

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

FALK AUDITORIUM

A CONVERSATION WITH US AMBASSADOR TO CHINA R. NICHOLAS BURNS
ON US-CHINA RELATIONS

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2023

INTRODUCTION

SUZANNE MALONEY

Vice President and Director, Foreign Policy, Brookings

KEYNOTE

AMBASSADOR R. NICHOLAS BURNS

U.S. Ambassador to the People's Republic of China

MODERATORS

RYAN HASS

Senior Fellow and Director, John L. Thornton China Center
Chen-Fu and Cecilia Yen Koo Chair in Taiwan Studies, Brookings

PATRICIA M. KIM

Fellow, Center for East Asia Policy Studies, Brookings

* * * * *

MALONEY: Good morning to all those of you who joined us here in the Falk Auditorium of the Brookings Institution and to all those of you who've joined us online. I'm Suzanne Maloney, I'm vice president and director of Foreign Policy here at Brookings. And I'm delighted to welcome you to our public event, featuring a discussion with the Honorable Nicholas Burns, U.S. ambassador to the People's Republic of China.

Ambassador Burns and his hardworking team at Embassy Beijing are on the front lines of one of the most complex and consequential bilateral relationships for the United States. The U.S. mission that he leads includes public servants from 47 U.S. government agencies and sub-agencies. He oversees the embassy's interaction with China on the full range of political security, commercial, economic, and consular issues, as well as many, many other issues that shape this critical relationship. Last month, Ambassador Burns accompanied President Joe Biden when he met with President Xi Jinping at the APEC summit in California. I'm looking forward to hearing his firsthand perspective on these conversations that covered a number of critical issues. Today's discussion will include a unique opportunity to gain direct insight on the impact of that summit on the direction of U.S.-China relations, including whether stabilization efforts resulting from the summit can endure, and on the issues that will animate the relationship into the future.

Before we begin our discussion, let me offer a very brief and telegraphic introduction of Ambassador Burns. In his very distinguished career in the U.S. government, Ambassador Burns has played a key leadership role in formulating U.S. policy on every major issue and region. He has served six presidents and nine secretaries of state in very senior positions, including as undersecretary for political affairs, as ambassador to both NATO and Greece, and as State Department spokesman, just to name a few. Ambassador Burns is currently on public service leave from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, where he founded the school's Future of Diplomacy project and served as a Goodman professor of practice on diplomacy and international relations.

In addition, I'll briefly introduce my wonderful colleagues who will be moderating the discussion today. Ryan Hass is the director of the John L. Thornton China Center and the Chen-Fu and Cecilia Yen Koo chair in Taiwan studies at Brookings. He is also a senior fellow in the Center for East Asia Policy Studies. From 2013 to 2017, he served as senior director for China, Taiwan, and Mongolia at the National Security Council staff during the Obama administration. Patricia Kim is a fellow at Brookings and holds a joint appointment with her Center for East Asia Policy Studies and our China Center. Pattie is an expert on Chinese foreign policy and U.S.-China relations, and she co-leads our wonderful Global China project here at Brookings. alongside Ryan Hass. The Global China project focuses on advancing recommendations on how the United States can respond to China's actions that implicate key U.S. interests all around the world. Before a discussion gets underway, I'd like to thank the Ford Foundation, which has made this event possible and our Global China project as well. They've always shown respect to our research independence, and this event reflects only the views of the speakers themselves.

A final reminder that we are streaming live and on the record, so please send your questions to via email to events at Brookings dot edu or on social media using the hashtag Global China. A question and answer session will follow at the end of our discussion and staff will come around with microphones. Thanks so much for joining us here today. And Ambassador Burns, the floor is yours.

BURNS: Suzanne, thank you very much. Good morning, everybody. Really nice to be back at Brookings. I want to just pay tribute to Suzanne. We worked very closely together when I was undersecretary of state in the George W. Bush administration on Iran policy. And we were trying to figure out a series of sanctions against the Iranians for their illegal aspirations in the nuclear realm, and I didn't have a better partner than Suzanne Maloney. And so I wanted to pay tribute to her as one of our great public servants. And also just wanted to say it's nice to be at Brookings. I, not to date myself, but I came to Washington for the first time in September 1978. I was a student diagonally across the street at Johns Hopkins SAIS, and Brookings, to all of us who were students

was the place to go to get smarter on economics, on domestic and foreign, foreign economic policy, and has always been an - my good friend Strobe Talbott headed this institution for a good decade - just one of our finest and most objective, I think, and scholarly think tanks in Washington. So I'm really glad to be here, glad to be with Ryan and Patricia. We're going to have a conversation, and I'm not going to bore you with a long speech, but they've asked me to give a few introductory comments. I wanted to do that just to set the stage where I think we are in U.S.-China relations. I've just come back four, four days ago from Beijing. It's been a very active period in our relationship with the Chinese, and I was with the president a month ago this week in Woodside, California, just north of the Stanford campus, for his meeting with President Xi Jinping.

