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SHOULD THE US PURSUE A NEW COLD WAR WITH CHINA?

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MALONEY: Good morning. I'm Suzanne Maloney, vice president and director of Foreign Policy here at the Brookings Institution. And I'm delighted to welcome you to our debate style discussion today, where we'll tackle the question of whether the U.S. and China are destined for a Cold War-like rivalry. Today's event marks the beginning of the third phase of Brookings's Global China Project, an institution-wide effort to analyze China's growing role in the world. We began this project in 2018, setting a baseline with one of the largest open-source assessments of China's actions in every major geographic and functional domain. The next phase generated original policy proposals for addressing various facets of China's emergence as a global actor.

And now, the Brookings Global China Project is examining the choices and tradeoffs for the United States and its partners in managing long-term competition with China. By establishing an objective and balanced platform for substantive exchanges among opposing points of view, we hope that this initiative will create much needed space for robust consideration of the foundational questions that will inform American policies toward China for the next decade and beyond. We are joined by an especially distinguished group of experts on stage to discuss whether the United States should pursue a new cold war with China. In preparation for today's debate, each of the participants has published their views as well as responses to one another's arguments on the Brookings website. I hope you'll check out their essays at [Brookings.edu](https://www.brookings.edu) as a supplement to their comments today.

And let me just introduce them very briefly. I'm truly honored to welcome Joseph Nye, Harvard University distinguished service professor emeritus and former dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. He's held many roles in the U.S. government including as assistant secretary of defense for International Security Affairs, chair of the National Intelligence Council, and deputy undersecretary of state for security assistance, science, and technology. We're also joined today by Jessica Chen Weiss, who is the Michael J. Zak professor for China and Asia-Pacific studies at Cornell University. She's also served in government as a senior advisor to the secretary of state's policy planning staff, and she's the author of "Powerful Patriots: Nationalist Protest in China's Foreign Relations." Matt Turpin is a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution. From 2018 to 2019, he served on the U.S. National Security Council as director for China and as senior advisor on China to the secretary of commerce. Patricia Kim is a fellow here in Brookings Foreign Policy with joint appointments to our John L. Thornton China Center and our Center for East Asia Policy Studies.

Pattie is an expert on Chinese foreign policy and U.S.-China relations. And she co-leads her global China project along with our director of our China Center, Ryan Hass.

I'll shortly turn the microphone over to Demetri Sevastopulo, a U.S.-China correspondent for the Financial Times, who will moderate our discussion here today. Demetri has reported from Washington for over a decade and also spent considerable time in Asia, including as the FT's Asia news editor.

Let me just thank the Ford Foundation for their support, which has made our Global China Project possible. We're grateful that, like all of our donors, the foundation respects Brookings Research independence, which is sacrosanct. Today's event reflects only the views of the participants in the speakers themselves.

A final reminder that we're on the record and streaming live, so please send your questions to events@brookings.edu or on social media using the hashtag Global China. A question-and-answer session will conclude the event and staff will come around the room with microphones. Now over to you, Demetri.

SEVASTOPULO: Good morning, everyone. I was actually here yesterday moderating a panel on Japan, and I was allowed to sit down. So, I must have done a bad job and I'm being forced to stand today. Um, it's actually quite strange to be holding an event on the Cold War when it's so hot outside but I think we're going to have a fascinating discussion. Hopefully, some of you have read what are really excellent articles that are on the Brookings website, in a really kind of interesting format where everyone engages with each other in a back-and-forth. But for those of you who are taking refuge by the beach and haven't done your homework, I'm going to ask each of the panelists to give a very short synopsis of your main thesis that you put in your essays and your responses to your, to your fellow panelists. So, I think I'll just go down the line. And Joe, if I could start with you. Give us a couple of minutes of what you said in your article, please.

NYE: Good morning. It's a pleasure to be here with you. I'm going to try to go very quickly through my argument because I think the more interesting thing is to hear the discussion. Basically, I say that whether we're involved in a cold war with China now is partly definitional. If cold war means intense competition without actual fighting, then we're in a cold war. But if cold war is a term that draws an analogy to a particular historical period that we know lasted nearly 40 years, then I think the danger is that that analogy gets us into trouble in terms of our own analysis and our own policy.

What's very different today in the intense rivalry we have with China from the what I call the real Cold War or the historical Cold War, is two things. One, there's extraordinary difference in the degree of economic interdependence between the two protagonists, you know, with half a trillion dollars' worth of trade, whereas the Soviets had virtually none. But there's also what you might call ecological interdependence, which involves things like climate change, pandemics, and where no matter what you might think of decoupling in the economic area, these new ecological interdependencies obey the laws of physics and biology, and we don't have the ability to decouple those.

So, when we see the challenge that China presents to us through the historical analogy of the historical Cold War, we're not going to perceive the right challenge. China's a challenge, but the historical Cold War is not the right model for it. Essentially, what I argue is that we should be following the strategy in which we rely upon the alliances and institutions that we've created, which still work. And if I try to sketch out what I would say in terms of what a strategy should look like, and this is a very simplified version of a longer article, it comes something to what Tony Blinken said at the Aspen Security Forum this summer. He said, "Our aim is not to change China domestically. They're too big and we can't do it. But we can aim to constrain them by structuring the environment in which they carry out their foreign policy." And that's where alliances and institutions go in. And Blinken called it essentially a peaceful coalition, a coexistence, or you might say competitive coexistence.

The question of whether this is feasible or not, I argue that in fact, the United States has a stronger position than China in the balance of power in the competition. I won't go into all the details, but we benefit from geography, from energy, from demography, and technology. And there's more we could say to that as well, but I won't in terms of time. So, in my conclusion, I would say that a misguided strategy would try to mimic the traditional historical Cold War. And that what we should be aiming to do is to manage this relationship so that we avoid a hot war, cooperate when possible, and marshal our own assets to compete successfully. And that means shaping China's strict external behavior.

Strengthening our military power of deterrence is welcomed by many states in the region. They don't want, they want good relations with China. So, the old-fashioned economic containment of the traditional Cold War is not feasible. But they don't want to be controlled by China. Which means that they're quite happy to see significant American military capability, which helps protect them against bullying for China. So that's a short version of a somewhat longer argument. But I must say, if you like historical analogies, some people always want an historical analogy, and I would say don't

pick up the historical analogy from 1940s Europe, which is the historical Cold War. Pick up an analogy from 1914 Europe, in which the major powers blundered into something which was far worse than they ever expected.

SEVASTOPULO: Great. Thank you very much, Joe. Patricia.

KIM: Well, thank you very much, Demetri. And I just want to first say that it's a real privilege to be a part of this discussion this morning and to have here with us Joe, Matt, and Jessica. And I also want to thank Jessica's coauthor, Eun A Jo, who's not here with us today on the panel. But, you guys had really terrific written contributions to this debate series and I'm looking forward to what I'm sure will be a very engaging conversation. I'm just going to very briefly lay out some of the main points that I make in my opening statement for this essay series, and then unpack the rest of it throughout the panel. And so first in my essay, I make the case that it's natural for the United States and China, as the world's first and second largest economies, as the top military spenders, as leading innovators, and as great powers who seek influence and leadership on the global stage, to be in vigorous competition for the foreseeable future. But what I don't believe is that the parameters and the nature of this competition are fixed. And I make the case in my paper that we could find ourselves sliding increasingly into a debilitating rivalry, or we could strive for a more productive coexistence.

But this trajectory is not predetermined, and it will really depend on the political will on the efforts of both sides. Now to be sure, the United States and China have many fundamentally conflicting interests and values. Our political systems are different. We are competing across the economic, technological, military, and ideological domains. And while I believe that China poses a significant challenge to the United States on a wide array of issues, it doesn't pose an existential challenge or existential threat to the U.S. homeland or to the United States democratic system. And neither does the United States pose an existential threat to China.

