. And you just had your hand up glasses. Yep, Right there. Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi, Piper Campbell, American University. My question is, what's in this for China? I feel like. so far in this whole. Conversation, I actually haven't heard anything that if I were a Chinese official listening, I would say. I have just heard a good argument for why I should want to cooperate with the United States in any area. And if we're, if we're not able to make that argument, if we're not able to envision what brings China to our table, whatever that table is, then I think we're missing something. Thank you.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: Thoughts on either?

LILY MCELWEE: I've got thoughts on the the the China piece. I think it goes back to playing to China's competitive instincts. And I think about a case it actually goes back to your question at your latest question, Jude. I think we're we're kind of in a live case study here in terms of the Ukraine war and China's role in it. And here's a situation where China has the opportunity to play an important role that shows it's a responsible power, that shows it is a power with influence in other parts of the world. But there's also something at stake for China. If you look at its relationship with Europe, for example, I mean, you Commission President von der Leyen has made it very clear that the trajectory of the US, the EU China relationship will depend on China's behavior in relation to the Ukraine war. And we're seeing China struggle a bit. I mean, it's 12 point peace plan. You know, it's it's ongoing. So far we haven't seen it propose acceptable solutions that would satisfy Europe, that would satisfy Ukraine. But I think the pressure is on. So I think that the stakes for China there are quite clear. I mean, you know, this is about its relationship with the EU and, you know, which is an incredibly important economic partner for China, an incredibly important diplomatic a power player in the world. I think the stakes I think the stakes there are pretty clear to Beijing, and I think that the pressure is there. And I think that they are actively trying to work out how they'll they'll navigate it. But I think that that's the type of situation where the best thing that the United States can do is to encourage China to play a role because it's good for the world if we bring this war to an end and then the, you know, the pressure will be on for China.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: So two questions on the table rule for for business and what's in it for China? Mike.

MICHAEL J. MAZARR: I'll just say quickly on the business point, I think the business community is naturally a kind of rivalry moderator because of our significant economic interest there as it is in Europe and elsewhere. But I, I worry that that the position of business is going to become more and more difficult over the next several years for a variety of reasons. I'm concerned, for example, that derisking is not something with an obvious end point and and can sort of snowball the situation for business. As we know from the the Chinese government has been making things more difficult in certain industries, particularly autos, for example. I think China is going to advance in the next decade in ways that steal market from a lot of Western companies. I would almost bring it back to the point that I made earlier and say I'd be really interested in thinking about because obviously, you know, China competes PRI government led investment or dominantly private sector investment. So how does business fit into an agenda beyond China? If the United States is looking at development concerns, you know, environmental issues, other kinds of things, what kinds of innovative and creative partnerships could be made? Because frankly, according to a lot of projections, China is going to be a slow growing country in the next several years. It's obviously an enormous market, but with increasing constraints, declining population, slower growth, there are other places where the United States government working with businesses, can begin to say this is where we want to work together to open new opportunities. To me, that would be a more kind of fresh way of having business play a role in this dynamic.

JENNIFER LIND: I'm just reminded by your question about a conference I went to in China. I think it might have been at Brookings. It was about win-win and US-China relations. And so I'm at this conference and basically the thrust of the Chinese presentations was, okay, here's the win-win. And you say that Taiwan is part of the PRC, you and your alliance with Japan and say that the Diaoyu Islands are Chinese. You you basically pulled military forces out of of of Asia and then we all win. And I said, I have a question. So that that was eye opening. And the key thing here is like you're saying, we don't want to be doing a similar thing to China. We don't want to be saying, you know, here's this great outcome by which you cede all your your major priorities and we get everything that we want. We have to be realistic. But we have real policy clashes like fundamental policy clashes about democracy promotion versus autocracy promotion, and Taiwan is the ton of it versus reunification and so on. And so being proactive in terms of cooperation here and in a political environment in which, you know, we're going to plan a wonderful conference on cooperation with China, and then there'll be some horrendous news about Wigger abuse that comes out. And then how do we have that conference? Right? And I'm sure they would find an equivalent like the the ship going through the Taiwan Strait. So so how do we actually do this in that kind of a setting? I mean, that's where, again, we we during the engagement policy, we actually did pursue engagement despite a lot of pressures for people saying we need to be reacting to human rights and so on. So that's another thing to study is kind of the process of it. How did we bring China into the WTO irrespective if we think it was a good idea to do that? How did we do

that politically? And can we cooperate with China in a different fashion going forward? But how can we arrange that process of cooperation in that kind of a polarized setting?

JUDE BLNACHETTE: Of course, yeah. In the case of the WTO, we didn't have to do much convincing. It was pretty obvious for China the benefits. So let me do two quick final questions and then we'll and then we'll we'll wrap up. I think I saw you had been next and then I think I had seen you in the blue shirt.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hello. Thank you for being here. My name's Philip Gunn with the Washington Export Council. My question is, bring this back to Congress. Are there any actions in particular that. You want to see done by Congress? Thanks.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: Yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi. I'm Sheldon Ray. There have been some recent narrow lanes of cooperation between these governments. Believe it or not, the PCAOB audit issue was resolved in September, but barely got any many news. This is about Chinese companies delisting. This was an intractable problem for over 15 years, and it was resolved amongst the U.S., China and Hong Kong government officials. There's also quite a bit of criminal law enforcement cooperation amongst those three governments. I consider it significant or is it just a one off?