So just a few general thoughts from me on where we stand. I look at this, and I think most people do, the U.S.-China relationship is the most consequential relationship that the United States has now, but particularly will have for the next couple of decades. We're the two leading economies in the world and will be into the 2030s and 2040s. We're the two most powerful militaries of the world and certainly will be for the next two or three decades. We're the two countries with the widest global reach, if you think about the economic, societal, political, strategic breadth of the interests that both countries have. And we are vying for global power as well as regional power. I think we're systemic rivals. If you think about our larger security and economic and political interests around the world in our administration, President Biden has set out a very clear policy. It's called invest, align, and compete. That's the policy that Secretary Tony Blinken put forward a year and a half ago in a speech here in Washington at another institution, Georgetown University.

We think as we look at this long-term competition with China, we have to invest in our own country. And that's the infrastructure bill of 2021. That's the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, the \$369 billion that we're putting into clean energy research, which is going to revolutionize the economy of the United States. And it's also the CHIPS and Science Act where we have to make strategic bets on certain key industries that are at the heart of our competition with China to enhance our competitiveness economically and as a society as we look forward. So that's the invest part.

The align part is critical to the United States. Our advantage, if we think about this competition with China, is that the United States has long historical alliances with the key countries of East Asia. With Japan, and that alliance over the last couple of years under President Biden's leadership, I think is the very strongest we've ever had with the Japanese. A newfound and revived alliance with the Republic of Korea and through the Camp David summit that the president hosted this historically good relationship, productive relationship between Japan and the Republic of Korea itself. Our alliance with the Philippines, which dramatically in 2022 has swung back in favor of a very close strategic military, political, economic engagement, where the United States now has access to nine bases on the Philippines. Very important as we think about our geostrategic position in East Asia. Australia, pound for pound, extraordinarily important and close security and strategic relationship. The development of AUKUS, which is Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom working on really generational investments in the national security realm. And very importantly the development of the Quad, and that's India with Japan, Australia, and the United States. And this is an initiative that both Republican and Democratic administrations have been putting forward for the last 20 years. We worked on the Quad back in the George W. Bush administration. President Obama took it forward. President Trump took it forward. And now President Biden. India is not a formal security ally of the United States. It's, it's non-aligned. It still is. But India is choosing to have a strategic military and political partnership with the United States, with Australia, with Japan, which is really a game-changer in terms of the politics of South Asia, with the Indo-Pacific, as well as East Asia. So that is the align part. I think what's been interesting in 2022 and 2023 is the degree to which Europe has begun to think strategically in a very important way about its relationship with the U.S., with Japan, with Australia, vis-a-vis China. Both the EU and NATO have now called China a systemic rival of the Europeans. I think that's been motivated in large part by the fact that China has swung its support in, to Russia in support of Russia's barbaric illegal invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. It's also because I think those countries in

Europe want to see a stable Indo-Pacific for economic and strategic reasons, but we are cooperating with both, of course, inside of NATO, as one of the founding members of NATO, been in our strategic conversation with the EU leadership, particularly with the President of the EU Commission, Ursula von der Leyen. Very close relationship between us. That alliance part of it is the unique American strength, our alliance in NATO, but also these East Asian alliances. And finally compete. We're in a competitive relationship. We're competing for strategic military power in the Indo-Pacific. We see China pushing out illegally in the South and East China Seas, claiming territories that is not theirs, that the International Court of Justice, in the case of the Philippines, ruled clearly in favor of the Philippines in July 2016. That's irrefutable. And you've seen the rather dramatic actions in Second Thomas Shoal recently, just over the last weekend in Scarborough Shoal. These are very important issues that we're very much involved in as a treaty ally under the 1951 U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Agreement.