And I'll unpack this further as we get into the discussion. For this reason, though, I don't believe that the United States and China are destined to be in a state of hostility across all domains today, nor in the future. And I do, in fact, believe that we have overlapping interests, just as Joe talked about ecological shared challenges. We have an overlapping interest, for instance, in a stable global economy. We have an interest in not stumbling into a military conflict. We certainly have a daunting list of transnational challenges like tackling climate change, nuclear proliferation, creating safeguards

for emerging technologies. All of which cannot be addressed without the active participation and cooperation of these of the two great powers.

Now, of course, the fact that we share common interests and challenges doesn't mean that we see eye-to-eye on how to resolve these issues. And there are certainly areas where the disagreements are particularly sharp and dangerous, such as when it comes to Taiwan, for instance. And so, we'll take a combination of intense deterrence and intense diplomacy to responsibly manage these differences and rise above just a baseline of preventing conflict to actually making progress in areas of mutual interest. Finally, I make the case in my paper that as the United States and its allies flush out our respective strategies towards China at this critical juncture, assessing precisely what kind of threats that Beijing poses and does not pose, and adopting a surgical multidimensional approach rather than a sledgehammer of full blown containment that, you know, brings us back to the actual Cold War of the 20th century, is the best way forward to deal with the complex challenges and opportunities that China brings to the table. But let me stop here and pass it to Matt.

SEVASTOPULO: Thank you.

TURPIN: Well, thank you. First, I want to thank Ryan for inviting me to participate. Really appreciate it. And I really enjoyed the interactions that I had with my fellow panelists and was so glad to see Demetri as our moderator today. Maybe I'll just sort of briefly kind of go through sort of my basic argument as I sort of work through this. First of all, the United States and the PRC are already involved in a cold war. And I agree with, with Joe's sort of definition of, you know, an intense rivalry in which you compete in sort of all domains, and you seek to avoid direct conflict. And I think that concept of a cold war, if I look back to sort of George Orwell's sort of initial definition of Cold War, which he wrote in the weeks following the first droppings of of atomic weapons. And was really an observation that that the introduction of atomic weapons created the conditions in which the possessors of those things made themselves unconquerable, and that it pushed that competition and rivalry between countries into other domains as each side seeks to achieve its outcomes and protect its values, while also avoiding direct military conflict with each other. And I think that's, that's indicative of the of the situation we find ourselves in today.

I think, I think it's important to kind of keep in mind what Michael Beckley just sort of recently argued in a in a Foreign Affairs piece, that the United States and the PRC are enduring rivals. That this rivalry is is sort of with us and has been with us for a long period of time. We have sought to sort

of paper over that and find some ways to be able to sort of come to a sort of a mutual agreement. And we should be very honest with ourselves. We have not been successful with that, and it is unlikely we are going to resolve our differences anytime in the near future. I think it's important to keep in mind and I think I, I believe completely that the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party view the United States and the values that we represent as an existential threat to their rule. That's, that's how they view the world. And it creates for us this very difficult situation, our efforts to bring them into a liberal based international order is fundamentally seen by the party as a threat to their continued existence. Because it is for them to become a part of that system, it does mean that they give up power and they surrender it. And that's, I think that's very clear that that they view that it that way.

Lastly, I agree with Joe that that that a 1914 blundering into a hot war is absolutely something we should be avoiding and be sort of thinking about in the back of our minds. It's why I largely conclude that our least worst option is a cold war. It's to avoid that direct military conflict. It's to think about how do we shape the international system in such a way, over a long-term rivalry, to create systems that advantage us and disadvantage our rival. And I think that that's kind of how we should look at this. And I understand there are risks and there are, you know, very real costs that come with that. But to think that we can sort of sidestep this this rivalry and paper over it, I think is really a bit of magical thinking. And we need for the American people to kind of come to grips with the challenges that they're really facing in the world rather than thinking that there's an easy button out of this.

Thanks.

SEVASTOPULO: Thank you. Jessica.

WEISS: First of all, let me join my fellow panelists in thanking Pattie and Ryan for organizing such a thoughtful conversation on such an important topic. So, I think we can all agree that avoiding war is the base case for success. But I agree with Pattie and Joe that we will still collectively lose if that is our only objective. And I find the Cold War analogy or metaphor problematic because if we assume inevitably a comprehensive state of hostility across all domains, we default to defining competition between the United States and China in zero-sum terms where we measure success in our ability to thwart China and interpret any benefit or advantage to China as a loss to us. And I think this is a deeply damaging and reductive approach that neglects the fact that the United States and China and the world still have a lot of overlapping interests, even as we have deeply diverging ones in other areas. And in particular, I think I want to commend Representative Meeks, who I think was right

when he wrote that the anti-China panic on Capitol Hill and in some parts of Washington is distracting us and weakening us. A strategy that's focused primarily on keeping China down and out will alienate us from our allies and partners. And perhaps more importantly, reinforce the chilling effect already being felt on the United States ability to attract and retain talent and innovation here in the United States, including productive collaborations with Chinese firms and scientists that will make, for example, the green energy transition possible.

What we need is a framework for thinking about China that balances not only the costs and risks but also the benefits and opportunities of some degree of continued integration. But this is not what the Cold War diagnosis I think implies. And what I have not yet heard, what a cold war diagnosis implies for our strategy other than a reflexive effort to thwart the other side across every region and in every domain, and sometimes including efforts to increase the pressure on their domestic system in hopes perhaps of some kind of regime transformation, or just to distract the CCP from projecting power abroad. And I'm afraid that such a strategy, which has not yet to be clear, has not yet been adopted, but I think some would like it to be, I think would only increase, not decrease, the danger and damage to American interests. Both in terms of our own ability to lead affirmatively and also what kind of behavior it might provoke from China in return.

So briefly, I know I think Matt and others here believe that it's the CCP's insecurity that has inevitably led to this juncture, and there is no hope of mitigating or escaping it. But just because the other side is digging a hole, as I believe Ryan once wrote, does not mean that we should wrestle them for the shovel. We can acknowledge that there are certain elements inside China that see the United States liberalism as a threat to the survival of one-party rule in China without ourselves declaring that the CCP is an existential threat to democracy. Our life as we know it in the 21st century, the intensity of ideological competition and fears of subversion can wax and wane, both in China and here, depending on the choices and behaviors by government leaders.

So, differences between our two systems, while definitely a source of risk and corrosive harm, do not have to become existential. If leaders on both sides choose to manage these differences judiciously and in particular avoid more flagrant efforts at subversion of regime change. So, in concluding, just to finish with this, we should not out China, China in pinning our political insecurities on external forces. The most important thing we could do is to get our own democratic house in order

at home and renew our enduring strengths, particularly our open-ism, our dynamism, and inclusiveness as a democracy here at home.

SEVASTOPULO: Thank you very much to all of you. So, let's jump in. And at the risk of digging my own hole, that Pattie and Ryan might push me into afterwards, why do we even care about the term Cold War? Whether it's capitalized Cold War or lowercase cold war. For the average American who's not steeped in foreign policy, why does that terminology matter? Pattie, I'm going to put you on the spot on the spot first.

KIM: Okay. Well, let me just start by saying that when my fellow project colleagues and I came up with this title and the prompt for this debate, we chose it because it's provocative and we knew that all of our participants would interpret the prompt differently. They would react differently to the term cold war, and I think we achieved that. For me, the Cold War evokes a period of absolute rivalry between the United States and Soviet Union. And when the world was divided into two distinct camps and when, particularly in the early years of this period, each camp characterized competition or contestation as one of countering an evil empire on the other side.

And I find that framing the current era of U.S.-China competition in such stark terms have significant implications for policy. And I think Jessica just made a very compelling case for why that is. And so, it worries me that that if the United States if American people, if the American people or Chinese citizens, were to start using this framing, this would leave no room for any kind of practical coexistence and put unnecessary limits on the U.S.-China bilateral relationship to the detriment of American, Chinese, and global interests. So, I think it does matter and it's important.

SEVASTOPULO: Matt, would you agree with that?