JUDE BLNACHETTE: Congress and PCAOB.

LILY MCELWEE: I mean, I'll just say I think I think we're in an environment where maybe for a little bit those discrete areas of cooperation will remain quiet just because of the domestic political dynamics in both places. But that doesn't mean that they can't provide the foundation for something more. And on the Congress part, I was struck by Congressman Kim's remarks that Congress is driven by dollar signs. I think Congress is also driven by defense, the word, you know, national security concerns. And I actually think that potentially. Congressmen like Congressman King making the making the argument that it will be in the dollar, sign interest and the security interests if we do pursue certain discrete areas of cooperation. I think elevating that conversation, just awareness of other national security challenges that we have outside of China that might in some instances demand cooperation. I think elevating that conversation and and and promoting that narrative can, I think, help lay the groundwork. And actually, that's something that we aim to do in this project, is to think about the importance of domestic narratives in in laying the foundation for discrete government to government interactions, but also non non-state actor interactions as well.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: So if I can just make a few comments on the PCAOB, you know, first is it's cooperation in the same sense that finding a way around a default here in the United States was cooperation. It was the avoidance of a very bad outcome. The United States used leverage in this case legislation that sort of forced China's hand or clarified the cost, put a definite time limit on it. So that way it pushed a sense of urgency. And on the Chinese side, unfortunately, I'll throw cold water on our project by saying it really came down to just a very few individuals in the Chinese system, most specifically from Shanghai, who have had the authority and saw the sort of who had the authority within the system and also believes strongly enough in this. But actually PCAOB and by the way, it's not an ultimate solution because, of course, if we find that China we've just done one round of audits, we've got more audits to do. And if we find that China has violated any of these, the clock starts again. So we can we can this is basically going to be a sort of Damocles hanging over us. So I appreciate the the the underlying logic of the question, which is, first of all, making the point that we've sort of framed this conversation as if it's a desert of collaboration and coordination and cooperation. But of course, if you look at the bilateral relationship right now, you have an extraordinary amount of subnational cooperation, economic cooperation, you know, trade, investment. A lot of that is still going. But unfortunately, I feel like the PCAOB actually highlights some of the some of the challenges we have to face where if we have the end of or the movement out of the system of people like functioning, Hi. It's arguable that, you know, we will have even just on that PCAOB agreement, you know, when he retires, we're going to lose the biggest advocate in the Chinese system who sees the logic of keeping, you know, Chinese firms listed here. So highlights some of the challenges we have to explore in this project. Mike, Jennifer, any benediction? Closing thoughts?

MICHAEL J. MAZARR: Just quickly on the Congress question. I would say two quick things. One is to I mean, this is a broad point, but without going into specific legislation, recognize that foreign economic statecraft and the resources behind it are a critical component of everything we're talking about. And they're not sort of charity. And secondly, one of the biggest barriers to our competing effectively is that in so many ways and working with the DOD every day, I see this, but the US government has become an immense and incredibly inefficient bureaucratic monster that in so many of these areas, when you have great ideas and initiatives a year later you talk to people and realize you're not that much closer to getting there. Because of the nature of that, there is a role for Congress in creating new institutions and demanding accountability and creating commissions and doing various things to say we want to be a a sort of a little bit of a battering ram here to try to open the way to possibly a more agile, adaptive, nimble sort of set of executive branch institutions. I think that's another agenda they can take up.

JUDE BLNACHETTE: Final word?

JENNIFER LIND: Yeah. I'll just mention on the Congress point, I recently heard an interview with Orville Schell and he was talking about the the China Committee hearings that were going on at the time, which again, he was saying very focused on Taiwan, very focused on defense and how to manage U.S., Taiwan, China, all that. And Orville was saying he was reminded of the the hearings that William Fulbright presided over on China and found these extremely rich and wanted to really get to what was going on in Chinese society and what was changing and much richer conversation than just a defense security lens. And at the time, those were criticized severely by the hawks saying, you know. You're a bunch of panda huggers and you shouldn't be having these these dumb hearings. And so can't we do both? Right. So. So can we hold hearings about this, this valued partner, Taiwan and about defense and these issues that we care about? But can we also appreciate that China is. I mean, you guys are China experts. It's a massive, messy, terrible, marvelous, vast place. And the hearings should probably reflect that, too. And we're never going to understand it, just like God help them. They're never going to understand us. But but we want to take as big a swing as possible as we try and do that.

JUDE BLANCHETTE: Well, I want to thank everyone for for coming for this initial discussion. And we hope you stay with us over the course of the next year and a half as we continue with public events research. I want to thank the panelists for for taking time out of their busy day. Lily and Mike had a relatively easy commute within the city. Jennifer, I want to thank you for coming all the way down from New Hampshire as a native Vermonter. We think of New Hampshire as just a sort of a spun up, 180 version version of us, but nonetheless and want to thank our our comrades here at the Brookings Institution for facilitating this for for hosting us. And I also want to thank my colleagues at CSIS for for helping our end of the bargain on this project. So thanks, everyone. Have a great day.