And then if you think as well, on the competitive side, the larger firmament of issues dealing with the East China Sea, Senkaku Islands, which also fall under the U.S.-Japan defense alliance, and of course, the Taiwan Strait, which is such an important place for the global economy. 50% of container traffic in the world flows through the Taiwan Strait daily. 70% of the advanced semiconductors in the world are produced on the island of Taiwan. So think about that as a strategic economic space as well as strategic politically. This is a consequential part of the world in terms of strategic, military and political and economic interests. Technology on the competition side has become, in a way, a heart of, the heart of the battle. It's not just the commercial rivalry that might be normal if you think about the development of AI and machine learning and biotechnology and quantum mathematics. It's the fact that many of those technologies will be militarized into a new generation of military technology, and we don't plan to be the number two in that technology battle in the future. So you've seen the competitive actions we've taken over the last couple of years to restrict the supply of advanced semiconductors, for instance, into the Chinese economy, because they'll, they're potentially dual-use technologies. Trade and investment. I spent a lot of time with our business community. I was in Shanghai last week, talked to many members of our business community. There is no level playing field between for American companies and China. Intellectual property rights violations, forced technology transfer, massive subsidies not just from the government in Beijing, but from for from provincial governments in China to Chinese companies, thereby putting their American rivals, competitors at a distinct disadvantage. So you see the competitive nature of of of trade in technology.

And last but really first is the philosophical differences between the Communist Party of China, the People's Republic of China and the United States. Human Rights Day was last Sunday marking our the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Our secretary of state issued a major statement globally, issued a statement as ambassador to China condemning Chinese human rights practices in Xinjiang, in Tibet, on Hong Kong, the lack of religious freedom, the lack of political freedom. So in these competitive areas, that tends to dominate the relationship between the United States and China. Our job is to wage that competition, to do so practically, to do so peacefully, but to wage the competition because these are our national interests that are at stake.

What makes this relationship complicated and complex and doesn't render it to simplistic analysis is the fact that we are competing with China, but we're also engaging China. And we have to engage China. And so President Biden and President Xi have agreed that we have to work on climate change together. China's the largest carbon emitter in the world, we're number two. And you've seen John Kerry and his Chinese counterpart, Xie Zhenhua, working very practically together. They've had, they had 50 meetings over the last three years before they arrived together at COP 28 in Dubai that just concluded. So we have to work together on climate change. We have to work together on fentanyl. And that was one of the breakthrough agreements at the Woodside, the California summit between the two presidents. Fentanyl is the leading cause of death in the United States of Americans aged 18 to 49. It is the greatest public health crisis we face. And the majority of the precursor chemicals that are shipped to the drug cartels in Mexico come from black market Chinese firms. President Xi and the Chinese leadership have agreed at California to work

with us to cut off that flow of precursor chemicals to defeat the drug cartels and to reduce by a very large margin, we hope, the fentanyl coming across our borders into every town, every county, and every state in the United States. So we're cooperating. We're engaging with China on fentanyl. We have to engage on global public health. We didn't do such a good job of that back in February, March, April, May, you remember, June of 2020. Law of averages, we're all going to face another pandemic at some point - law of averages - in the coming years. We're the two countries with tremendous capacity in global public health and epidemiology. We'd rather cooperate with China, if that's possible, on global public health than not.

Food security is another area where we want to be engaged. We've seen a dramatic reduction of grain, of course, coming out of the Black Sea ports of both Ukraine and Russia. That's had a major impact in the Horn of Africa, in sub-Saharan Africa, in South Asia. And so we're trying to work with the Chinese on that. And finally, agriculture. One of the anomalies of this relationship - I started with the competition - is that the largest market for American agriculture in the world is China. One-fifth of all of our agricultural exports go to that one country. And I spent a lot of time with farmers, ranchers, and our fishing industry. And if you talk to soybean farmers from Illinois, or corn and wheat farmers from Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, or a Western ranchers or a fishing industry from the Pacific Northwest or my home region of New England, Red Sox nation, Massachusetts, that's the largest market. And so I want to introduce the idea of complexity. That a single dimension, one-dimensional shot, that this is only a competitive relationship, it doesn't get to the heart of what the relationship is. I started with competition because a lot of our vital national interests are focused, and they have to be focused, on competition. So all the Americans, great public servants, and I work with them all in China and I, we're focused on competition. We probably spend undoubtedly the majority of our time competing, defending, advancing in those four areas that I talked about: security, technology, trade, human rights. But we've also got to work with China on these other engagement areas because our interests sometimes are aligned and we've got to do something about climate change and global health and food security and fentanyl. This means that we have to think of a balance of interest as we deal with China. It's not weighted evenly. The competitive balance is certainly weightier, but that we have to engage this country. And that's what President Biden has decided to do.