TURPIN: I mean, I guess I have a slightly different sort of interpretation of what we would think about as a as a sort of a cold war condition or a cold war. I mean, I view your experience with a cold war as a successful way in which we manage enduring rivalries between, between two great powers. But it's a way to avoid direct military conflict. And I would, you know, I think that it's a bit wrong to characterize it as all-encompassing and zero-sum. In fact, the U.S.-Soviet competition was not all-encompassing and zero-sum. Right? There were limits on it. There were calculations made about the kinds of actions you would take. There was an effort to achieve a degree of strategic stability between the two countries. It was simply a recognition that that we probably couldn't resolve

our differences through simple negotiation. And that it would be better to manage that competition through avoiding direct military conflict while also seeking an advantage over time.

And so, I see it as it is certainly a regrettable position to be in. I don't welcome that we are in a cold war. I think that the alternatives are worse. And that's what I am most fearful of, is that we can we convince ourselves that that there is some sort of way in which if we just sat down and talked to them, we could resolve these issues. And I just don't think that's the case. And until we come to grips with that, we're not going to prepare ourselves for what would be required to sort of run this out over time and to avoid real military conflict. That's what I'm most concerned about.

SEVASTOPULO: So, Jessica, can I ask you to kind of play devil's advocate there? I mean, let's assume for a second that we, we are in a cold war, which is what not what you are arguing. What does that mean for U.S. policy towards China?

WEISS: Thanks. And I think that I mean, I'm very, I think, gladdened to hear Matt sort of go beyond the usual way in which the cold war is invoked to say, well, you know, there can't be any kind of, for example, even diplomacy is somehow zombie engagement or appeasement. I mean, so the fact that we can potentially sit down with Chinese leaders, just as we did with Soviet leaders, and work out some kind of, you know, rules of engagement, kind of informal rules of the road. That's an optimistic view of of the cold war. And I would say that we should, I mean, that if we could get to that, that's fine. But I think we ought to aspire to more. And in doing so, make that perhaps more likely.

I mean, I think the problem here really is that most people, when they talk about the Cold War, don't do so in such measured and optimistic terms. I think they really do use it really as a way of shutting down alternatives. And, and even though on the one hand, I think Matt you've talked about ways in which there can be diplomacy. On the other hand, I think in the next breath you also talked about, kind of, just if we just sat down, that is not the position of those who are arguing, I think like Pattie and I, that that deterrence ought to be coupled with, you know, diplomacy. Diplomacy is not a gift to the other side, but a means for communicating credibly. If China does X, we will do Y. If China doesn't do X, we will not do Y. That's what diplomacy is about, is about making credible the choices that China faces and the consequences for their actions.

So, to me, these are not separate strategies but actually ought to be paired more. And I think when we sort of paint this as a cold war, and again, this is not what you were doing, but I think what is suffusing, I think the public conversation is this idea that any kind of dealing with China, whether that's

diplomatically or commercially or scientifically, that somehow there is a taint there. That is an evil empire, and we want nothing to do with them as long as they stay on their side of the ocean will be fine. But frankly, the global challenges that we face, that's not a realistic possibility. We will fail to address those global challenges, even the ones our part in solving them. If we don't recognize the deep degree of continued interdependence, even as we, and I'm not saying we shouldn't, also try in a responsible way to protect national security interests in a tailored kind of scalpel-like way, as Pattie mentioned.

SEVASTOPULO: Great. Well, let's jump beyond the actual term cold war for a second. Pattie's just confirmed that think tankers are just like journalists. They're looking for headlines and controversy. Let me ask one of the, one of the kind of key questions that I think underpins the debate, depending or regardless of which side you're on, is whether you believe the U.S. and China pose existential threats to each other? Matt, you said that China, or the CCP and its leadership, views the U.S. as an existential threat. Do you view China as an existential threat to the U.S.? And then if we start there, I'll ask everyone else to jump in as well on this.

TURPIN: Well, I think we should view powers that have significant-- I think we should view powers that have significant nuclear arsenals as existential threats. Particularly when the two countries, you know, largely conduct military modernization and build military forces, you know, against each other. We should, we should seriously consider what that would mean. What a conflict between the two would look like and the kinds of dangers that come could come about from that. Right. I mean, so, I mean, you know, at the low end, the PRC possesses, you know, currently several hundred nuclear weapons and sufficient delivery systems that we are unable to prevent from being able to strike major U.S. population centers.

So definitionally, yes, they do pose that kind of threat. Do I think that their ideology poses an existential threat to the United States? I don't think so. I think that we are much stronger than that. We have much more of a resilience. But in a pure sort of military sense, I think it should be very clear that this is a real significant peer competitor that we have to take very seriously and to figure that out. Right. Now I do believe, and I and I will state again, I do think that the party does view the United States as an existential threat. And it's kind of clear that that is how they had viewed it. It's how they interpreted our strategy of engagement. As essentially peaceful evolution that would bring about the end of the party and bring about the kind of political liberalization. Now there are certainly--

SEVASTOPULO: Just assuming a kind of threat to the party as opposed to the country.

TURPIN: Correct. Yeah. Which which, of course, the party will conflate the two together. Right. That that of course, the only success of the country can only come about through the leadership of the party. Now, I think those things are separate, but that is certainly not how the party would view those two things.

SEVASTOPULO: Joe, in your essay, you talk about a lot of the strengths that the U.S. have in terms of geography, allies, alliances, partnerships, and other things. Do you think China poses an existential threat beyond the nuclear question?

NYE: Well, you know, I can say existential threat means a threat to your existence. Only if we get into a nuclear war could they become an existential threat to us. If you think back to what were existential threats, let's take Hitler or Stalin, those were threats that wanted to destroy us, even regardless of nuclear weapons. But, you know, let's be realistic. The ideological competition that we had when the Soviets were trying to build up a Communist Party inside the U.S. and elsewhere is very different from the threat posed by Xi Jinping, thought with Chinese characteristics, which doesn't have a mass following anywhere, probably including China. But I think the - so the only way we can make this an existential threat is to is a failure to manage the intense competition. That's why I mentioned 1914 rather than 1940s.

SEVASTOPULO: So, if I can ask all of you to think of another question, which is, you know, often in the debate in Washington, you'll hear talk about China trying to export its political model or its ideology around the world, which it gets to the point you were just making, Joe, about the Soviet Union. I'm curious if you think China is trying to export its political model or is it competing for more influence in the U.S.-led order to try to reshape that order so that it's more to China's benefit? Jessica, would you like to start with that one?

WEISS: Sure thing, thanks. I think it's really important to be very careful here because just like the Cold War, this idea of a model is, I think, thrown around pretty casually. Look, I think what the Chinese Communist Party is trying to do is create a space for its own legitimacy. I think they do feel existentially threatened in some, and especially by, you know, decades of efforts at democracy promotion, including U.S.-led efforts at regime change in what they perceive to be color revolutions, etc., that were supported by the United States and other liberal democracies.

That said, I think that their efforts to, and over time, I think their efforts to, the CCP's efforts, to carve out that space of legitimacy has taken the form of two things. One, changing the norms in the international order so that they're less liberal and less intrusive, really emphasizing sovereignty, a more conservative version of the system, a more Westphalian notion of noninterference in internal affairs. I think secondly, they've also been trying to support autocracies where they exist through various means. This is different from what was taking place during the Cold War where, you know, Mao-era efforts to support left-wing communist insurgents. That this is a different form, which tends to be pretty, you know, state-centric, supports the incumbents largely where they are, rather than trying to subvert them.

So, this is creating, I think, over time, a less intrusive and less liberal system internationally. Which is different from trying to, I think, export a coherent model. Those who have studied the evolution of China's own domestic political governance and political economy will say that they have experimented and borrowed. In fact, Xi Jinping talks about this, and we need to learn from other systems, but of course, definitely not wholesale adopt them. I think that, well, you can surmise from what the CCP is doing by talking about how others can learn from, you know, Chinese lessons and solutions, is something of the same, which is though you can, you know, a la carte.

You know, take from China's experience, the lesson that you don't need to democratize to develop for example. Or, you know, you buy their surveillance system or whatnot. Again, strengthening the incumbents where they are. But not necessarily coercively, you know, putting the thumb on the scales of who it is that is ruling that country. Now, of course, as Pattie noted in her piece, you know, Taiwan is a significant exception, but that, of course, is not sui sort of sui generis in terms of how the CCP looks at other territories and systems across the world.

SEVASTOPULO: So, Matt how do you see the way the CCP is approaching this around the world? What is it actually trying to do?

TURPIN: Yeah, I mean, you know, a lot of this is forward-looking. So, we've seen a, you know, a pattern of behavior which is tough. And I agree with Jessica, to strengthen autocracies where they, where they currently exist and to provide them with the tools. So, they don't, they don't, they don't succumb to sort of liberal democracy, but they're able to sort of hold on to their power. And I think we then have to look into the future of what this looks like as Beijing continues to gain power and influence. Does it stop at that? Or does it continue to sort of move on? Right. How would Beijing feel

safer in the world? It would likely feel safer in the world in which it has more regimes that that generally share its worldview, that that sovereignty is the only way to to be able to look at these problems, and that and that they largely back Beijing inside the the issues that they care about.

I think, you know, Beijing's strategy is about undermining a key American strength. About how do you form alliances and partnerships around the world to sort of advocate for a liberal international system in which which various folks share power. And I think Beijing would much rather prefer to be in a system in which they establish their own bilateral relationships where they are the dominant power and then can dictate those sorts of outcomes. And that's a world that's an international order that I think we should be very clear to ourselves would be very hostile to to sort of our interests. And. and, and so I'm looking out into the future of how this unfolds. And I'm very concerned with how this plays out. That we do actually have the the sort of the nascent competition of systems that will play out over time. And therefore, we should be quite prudent about the actions we take now to ensure that we have the kind of position that we want to have in the long term.

SEVASTOPULO: So, one thing I'm curious about is when you listen to politicians on Capitol Hill, you get very stark statements about the U.S. cannot lose to China, the U.S. needs to make sure China doesn't win. Well, we had a question in advance from Professor Wang Jisi from Beijing University who says, what is the end state of U.S.-China strategic competition? And I would just add, whether whether you call this a cold war or not, are the two countries, U.S. and China, not just locked into perpetual competition with no end in sight, as Michael Beckley said, with with the phrase enduring rivals that you've mentioned earlier, Matt. Joe, would you like to tackle that?

NYE: Yes. Let me before I turn to Jisi's question, let me turn to this Beckley article in Foreign Affairs. Which I, there's a lot in it I agree with, but you greatly oversimplify things, as he does. That you have enduring rivals. So, it's either or. The problem with his article is there's no middle. It's all either or. Let me give you the example of U.S.-China relationship. We are enduring rivals, he says. Well, for the first 20 years, we shot at each other and killed each other. For the second 20 years, we were de facto allies against the Soviet Union. So, the third 20 years, we're deeply engaged with increasing economic interdependence. And the fourth 20 years or more, which we entered since about 2016 or so, we call it intense competition. But we don't know how it's going to turn out. To my mind, Blinken's point about competitive coexistence is not a bad answer to this question. But the idea of, oh, I mean, if we get in the pattern that Beckley has of enduring competition. I've just told you four

very different types of, in quotes, "enduring competition." And certainly, some of those are better than others.

SEVASTOPULO: Patricia, would you like to jump in on that?

KIM: Sure. And before we get to that, if I could just comment on the previous conversation we were having about whether the - China views the United States as an existential threat. Just, I mean, a lot of great points were already raised that I wanted to make. And so just one extra thing that didn't come up is that, you know, I think the fact that China's comprehensive ties with the United States and other democracies since the launch of its reform and opening policy has been foundational for its rise and the vast improvement of the quality of life for its people over the last three decades. And China's growth, continued growth, and its prosperity hangs on its continued engagement with the outside world, including the U.S. and its allies and partners.

So, in short, I think having zero ties with the U.S., and its allies and partners, poses a greater threat to China and to the CCP's legitimacy, which really hangs on its ability to deliver for its people rather than the other way around. And so, I think, although I do completely agree that there are elements of Western values and political models that Beijing rejects and it doesn't want influencing in its domestic system. But I think we do need to recognize that there's a great benefit for China to remain engaged with the West. And so, that's something that's something that I think all Chinese people are aware of if they've just watched where their country has gone over the last 20, 40 years and that Chinese leaders know as well.

Now, in terms of what is a what is an end state or what should we be aiming for in this U.S.-China competition? I don't think, you know, this question is raised often in a lot of discussions. And its its, there is no sort of crisp, perfect answer to it. There's no, I don't think there is some ideal end point that we could describe and say, oh, this would mean that the U.S. had prevailed, or China had prevailed. I think it's easier to define what we should avoid, and these would obviously include a military clash that results in the loss of human lives, an unbridled arms race that strains resources and leaves us all less secure.

The failure to address, jointly address preventable climate and global health disasters, the dissolution of people to people ties, many of which have benefited both countries. But frankly, I think given the state of U.S.-China relations, simply preventing such developments would be counted as great success. Now, how can the United States and China chart a way towards a more promising

near to mid-term future? I think a good starting point would be for both sides to accept and to realize that the outright defeat of either side, in which one side capitulates to all of the other demands, is an unreal-- unrealistic goal. Well, we've never had this in the U.S.-China relationship. However you break down the different phases of the relationship in different 20 years, we've never had this. I think rather we should aim for a stable, rational, sportsmanlike competition that doesn't veer into conflict and rises above zero-sum thinking so that we can start to address common global challenges. And I think this is where I would agree with Jessica, where it's really important for both American and Chinese leaders to firmly establish within their domestic audiences and to each other that there's no reason why competition has to be existential. There is that diplomacy is not a dirty word. That it's not a it's not a concession to the other side. And common-sense interdependence is essential for both sides. So, let me stop there.

SEVASTOPULO: Matt, looked like you wanted to comment.

TURPIN: Yeah, I think I think there's a sentence that sort of expresses the the objective that that we're trying to achieve. And that comes from the Biden administration's February 2022 Indo-Pacific strategy. And I'll just read it for you, "Our objective is not to change the PRC, but to shape the strategic environment which in which it operates. Building a balance of influence in the world that is maximally favorable to the United States, our allies and partners, and the interests and values we share." That's that's the objective we're seeking to achieve. I agree with that. I think that that as we think about what that looks like, you know, the unstated thing in that that sentence is that that is an international system that is not favorable to Beijing. And we should be very mindful about what that looks like. And we should prepare ourselves for the real competition that it's likely to unfold as we seek to achieve that objective. Like that's in our interest to do so.

I understand there are dangers and risks that come from that, but of course we do have an example of a really enduring rivalry in which one side capitulates and walks away from this. It would be the one cold war we do actually have an example of. I mean, it is obviously not yet happened in the Sino-American cold war, but it certainly happened in the Soviet American Cold War. That's how it ended. So, it is not unreasonable to expect that that is the kind of outcome that you could have.

SEVASTOPULO: So, if we assume that, as Patricia says, a kind of a successful goal is to avoid a lot of bad things happening. And if we accept that the Biden administration's policy is that you can't really change China at this point, it's too strong and powerful and that you need to shape the

international environment. If each of you was testifying before Congress as a Biden administration official and was asked to give one example of where the Biden administration strategy is succeeding in terms of stopping China from doing something by shaping the environment, can you just give me one example of what you think that might be? I won't put someone on the spot. I'll allow someone to volunteer and then--.

WEISS: I'll start.

SEVASTOPULO: Yeah.