We're going to test, of course, over the next couple of months, implement these agreements from California on fentanyl, on the resumption of our military-to-military ties, at very high communications, at very high levels, starting to talk about what the advent of artificial intelligence means for two global superpowers and the global balance of power. And finally, and I'll close on this and we can have our conversation, bringing the American people and the Chinese people back together again. I guess one of my, the palpable insights that we feel every day out at mission, U.S. Mission China is the degree to which the American and Chinese people were pulled apart by COVID. And I'm not blaming either government for that. But let me give you some data points. We had 15,000 American students six or seven years ago in China. Last year, we were down to 350 American students in all of China. Now we've doubled that population. But 700 American students now doesn't represent the interest that we have. And I'm looking at a lot of young people - and I'm a former college professor - we need young Americans to learn Mandarin. We need young Americans to have an experience of China. We need young Chinese, and there are nearly 300,000 Chinese in our universities, to understand this country, to understand our democracy, because 20, 30, 40 years ago, the young people here are going to be running our society. They'll be president of Brookings and president of the United States and secretary of state and for an American leadership in the future that is cut off from China that hasn't had an experience there, that doesn't speak Mandarin, that's not in the national interest. So we're trying to put our students back together. I'll give you another example: tourism. Chinese tourism in the United States is a \$30 billion business for the American economy. And I was really struck when Secretary Gina Raimondo came out in late August to Beijing, and she and I talked to the representative of Los Angeles County. And this representative said that in 2019, there were 1.2 million Chinese tourists in Los Angeles alone. But in 2022, 161,000 Chinese tourists in Los Angeles. We've got to reconnect the two societies. We compete with the government of China. We're opposed on all the grounds that I suggested to what that government is doing. The people of

China are not our enemy. We do want to live in peace with China. No person in their right mind should want this relationship to end up in conflict or in war. And so we're going to have to develop a relationship where we can compete, but as the president says, our president, compete responsibly, drive down the probability of a conflict and bring our people together as ballast in the relationship is one way to do that. What I'm trying to suggest, Ryan and Patricia, for our conversation is, we have to think of this as a very complex undertaking, how we relate to the Chinese people in government. It's not simple. The pervasive color, as I learned at Johns Hopkins SAIS across the street, often in international relationship, is not black and white. It's gray. And so let's start the conversation there. Thank you very much.

HASS: Thank you, that's great. Well, thank you both for your leadership, but also for the candor and clarity of your comments this morning. I think that you've you've set us off on a really interesting course. I think it is important for us to be able to hold two contradictory thoughts in our mind at once when we think and talk about China. And I really appreciate you emphasizing that. So our plan for this morning is to try to dive into a few of the issues, to try to draw out your thinking on the outlook for the relationship going forward.

BURNS: Easy softball question.

HASS: Yeah, but most importantly, to try to preserve as much time as possible for this wonderful audience to have the opportunity to engage with you. But I will get us started. You, as you mentioned, you were in the room with both leaders in Woodside. Not many of us have had that opportunity. Bring us into the room. What was the atmosphere like? What was the tenor of conversation? How would you rate the quality of the conversation between the two leaders?

BURNS: Thank you. And Ryan, thank you for - I hope people can hear me. Thank you. No, not working? Is the voice quality ok, you can hear? Okay, good. Thank you. You've been in that room when you served the National Security Council. I think one of the advantages we have in this very important relationship is that President Biden and President Xi Jinping have known each other for 13 years now. They don't agree on a lot of things. And you can tell by my opening comments how many issues divide us. But there is a sense of mutual respect. They listen to each other. They spent a lot of time together when they were vice presidents. And then when President Xi became president, vice president, then-Vice President Biden continued to interact. And now they're two leaders and they are able to disagree constructively. Our president doesn't mince words. He's very straightforward and he defends the United States. And so I thought the quality of conversation, four and a half hours in Bali, it was about the same time between them. And they've had two in-person meetings and then five virtual meetings or phone calls because of COVID, seven meetings in the last three years. It's our best working relationship. And so that's what struck me in Woodside, California. Also, just the honesty of the debate. We know where we're competing and that sometimes the Chinese will tell me in Beijing they don't like the word competition. They would like to think we're not in competition. We both know we are in competition. And so our view is, call it what it is. That clarifies that we need to compete, but to do it responsibly, drive down the probability of a conflict, but compete and defend. And I think that quality came out as well in California. President Biden said in the press conference he thought it was a constructive meeting and productive. And he said probably the best meeting in that sense that he'd had of the seven meetings. Why? Because we had a couple of gaps we had to fill. We have an agreement on fentanyl. China is going to help us on fentanyl. We've seen that happen over the last 30 days. China is beginning to shut down some of this black-market trade, and it began in chemical precursors to the drug cartels. The test will be whether that continues. We hope it will. But as President Reagan said famously, trust but verify. And so implementing that's going to be important.