WEISS: Sure. I think that the Biden administration's move to rejoin multilateral organizations the Trump administration quit or denigrated was a really important part of shaping the external environment. When you leave a vacuum, of course, it invites others to fill it. But that's different from than suggesting that wherever China has influence in international organizations, that it is necessarily at odds with American interests, and we must therefore move to block their participation or influence. Because ultimately, at the end of the day, the PRC does also have a vote. And they are, as we are seeing, also investing as we are, in smaller fit for purpose kind of coalitions. Smaller minilateral organizations, although they're not so mini men anymore.

And I think one of the real challenges here is that you have a growing kind of bifurcation, a fragmentation, which is not going to ultimately serve our interests. Again, many countries, if asked to choose, are not necessarily going to line up behind the United States, given China's-- the reality of China's material, heft, and influence. And that, I think, will persist regardless of whether or not the Chinese economy continues to slow. I mean, there are, of course, I think, pinning our hopes on the idea of, you know, a kind of a, you know, I don't know, an implosion or whatnot of China as I think deeply. And nobody here has said that.

But I think that the idea that there's really the cold war playbook would lead to that kind of success, I think really understates the challenges that we face in the moment and how, just how dangerous the next decade will be if we resign ourselves to that kind of footing. Assuming that well, because we came out of it okay with the Soviet Union, let's, you know, let's go through those kinds of hair-raising, near-miss crises once more.

SEVASTOPULO: But we've seen some examples of Xi Jinping reversing course or changing course domestically. For example, the "zero-COVID" policy. Probably the most extreme example. But

have we seen examples of China shifting or reversing course internationally because of things that the Biden administration has been doing?

TURPIN: Well, I was going to answer your first question. I mean, I think just in the last month, the example of of the Biden administration's Camp David trilateral summit, bringing Japan and Korea back together again. And sort of centering the concern about both North Korea and the PRC as a as a centerpiece of that agreement, I think is is absolutely it's it's a great example of what the Biden administration has been able to do. I would, I would argue that their efforts with the Europeans at adopting a sort of a de-risking approach are also indicative of of great work that we've seen from them. I think there is still plenty of work to do.

And, you know, I well, I certainly understand the argument about how how all countries may not simply choose our side, it's also quite clear that that as China's power grows and as their influence in the world grows, then increasingly third countries are looking for collective security arrangements to be able to protect their own interests. Right. I mean, that's the other aspect of what we see happening is that we have countries that are clamoring for American engagement and the ability for the United States to maintain an international system, in which it isn't might makes right, but you actually have the rule of law, you have limited government, and you've got those kinds of things that happen in the world so that they can protect their own interests.

And so, I'm not I'm not entirely clear, it's not entirely clear to me that as this unfolds, that what we see is everyone backs away from us because it's too hard. That many of them come to the many of their own conclusions that they actually need to band together to deal with a China that is increasingly aggressive on the world stage.

SEVASTOPULO: Sorry, Joe. Did you want to say something?.

NYE: I I agree. I agree with what Jessica and Matt said but let me give a couple of specifics I would use in my testimony. I said we want a strategy which is based on alliances and institutions. If you look at what Biden's done, strengthening the quad, developing AUKUS, and improve as Matt said, improving the relationships of Japan and Korea. Those are pretty concrete and important changes. On the other hand, it's worth noticing that the simplistic view that the 1990s and 2000s were all just engagement is not true. We reaffirm the U.S.-Japan security treaty before we ever approach the question of getting China into the WTO because we felt that that was a bedrock. So, maintaining

alliances is critical. Jessica is also right that institutions matter. And when you, when we vacate from institutions, you leave the standard setting by institutions to the Chinese.

SEVASTOPULO: I mean some people would argue that, and this gets a little bit to something that you said, Patricia, you know, China for several decades has put a priority on building its economy and it has a compact with its people that the economy is growing, everything will be fine. The question is, is Xi Jinping shifting the calculus and putting out more priority on national security and therefore may take certain risks overseas that China, you know, Hu Jintao or Jiang Zemin, or his predecessors wouldn't have taken?

KIM: Yeah, I would completely agree with that. I think Xi is definitely prioritizing national security. It's very plain in all of his speeches and the policies of China. And so, it, so China is going in that way. I guess, you know, to think about economic interdependence. I think it still has and still continues to serve as an important facet of U.S.-China relations. Even though we're locked in this intense competition, the U.S. and China traded at record levels at \$700 billion last year. The United States remains the largest destination for Chinese exports.

And so, there is a robust commercial relationship here. And now, has that served as a magic bullet to all of U.S.-China differences, or has that prevented China from turning to coercion or weaponizing its economic leverage vis-à-vis U.S. allies and partners? No, obviously not. I mean, that has not been the case. But imagine if China was completely decoupled from the West if it saw no tangible benefits in maintaining some semblance of ties and stability in the relationship with the U.S. and its partners. I think this would remove any restraints on its behavior and leave us in a much more dangerous position. And so that's that's one point I would make there.

SEVASTOPULO: So, one thing I want to ask all of you is, and this question came from someone much smarter than me by a carrier pigeon, which is that in Washington, you know, all of us are reading the same reports and speeches by the Chinese authorities. So, why is the China watching community reacting or reaching such different conclusions about China's ambitions and the proper U.S. response? Who wants to put their hand up first?

TURPIN: I mean, we all look at it through our own lenses. So, I mean, I think it's, that's just natural. We come at it from our own biases and our own, you know, sort of preconceptions of how this plays out. So, I mean, I'm I welcome the variety of views that we have on, you know, even you know, providing a an assessment of what Beijing is trying to achieve and what their speeches say. Like,

that's I think actually we should look at that as a as a strong strength of how we will wage this competition over the long-term. As it will have a robust debate, and a continued robust debate about is there an opening here, is there been a real change in how they're approaching this? And I am, I am, I am truthfully more than willing that if what we see is a real change, that we should then reevaluate what our own approach is. We should adapt ourselves to what that is. And the only way we're going to kind of see that is through an open debate of how we're, how we're looking at this. So, it's not surprising to me at all that there are a variety of of views on this.

SEVASTOPULO: Jessica, did you want to?

WEISS: Yeah, I want to take the opportunity to wholeheartedly agree with Matt, which I know was not necessarily expected. That that in fact, that degree of, I think analytic humility about what exactly these words mean. Rather than taking them literally to understand them better in their context, but also recognize that something as tough as a country's ambitions are something that are difficult to know with any certainty, and they can evolve over time. And that rhetoric is often a poor guide to action. And then it's really important to track both, not to say that to discount it, but they need to be read in context.

And I thought that Pattie's contribution did a very nice job of suggesting that some of the phrases that are commonly interpreted in Xi Jinping's rhetoric is to suggest that, you know, socialism will inevitably triumph over capitalism. Neglect the fact that, for the first instance, China is more capitalist than it is Marxist. But secondly, that same speech also includes the phrases that these two types of systems will need to cooperate even if they are in conflict. And that such a contest or struggle will last generations, maybe even longer than the time of Confucius to the present. So again, this is, you know, there's a heavy dose of kind of ideological veneer here.

But beneath it really, there's a lot of question as to, well, just how seriously should we take some of these phrases? And so, the fact that we do have a robust debate, I think is really the essential piece here. Rather than saying, well, the debate should be over, you all over there are naive because you're suggesting something else. No, in fact, we need to have all voices, I think, regularly contributing to test our own biases and assumptions for their correctness and then adapt over time and update. That's the rational thing to do. And I'm really grateful to all of you here for convening that.

SEVASTOPULO: So, in about seven or 8 minutes, I'm actually going to put you all on the spot and employ something that Joe used to do when he was running the National Intelligence Council, which is have a little box that says, you know, here's my ten pages of what I think, but here's the reason why I might be wrong. I know that's a very un-Washington thing to do. So, I want at the end of this, just a very quick I might be wrong because... Literally one paragraph. But, before that--

NYE: Could I, could I just add a comment to the last question.

SEVASTOPULO: Of course.