We had a real problem on military-military communications. China very unwisely shut down all of our military-to-military talks in the wake of Speaker Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August 2022. By the way, I was engaged with the Chinese government before, during, and after her visit. We defended Speaker Pelosi's right to visit. We defended Speaker McCarthy's right to meet with Tsai-ing Wen in Los Angeles, California, the Reagan Library. We think American members of Congress

have a right to go to Taiwan. China's response was to shut down our climate talks, shut down our military-to-military talks, shut down our fentanyl conversation at the time. So they agreed in California, President Xi did, to resume military-to-military communications. That's our secretary of defense to his counterpart. It's the chairman, Chairman Brown, our new chairman of the Joint Chiefs, to his counterpart. It's all the way down the line. Why is it important? Our two militaries, specifically our navies and air force, are operating in very close proximity to each other in the international waters and airspace of the Spratlys and Paracels of the South China Sea, the Senkakus of the East China Sea, and the Taiwan Strait. You've got to have a situation where, you know, God forbid, there's an accident, military, senior military people can talk to each other to defuse a crisis before it gets out of hand. So that's very important.

Third, on artificial intelligence, Ryan, and you know this well, every government in the world has to talk to each other now about the advent of AI and what it means for global stability, particularly in the military realm. And so we've agreed to have a conversation. We've got to figure out the dimensions of that and what it looks like and who's at the table. But that's going to be an important conversation. And fourth, we agreed, and both presidents, I think, firmly believe we've got to get our people back together again for the reason that I suggested that we need to work with the Chinese people. And that's something I think that most of, all American presidents have agreed on. So I thought it was, those are the four agreements that we came to. There is a lot of other conversation on issues where we disagree and we can talk about those.

HASS: Great.

KIM: Well, ambassador, let me join my colleagues in thanking you for joining us today and sharing your valuable insights. It's really a treat to engage with you. Last June, you made headlines when you did the right thing, when you said --

BURNS: I did? It's good to make headlines.

KIM: -- when you said at an event that US-China relations are at the lowest point since Nixon's opening to China.

BURNS: I do remember saying that. And it was true at the time.

KIM: And since then, the relationship weathered a considerable amount of turbulence. And as you just mentioned, great efforts were made to restore channels of communication and to stabilize this relationship. But, of course, the big question is how durable is this stabilization? And are open channels of communication alone sufficient to prevent the U.S. and China from veering into dangerous conflict?

BURNS: It's a really good question, Patricia, and thank you for asking it. You know, it's been a - I was confirmed two years ago next week by the Senate to begin my term as ambassador, and it's been a rollercoaster. I have to say, I think it's apparent it's been a rollercoaster. You know, we had in 2022 COVID and we had lockdowns and mandates in China that made it impossible for my staff and I to travel. Shanghai locked down, our consulate locked down there, real crisis situation. The president had a good meeting in Bali at the end of 2022. But then you all remember the balloon incident of the beginning of February of '23 that was preceded by the the controversy over Speaker Pelosi's visit. So the Chinese reaction both to Speaker Pelosi and the balloon incident was to shut down most senior-level conversations between the U.S. and China. I thought that was very dangerous and ill-advised of the Chinese. And as of late spring, early summer of this year, we were in a situation where we did not have highly, any highly developed cabinet contacts. We didn't have channels where the secretary of state or treasury or commerce could call their counterparts and work out issues. We were active in Beijing. Obviously, that's our job, but you want to have that higher level. And so we decided, along with the Chinese, that we had to change that situation. So it's been a remarkable last seven, eight months. Secretary Blinken was the first secretary of state to visit China in four and a half years. Secretary - that was June. Secretary

Yellen came out in July, first secretary of the treasury in four and a half, five years. Secretary Raimondo came out on her first visit to China, first visit by a secretary of commerce in four or five years. You can see how separated we had become. John Kerry came out there. The really extraordinary visit, in a way, was Henry Kissinger's visit. 100 years of age. I met him at the airport. It was about 102 degrees in mid-July, two in the afternoon. And he had just had a 20-hour flight. And he came off the plane and engaged in five days of conversations with Xi Jinping. He did a half-day seminar on AI with China's leading - with along with Eric Schmidt - with Chinese leading AI scientists. He came to the embassy and 700 of us honored him for being the father of this relationship in many ways. So I think that visit - was not our visit, he was invited by President Xi - but it helped to normalize the coming together of the two peoples. And then we had the first visit by a congressional delegation, any congressional delegation, when Majority Leader Chuck Schumer came. Three Democrats, three Republicans, 80-minute meeting with Xi Jinping on fentanyl, on trade and investment, on the Gaza war. We came together, we reengaged. Our first governor came out, Gavin Newsom, shortly thereafter. So I take you through that list. We had nothing like this in 2020, 2021, 2022. The two governments had separated. What we've done is to plug the governments back in together so that we can at least have open conversation on the competition side and the cooperation side. And I think over the next 12 months or so, as I look at 2024, implementing the agreements from California is going to be very important. Keeping the two governments connected through thick and thin is important. The Chinese practice when you hit major speed bumps is to disengage. That is not smart. And we want to keep this, these these contacts going. So that's where we are in terms of the methodology of this relationship.