NYE: Which is, when we talk about China's goals, or any country's goals, you can take the written word, and everybody agrees that it means X or Y. But in fact, it doesn't. Goals come in different shapes. When a leader gives a speech, part of it is external audience. Part of it is internal audience. And the other thing is it may be what you call aspirational, I want to dominate the world. Or operational, given the problems of these nasty American and I can only do so much. And if you start thinking that way, you get away from the kind of, "here's what she said on September 23rd. He's out to get us" type of thing. So, it helps to realize that the that the context of these declaratory statements you get vary enormously domestic, external, and aspirational or operational.

SEVASTOPULO: You're not suggesting there's a largely unsophisticated section of the society in Washington, D.C., are you?

NYE: No, I don't live in Washington.

SEVASTOPULO: That's what they all say in Cambridge. Let's jump into Taiwan. So, the question I have is, you know, the U.S. and China have managed their differences in different ways over many decades. How does the current situation vis-à-vis Taiwan change the equation? Is it possible to have meaning cooperation in kind of major areas as Taiwan becomes increasingly sharper thorn in the U.S.-China relationship and China closes the military gap with the U.S.? Because it seems to me that every conversation the Americans and the Chinese have, and I say just as a little Irishman, it all boils down at the end of the day. Taiwan is this huge elephant in the room. It's increasingly becoming, you know, a hotter and hotter flashpoint. So how do you, can you put Taiwan aside and deal with everything else in the relationship? Or have we got to a point where that's no longer possible? Who would like to? Jessica.

WEISS: Happy to start. I think Taiwan's really a critical potential flashpoint in the relationship, obviously. But it's made more complicated by all of the things that we have been discussing so far. Because to the extent that members of Congress or others see China as an enemy, they think, well, Taiwan's our natural ally, even though Taiwan has not been formally an ally of ours. And in fact, as a condition of normalization, you know, we you know, we did away with that. And so, this is an example of how decades of careful management of this issue, again deferring any potential solution, have begun to be undone.

I mean, it's not only, of course, actions and rhetoric on the U.S. side, the same is true on the Chinese side. And, you know, in Taipei, all I say, all three sides have increasingly, I think, invested in efforts to threaten and develop the capabilities to deter the other side. Not appreciating that those same capabilities are perceived by the other side as an offensive effort to move the status quo in their preferred direction. And there is no credible or less attention to what we consider, you know, credible sources of tactical assurance. Which is to say that if you do not act aggressively, we will not push the envelope. And that's the part of the deterrence equation that I think has been increasingly eroded over the past few decades but is by no means insoluble.

I think it's very important that we continue, as Ryan and others, Richard, here, I mean, to continue to state that the United States has an interest in a peaceful process, not the ultimate outcome. It's a critical part of U.S. policy within the one-China framework. And is, to do otherwise, I think is asking for trouble. Trouble that I do not think this country is collectively prepared for. And so, yes. This is nuclear-armed power. We are nuclear-armed powers. This would be devastating even if we don't resort to a nuclear exchange, and this would be devastating to the global economy. So, all minds ought to be focused on how to preserve a peaceful diplomatic process, to re-- to encourage. You know, dialog, of course, without preconditions on both sides all sides. And this is where we ought to be spending as much effort, even as we continue to invest in, you know, helping Taiwan provide for its self-defense, making sure that the United States maintains its capability to respond if we if we so choose.

TURPIN: Yeah. I mean, I agree with Jessica that that avoiding an actual military conflict over Taiwan is-- it would be an absolute disaster. I mean a real a real catastrophe that that we should be avoiding. But I think we should keep in mind that the sort of, the special conditions that that we were in in the 1970s that created this sort of negotiated arrangement we have in the cross-Straits, that that

arrangement was very specific to the conditions that existed at that point in time. Right. You know, China did not have the power to take Taiwan. China was interested in entering into a partnership with the United States to offset the threat that they saw from the Soviet Union. They felt that they needed to spend real time developing out their economy and still wanted to reacquire Taiwan. And, of course, Taiwan was very different at the time as well. Right. An authoritarian regime, you know, ruled by a military, you know, under martial law. But, of course, those conditions are not the conditions we have today.

And, and I think we need to to kind of come to grips with the fact that I think it's it is very clear that that Beijing has lost Taiwan. The Taiwanese people are not interested in giving up their democracy to be annexed by Beijing. And, and so, we're-- I completely understand our position to not want to talk about this problem and to kind of keep it under wraps and hope that this that this really tenuous arrangement that we set up in very different conditions can hold on indefinitely. But I think we also need to come to grips with the fact that those conditions just aren't there anymore. And and, of course, Beijing understands these conditions as well. They can see what's happening on Taiwan. But there is a younger population that has very little interest in identifying as a part of the PRC. And that these things are coming apart for them.

And so, we should be very realistic that that, you know, holding on to a policy and a set of things and conditions that no longer fit today is not a wise arrangement. I don't have a good answer for what the what the new arrangement should be, but we should be very mindful that this is unlikely to sort of, you know, the status quo is unlikely to hold in the future.

KIM: So, I agree with you, Matt, that the conditions have changed. I think without a doubt that China has become much more aggressive in asserting its claims vis-à-vis Taiwan. She has talked about unification with greater urgency. It's not been shy about increasing military pressure. I think this is all very much the case. Um, but I think while the conditions have changed, the way we manage this hasn't changed, and its deterrence and diplomacy. I think those two elements still remain key in managing this conflict. And standing by our position that the U.S. is not trying to determine the outcome of of of however the, however the disagreements in the Taiwan Straits is is resolved. You know, that's between the Taiwanese people and the people of China.

But what we want is no use of force to change the status quo and that we expect a peaceful outcome. I think the U.S. position, there really is nothing better than that. And I think to get to that

increasing deterrence with Taiwan, with our allies and partners, so that Taiwan could defend itself so that we are ready if there is some sort of contingency is important. And at the same time, diplomatically reassuring China that the United States is not trying to change the status quo, or prejudge the outcomes of this conflict is important. And so, I think the conditions have changed, but how we deal with it has not necessarily changed.

SEVASTOPULO: To Joe, if I could ask you just to kind of pull together some of the things that all three of your colleagues have said. So, the conditions have changed, as Matt said. But there's also the factor that the Chinese may view things that the U.S. does as changing the status quo. Each country is not always seeing things the way the other does. In fact, most of the time they're not. So how does the U.S. respond to the changing environment, provide more defensive capabilities for Taiwan, in a way that doesn't signal to Beijing we've lost the Taiwanese hearts and minds already, and now the U.S. is giving Taiwan more arms, therefore, at some point we have to invade? How do you how do you thread that needle?

NYE: Well if you say, what would Xi Jinping love? What's his greatest aspiration? It's the return of Taiwan while he is in power. But what is more important to him than that, it's losing power. And what could be the greatest prospect for losing power to try to capture Taiwan and fail? That's a threat to him and his control of the party. So, when he makes statements such as, "We will be ready, or the military should be ready, the PLA should be ready by 2027," there's partly a domestic politics aspect to that. Even though he may aspire to it, it's also for domestic political reasons. It may be a little bit operational in telling the PLA what to invest in.

But you have to realize that there's a huge domestic part of it. Which means that if we can increase the capability of Taiwan to be what's been called many times a porcupine, and also arrange the other countries like Japan and Australia, which they are now beginning to do, so that they have an interest in the Taiwan situation. And if we can thereby enhance deterrence and avoid poking a finger in Xi Jinping's domestic eye, such as having high-level trips to Taiwan. Then I think you can kick the can down the road. But the, but if we have a crisis, we could bring it on by making Xi feel that he has to go beyond his aspirational domestic statements to actually doing something because otherwise, he will lose power at home.

SEVASTOPULO: Excellent. Okay. I will at the end of Q&A, ask you all to play devil's advocate briefly against yourselves. But let's get into questions because we're getting close on time.

Um, I see Richard over here on the right, Richard Bush, if we have a microphone, please. And Richard, for the benefit of the two people who do not know who you are in the room, can you just tell them what you do?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Richard Bush, nonresident senior fellow at Brookings, happily retired. My question is for Jessica. Thank you, Jessica, for bringing American politics into the discussion. I think that the state of the politics of China makes it much more complicated for our decision makers to manage this very complex rivalry. But you are one of our country's leading specialists on China's domestic politics concerning external policy. And I wonder if you could comment a little bit on the ways in which Chinese domestic public opinion and also various sectors within the CCP complicate decision making by Xi Jinping and his colleagues?

SEVASTOPULO: Yes, of course. All right.

WEISS: Thanks, Richard, for that. I would say that domestic politics and public opinion do play an important role as one factor that the CCP leadership has to consider, but it's one that they have managed, I would say, fairly successfully. Which isn't to say that they can turn it on and off it will, but that it does exert some kind of influence and certainly a factor that they that they consider. And certainly, a factor, especially the nationalism, discourages a lot of what otherwise might be more outspoken intellectuals in China. Not that they fear reprisal from the government, but they fear attacks much worse than ours, even in our kind of toxic system. Attacks on social media and even personal threats.

But I would say that in the context of China's slowing economy, a lot, many have wondered whether or not this means that now Xi Jinping is going to reach for nationalism and perhaps some kind of convenient war or attack to distract the public and rally the folks around the flag. And on this note, I think I'm much more skeptical, mostly based on both the record and international relations scholarship outside of China, but also China's own foreign policy behavior. Where, if anything, domestic challenges in China have led to more moderate behavior, not necessarily, they're still saber rattling, but not a kind of full-on escalation to conflict, even under under Mao.

Now, of course, this is an area where I could, we could be wrong. The past is not necessarily a prolog to to Joe's point, you know. So, you know, this could be different. And what could make it different today? Well, here's something that I worry about, which is, you know, we're not anywhere near full decoupling. But to the extent that Xi Jinping thinks that, well, whatever ties to the outside

world are no longer necessary or even going to be available to to China, as he and the rest of the CCP leadership seeks modernization, which is another key component of rejuvenation in their view, that I worry that again, just as Pattie said this, no, this kind of external tie no longer acts as a restraining factor in Xi Jinping's calculus.

How do I, why do I think that? Well, look at China's sort of delicate position on, conflicted position on supporting Russia, for example. Why hasn't China done more to support Russia materially in its war in Ukraine? I think it really does run through the channel of, well, you know, the China's, kind of the agencies and bureaucrats who all are in charge of making China's economy go, just recognize just how devastating that would be to China's own interests if they were to go further in sort of sanctions busting and evasion. And so, this is a concrete example of how different interests, even within a, you know, a government led by as personalistic or concentrated of power as the figure of Xi Jinping, still can have some kind of restraining influence on more, I think I would say more aggressive behavior.

We may say, well, that's already aggressive enough. I would say, well, it could be a lot worse. And so, we should be be very, I think, sensitive to that, and also recognize that there could be changes on the horizon just as there was the pivot away from "zero-COVID." Again, that's an that's another example of, that was an acute domestic challenge. Did they, you know, did Xi Jinping, you know, launch an attack on Taiwan? No. They, you know, of course, detained none of those protesters. They ripped off the Band-Aid of "zero-COVID" and now we are where we are. So, there are a lot of different responses to these domestic pressures. Sorry, this is kind of long-winded, but the the--, it gives you a flavor of how it's not so deterministic. And I think, too often we have this neat pairing between, oh, domestic trouble at home and he's going to try to, you know, gin up nationalism by distracting attention abroad. It's not quite that simple.

SEVASTOPULO: Thanks, Jessica. And by the way, small plug, Richard and Ryan Hass and Bonnie Glaser have written a fantastic book on U.S.-Taiwan relations. Which I think is essential reading for anyone in Washington who dares to speak about Taiwan in public. So, let's see. Lady in the back-right?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi there. My name is Lili Pike. I'm a freelance journalist. My question is for the panel as a whole. We've sort of mentioned climate change today, but haven't talked about it sufficiently, I think. So my question would be if you look at the relationship between the US and China

today and the level of engagement, do you think that's sufficient for the world to adequately tackle climate change in the coming decades as we need to increase our climate targets and increase transparency between countries about meeting those goals? Thanks.

SEVASTOPULO: Who would like to take that? Jessica.

WEISS: Happy to offer some thoughts. Which I think that too often we see climate change as something that the United States and China have to kind of cooperate at the government level. And that, I think, could do something. But I think more concerning, is the challenge posed by suspicions of, for example, licensing technology from CATL, which you know, a Chinese battery, AV battery manufacturer, that Ford, you know, came under such suspicion in Virginia. And then then, you know, there's this kind of political backlash to, again, working with in any way, you know, Chinese firms. That, I think really is going to hobble our efforts to, you know, green our economy at kind of a cost that we can afford at a speed that we need.

And that going forward, you know, efforts between the United States and China to, for example, you know, co-finance, you know, green infrastructure around the world. That there's areas where we could do a lot more to tackle some of these, kind of short-acting, climate gases where, you know, some of the technology is not yet ready for market. So, there are areas where I think the kind of collaboration, whether it's sort of Big C collaboration or just small C collaboration, I think is really vital to recognize that these forms of of of cooperation or collaboration exchange don't have, you know, aren't a risk to national security. If anything, you know, not getting this right will have worse consequences for our our security and livelihood.

SEVASTOPULO: Matthew, you were nodding as well.

TURPIN: Yeah. I mean, I think we should acknowledge that, that the energy transition is already deeply, deeply tied to this geopolitical rivalry. You know, I think to pretend that it's somehow separate and that this is something we can cooperate on, and then there's gonna be the rivalry. I mean, energy transitions are inherently rivalrous. As as as, you know, conditions change, and where people get their energy from-- those things change, and folks seek to gain a set of advantages in this. I think we should just view this as it's going to it's going to unfold. Our policies around climate are going to unfold in the backdrop of this geopolitical rivalry. And we are going to be muddling our way through this.

I suspect we're going to have to spend much more time on mitigation and adaptation. We are unlikely, I think, you know, it's very clear that that both Beijing and Moscow are more than willing to encourage that, that that the Global South doesn't limit their own development so that we achieve those kinds of of of climate goals. We're going to see that unfold and it's going to be quite contentious.

SEVASTOPULO: I'd like to take one question that came in online from Paul Heer, who asks, "Will domestic politics in Washington and Beijing allow the two governments to pursue the kind of policies that would be necessary to avert a U.S.-China cold war?" We've talked or Jessica has talked about Beijing. Joe, could you talk a little bit about the role of politics in Washington, given that we have an election next year?

NYE: Well, the point is very important. That any time you assess foreign policy, you have to think about the domestic context as well as the international context. So let me answer the question by giving a very minor but important example from the last exchange. Matt is right, that the overall context of U.S. geopolitical rivalry will affect the ability to cooperate on climate. Wang Yi said the same thing a year ago when John Kerry was slated to visit Beijing. And he says climate cooperation cannot be an oasis in a desert. So, that connection is always there, and that would lead to things like not importing Chinese solar panels. Though they might be good for both of us in the ecological sense, there is a rivalry in there as well.

But there are levels at which the domestic politics can be even more pernicious. Jessica's answer wa-- it mentioned the importance of relatively low-level scientific exchange between Chinese and American scientists. I happen to have some colleagues who were involved in that. They say that it's extraordinary how good the conversations are on the technical and technological aspects of climate change. Well, this Congress is about to try to get rid of the umbrella agreement which supports U.S.-China scientific exchanges on the grounds of national security, even though it really doesn't have serious national security threat problems. So so, these are just a couple of concrete examples related to the previous question of how domestic politics determines much of what we do rather than national interest as a view externally.