KIM: All right. Thank you.

HASS: So as I look at U.S. ambassadors in Asia, I notice that there are two ambassadors that have high passion for train travel.

BURNS: I know who the other one is, my friend Rahm Emanuel.

HASS: And I think it's, I think that on, I've tried to do a informal count, I think on mileage, I think you're ahead on miles.

BURNS: Don't tell Rahm that.

HASS: That's right. But it has been a notable feature of your time as ambassador that you really have made an effort to get out of Beijing, to talk to different provincial leaders, to business leaders, to students. Help us understand what's top of mind for them. What are they thinking about? What are they talking about with you?

BURNS: Yeah. My entire first year, my, my first 11 months. We could not travel out of Beijing because of the lockdowns. The penalty was, if you want to go to Shenyang or Chengdu, you could go, but then you stay there for ten days under lockdown. You couldn't get back to the capital. Too high a price to pay. As you know, Ryan, China has an extraordinary high-speed train network. It makes a lot more sense to take the train to Shanghai - it's a little over 4 hours - than it does to go to the airport and wait and get to Shanghai. The advantage is, and I normally travel second class because that's what American investors should do. We should not be in first class. You sit next to Chinese people, you encounter people walking up and down the aisle. Yeah, people might think, well, that must be an American. Let's talk. And you're able to engage with real people. And the interesting thing is, I can't remember any of those people ask me about Taiwan. But what they want to talk about is business, trade and investment, students. "My nephew wants to go to UCLA," and stories - that high degree of connectedness of our people. We've had more than 12 million Chinese who are living in China now, who have studied American universities. That's 12 million people who understand how our democracy functions. They understand Brookings. They understand our society. And so that's why I travel by train. The other thing is to get outside of China. It's a distributed nation in some ways. You know, Chengdu is the window into western China. It's very important, as you know, very important city. Shanghai is kind of the New York and

L.A. combined of China. Nanjing is educational center. And so I do travel because that's where the Chinese people are. And we have to be out- I'm mainly in the capital, but you've got to get out to see the rest of China. And I think it helps our long, the long-term interests that I was talking about.

HASS: Yeah, I agree. I agree.

KIM: Ambassador, Washington and Beijing seem to have a philosophical difference over the concept of de-risking. So American officials often point to U.S. export restrictions and other competitive measures that have been adopted in recent years to explain that these steps are necessary to protect American security, to reduce overreliance on China. But they also make the case that the United States values its economic relations with China and doesn't want to fully decouple. On the other hand, you hear from Chinese officials who counter and say actually these measures that the United States are taking is actually seeking to limit China's economic development under the guise of national security. And so why do you think this perception gap exists and what are the implications for the bilateral relationship?

BURNS: I think it's one of the key questions in the relationship. And, you know, I told Patricia and Ryan before we came on, what's been, really, we're trying to do is we're trying to balance the national security interests and competition with the national security interests and engagement. And your question brings us to that. We have a \$690 billion, two-way trade relationship between the U.S. and China. China is the third largest trade partner. Number one and two are Mexico and Canada, free trade neighbors of the United States. 750,000 American jobs depend on trade with China. Largest market for agriculture, consumer products, health care. Look at the major parts of the American economy. 40 years has developed this extraordinary symbiosis in the two economies. We made a determination early on, that Secretary Yellen articulated right across the street at Johns Hopkins, and then Jake Sullivan came here to Brookings to articulate last spring. We're not trying to decouple these two economies. Secretary Yellen was very specific. She said that would be a disaster for the American and Chinese economies and the global economy. I was with her last night. We both spoke at the gala dinner of the U.S.-China Business Council. She went through this again and said, we are not trying to decouple. President Biden said at his press conference in California, we are against decoupling. So we're not trying to tear this relationship apart.

Jake Sullivan came here in a very important speech, and I read the Q&A from Brookings last spring - and a Q&A is really important - where he said, okay, we're not decoupling, but we have to derisk." What does that mean? The fundamental lesson we draw from the pandemic is that you don't want to have undue reliance on critical materials and critical supplies from a country that might practice economic coercion against you in a crisis. You want to bring the supply chain for certain products and supplies closer to home, the continent, the United States itself, or Mexico or Ireland, some trusted source. And Jake focused on what Secretary Raimondo is focused on. We want to prevent dual-use exports from American companies into China, prevent their use by the PLA to modernize and therefore compete with the United States military in the future. The example is October 2022 and the additional action we took on October 2023. We have shut down the ability of American companies to export advanced semiconductors, particularly for AI applications into the Chinese economy. Why? There's a civil-military fusion. The government of China can go to any Chinese company and say, we want that IP, we want that product. We're going to use it for intelligence or military purposes. It's in our national interest and it's irrefutable to keep that technology part of the battle outside of China. Sector Raimondo is very effective on this issue. During her visit in August, she said of the Chinese leadership, I am not going to compromise with you on these dual-use technologies. They are non-negotiable. This is our national security, and we've all said that to the Chinese leadership. So de-risking? Yes. Decoupling. No. We want to continue a major trade and investment relationship with China, just not in the, in the realm that might help them leapfrog over us sometime in the next ten years in military technology.

One more point, Patricia, this is important. It's been a little bit interesting for me to sit in Beijing and pound away at this issue in my discussions with the Chinese leadership and to have

them accusing us of - first of all, they were accusing - they said you're decoupling. And I kept saying we're de-risking. And there's a fundamental difference between the two. What they forget and which I have pointed out to them and others have, is you're doing the same thing. China began its real derisking with "Made in China 2025," which they made public in 2015. China's goal is to dominate a whole series of industries from, from solar and wind to battery technology, to AI and machine learning. It's a declaratory policy. They accuse us of de-risking when they've been doing the same thing. These are logical power, policies for both of us to follow. We're just a little bit more transparent about what we're doing than the Chinese are.

HASS: Ambassador, there's a lot of discussion in Washington, DC about the threat that China poses to United States. I think there's broad agreement that China poses threats, but there is not consensus on how to conceptualize what the threat is. I was wondering if you could help us sort of think through how you define the threat that China poses to United States.

BURNS: And Ryan, I think, you know, broadly described, if you look at the Congress and look at the debate in the think tanks and look at really how the Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and now Joe Biden administrations have proceeded, I think we have a high degree of uniformity, bipartisanship, on what the threat is. China wishes to become the strongest power in the Indo-Pacific. I think that is irrefutable. That's their goal. The great Lee Kuan Yew determined that was the case 12, 15 years ago. I thought that before coming into government this time, and I now I'm firmly convinced that's their long-term goal. China has a very different view of global governance and the future of the liberal order. If you look at the the three pillars of their theology, whether it's the general civilization, the civilization initiative or the security initiative or the development initiative - these are the three policies that are in the international system that China is offering - they look at a world where the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would not be central. And of course, we are attached to the liberal order because it speaks to our values and our interests, and we think this is the best order for the world. I think there's a competition there. If you look at Bob Gates' very good Foreign Affairs article of last month - and I have a lot of respect for him, he's my former boss at the National Security Council several administrations ago. You know, Bob is suggesting that there is at least a loose arrangement - not an alliance - Russia, China, Iran, North Korea. You can agree or disagree with that. But look at the way that the Chinese now are not holding North Korea to account for its violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions on ballistic missiles. Look at the way that the People's Republic of China have normalized their relationship with Iran. When Suzanne and I were working together not too long ago In historical terms, China was on our side of the table arguing and voting for sanctions against Iran. That's changed. And so, and most importantly, China has given unqualified support, in my view, to Russia for its illegal war in Ukraine. And that's the brightest red line in the international system. You can't attack your neighbor and try to destroy the country and take it over as Putin's trying to do. So we have a lot of differences with the Chinese, and it's important that we surface them publicly. And that's part of what we're, a large part of what we're doing in our private conversations as well.

HASS: Can I just follow up on that quickly? You are a long time strong advocate for democracy and human rights. It's been a through line of your career. And yet critics of the administration's approach to China have suggested that the Biden administration's pulling punches, is pulling back on these issues in service of smoother relations and a a better summit between the two leaders. Why are these critics wrong?