SEVASTOPULO: And I think we have time for one final question. Lady in the second row in the middle? If we can get a microphone. Sorry, up here. Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi, my name is Shirley Marty Hargis. I am the senior China policy fellow at Third Way for their national security program. And so, as I appreciate all of the comments

that I'm hearing as I'm listening, especially thinking operationally. So, I appreciate your point, Dr. Nye, about separating operational from as goals and aspirations. And so, speaking to domestic politics. I know often we hear of many strategies and objectives around how to approach a variety of challenges within the U.S.-China competition. But as I was listening, I was right. I noticed that Patricia, you mentioned that, okay, I shaped this title a certain way because it would then encourage everyone to think about who would rather share the lens through which they think about cold war. And Matt and Jessica, you two ended up seeing some cohesion in terms of your points as well regarding, I think also cold war. And Dr. Nye, you had mentioned enduring competition.

And so, when I heard all of that, eventually I was thinking, what would it take to operationalize reaching the goal goal, reaching the, reaching the goal of understanding if there's a goal about this. Understanding what these terms mean. Because I think we're not in lockstep regarding how we um define these things. And it's all, that that is, in my opinion, the foundational problem.

SEVASTOPULO: So how should the administration operationalize or?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes. What are the operational approaches that one would take to reach that objective? For us all to be in much more of the same understanding about what cold cold-- how we use cold war. What is strategic competition mean? Etc., etc.

SEVASTOPULO: Who would like to tackle that? Matt?

TURPIN: I can start. I mean, I think it's this, you know, the fact that we have different definitions for terms, the fact that there are areas where we do have overlap of things we agree on, and then there's areas where we don't agree. I mean, again, I see this as indicative of of how our democracy works, right? This is how-- there isn't as if there was going to be a decree that this is the only definition of cold war that everyone has to use and therefore all all discourse about it has to comply with this. Or or, you know, strategic competition. We're going to have continued disagreements. I mean, I'm a historian. I'm an American historian. The-- we still have deep debates about very real issues in American history over debates about what the terms mean and how we-- Again, that's how our system works. We shouldn't be surprised by that, that we haven't come to consensus.

What I think we start to, how we start to operationalize it, is that there are elements of it that start to come out. Right. So, I mean, I think there's an agreement that we have to pursue some degree of deterrence. Right. And then and then we should probably think, okay, so now we can have

an argument about what is that level, what are what are the specific things we need to be deterring on? I also agree that we need to have an open diplomacy with Beijing. The same as we had with with the Soviet Union. I mean, it was not as if U.S. and Soviet leaders never met each other. They had numerous summits through the entire Cold War, and you have to keep that diplomacy going. We had embassies in each other's countries, just as we have now. And so those things all have to stay in place. It's it's we have, I think we have arguments about what should be our priority, what should be, what should be accentuated, what should be downplayed. And those are fair arguments. Right. Because we're talking about sort of future activities.

Therefore, there is no clear answer on how you do this. The process of having this discussion, the reason why I think this is so valuable is that by framing it in this sort of this context of how do we talk about a Cold War, I think it centers us on that this is actually an important problem for us to focus on. And therefore, we must have these conversations, rather than ignore them and hope that they'll just go away. Because I don't think that's going to happen.

SEVASTOPULO: So, we're basically out of time. So, Joe, I'm going to ask you, if you were one of your analysts at the National Intelligence Council, how would you, what would your own caveat be to your own argument? I might be wrong because...

NYE: I, I in the box I would put in, that I assume that in domestic politics we're going to have a regime which maintains American alliances. And in the region of East Asia, I assume that we managed to kick the can down the road on Taiwan. If we get into a war with Tai-- Taiwan, ignore everything in my estimate. We're going to then be in the cold war and more. And if we have an election which produces an American government which says we can weaken or draw back from our alliances, then everything that I've said about a strategy has to be rethought.

SEVASTOPULO: Patricia.

KIM: So, I want to thank Matt for that last plug in this exact type of conversation. And we have many more debates coming. And so, we're going to do exactly that, sort of interrogate how we think about important concepts and how we think about the tradeoffs and the knock-on effects that that policies that the United States takes in this critical moment. In terms of what could make me wrong, I mean, I, so I argued that we're not in an existential conflict with China yet. And I think there's a recognition on both sides, despite sort of the increasing tensions, that at the end of the day, there is a pragmatic relationship to be had that has both elements of competition and cooperation and that this

is realistic and, in both countries, respective national interests. Now, of course, this kind of understanding could go away.

I think if hyper-nationalist voices in one country or both manage to capture the political narrative and convince publics that, no, actually this is existential or that we need to move into sort of a U.S.-Soviet Union type cold war, we can certainly go in that direction. We could certainly stumble into a nuclear war or even just a war underneath that level, which would make it existential. And so, I think there are ways where I could be, or you know, we don't want to get to that. And so, I think it's important that we think about how do we manage this relationship so that we don't get to that kind of outcome. And that's what we hope to promote through this debate series. So, yeah.

SEVASTOPULO: Matt?

TURPIN: I share Joe's assumption that the United States will maintain its sort of global collection of alliances. Oop, there we go. I share, I share Joe's Joe's assumption about U.S. maintaining its global set of alliances. If the United States were to not do that, a lot has to be recalculated from a U.S. perspective. And I completely sort of I grant that, I assume that that will continue to happen. My second assumption is that I assume that that the Chinese Communist Party will still pursue sort of a chairman of everything approach to how they run the Chinese society, the Chinese economy, and Chinese foreign relations.

If what we were to see is sort of a return to, to sort of shared leadership, the creation of systems inside the Chinese government, a Chinese society in which there were separate spheres in which citizens could take their own actions, and that government didn't feel that it could control, then I would I would come back and reexamine this whole thing. I think that would create for us the real window where we could have a re-discussion about how this goes. But, but again, I am assuming that Xi Jinping will remain the chairman of everything and that that will be the way forward.

SEVASTOPULO: Jessica, you have the last word.

WEISS: Great. Thanks. I think on the Chinese side, I think my assumptions largely are that the ideas around, you know, how much of a universal model China has for the world remains contested. That there are, of course, exist such voices, but they are not, they have not captured policy. And that there is a mix, still, of the kind of Chinese emphasis in the leadership on China's exceptionalism and uniqueness, which is not easily replicated elsewhere. Even if China has lessons to offer, particularly in defying the kind of Washington consensus that they are, they are trying to

ensure that they are not threatened by. I think on the U.S. side, I very much share, I think what the other panelists have said, that I assume the United States will remain a democracy. One that continues to see the attraction of people, people of whatever stripe from around the world as a key source of our advantage. However, you know, should we go through a more nativist, nationalist turn, one that not only weakens our alliances and engagement with multilateral institutions but also begins to turn inward in defining who really deserves to be Americans as we have in the past. You know, not just with the internment of Japanese Americans, but other episodes in which those who are, you say, hyphenated Americans were seen as less than.

I mean, we are already seeing an enormous uptick in anti-Asian hate. And that is creating, I think that it's planting the seeds for what I fear could be a much worse spasm. Of course, you know, should we end up in a hot war over Taiwan? I shudder to think what this will mean. But this idea that the United States should continue to lead with the affirmative, with what we stand for and not just what we are against, really is predicated on the idea that I still believe that Americans can come together across a partisan lines, across ethnic and religious and other lines, to, you know, fashion what it is that we stand for together. I think just as we have had here, a really honest conversation. One that is, you know, on the merits as opposed to denigrating the worthiness of anybody to be here. I hope that this can be a model for the conversations going forward. And again, really appreciate you doing the work of convening us.

SEVASTOPULO: But just on democracy, I was in my native Ireland last week and many of my friends said the U.S. helped Ireland over the decades when we were struggling. But we're willing to help you if you've problems here with your democracy now, so reach out anytime.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Does it come with Guinness?

SEVASTOPULO: Uh, it does come with Guinness, or zero Guinness for others. I sense that everyone is hungry and wants to get to lunch. So, I'd just like to wrap up by saying a huge thanks to the panelists and to the audience, both online and in the room. Thank you very much, everyone.