BURNS: Look at the statement that I made last Sunday, which is on our website. We condemn, I condemn, on behalf of the United States - and our secretary of state has talked like this as well - what they've done in Xinjiang against the Uyghur population, what they're doing in Tibet, what they've done to extinguish freedoms in Hong Kong, the lack of religious freedom, one can see that when you travel around China. And so we don't, we're not trying to downplay this value difference. It's a battle of ideas. I'll give you another example. We've started a program which is very transparent. You can find it on our web site where I've been interviewing Americans about the meaning of democracy. So I've interviewed Condoleezza Rice, Caroline Kennedy, Jon Huntsman, Gary Locke. What does democracy mean to you? You're a son or daughter of immigrants. What

does the American immigrant experience mean? What was it like the first time you're voted? We put this out in Mandarin. We're trying to get it on Weibo, on WeChat. Sometimes we're censored and sometimes we're not. We want the Chinese people to hear from Michelle Kwan. I interviewed her last week, Chinese-American great athlete, now an American ambassador to Belize. What was it like for you as a children of immigrant child of immigrants to succeed in California and then the United States? We're trying to give the Chinese people who don't get any sense, they get a distorted sense from their own government about what, who we are. A true picture of American society, of the immigrant experience, of the diversity of America, of the struggles. You know, we don't try to underplay the imperfections in our democracy. So I think we are waging a battle of ideas. And I challenge the critics to show us how we're not doing that because it's very public.

KIM: Ambassador, I'd like to turn to the war and Israel and Gaza. Beijing has taken a different approach to, than the United States in responding to Hamas's October 7th attacks on Israel. And yet both the United States and China share a common interest in preventing the spread of conflict. And both countries are concerned, along with many others, on the severe humanitarian toll that this conflict has had. And so I'm curious if you see room for coordination between Washington and Beijing on this issue. Has there been coordination? And what role can or should China play to help limit the spread of violence?

BURNS: So the way to answer your question, Patricia, is on October 7th, I was in Shanghai getting ready to receive, meet the plane of Senator Schumer, Senator Crapo and four other members of Congress. And within 2 hours of their arrival, we learned about the Hamas attacks, those vicious attacks against the people of Israel. And four days later, and I can say all this because Senator Schumer and I put this out in a press conference, four days later, Senator Schumer directly raised with Xi Jinping and with Foreign Minister Wang Yi. And the requests that he made, and he's talked about this publicly, and which I very much support and our administration is, please China, condemn Hamas for this barbaric, evil act of terrorism on October 7th. We've not seen that. Please show sympathy for the citizens of Israel under attack. Please use your influence with others in the Middle East to make sure the conflict doesn't widen. So we have had a conversation since then with the government of China. I can't speak for them, obviously, but it's important they use their influence with others, and they have friendships in the Middle East, to limit the nature of this conflict. I read People's Daily every day. They've been unremitting in their criticism of the United States on Gaza.

I'll just point out that we've contributed \$100 million to humanitarian support for Gaza and the West Bank and the state of Israel because of this horrific civilian crisis. And the Chinese contribution is not in any way, shape or form the equal of ours. I also really respect what Secretary Blinken and now Jake Sullivan today in the last couple of days have been doing. We're in the middle of this trying to do our best to end the war, but also to support the state of Israel, to help civilians, Palestinian civilians, as well as Israeli civilians. The Chinese just don't have that history in the Middle East. You've not seen that kind of involvement. I'm not being critical, I'm just stating the obvious. And when you sit in Beijing and read every day in the People's Daily, all this pounding away at us, we're in there. We're trying to do something about this. And that's the role of the United States in the world. China has, I think, a wish to become more influential in the Middle East. You saw China broker last spring, meetings between the Iranians and Saudis. We went out - I remember Jake Sullivan, Secretary Blinken and I both all of us going out to say, good for China, for trying to bring these two countries together. We thought that was positive. But in a crisis like this, we need real work to end this conflict. And I think it's really on our shoulders. I think the Chinese just are not as involved on a day-to-day basis.

KIM: Mm hmm. Turning to another conflict, to Ukraine and China, the China-Russia relationship, which you mentioned briefly earlier. There's great concern that Beijing's deepening strategic alignment with Russia is having implications for the war in Ukraine. And while Beijing has not provided lethal aid to Moscow, bilateral trade is booming between the two countries. Beijing continues to diplomatically support Moscow. They're continuing to exercise together militarily. Just yesterday, there was news that there were joint patrols, Sino-Russian patrols over the Sea of

Japan in the East China Sea. So how should the United States view this growing alignment? Is this something that we can impact the dynamics of this alignment? And what's what should we try to avoid or achieve when it comes to the Sino-Russian partnership?

BURNS: Yeah, so it's obviously a significant development that these two countries are working together. Secretary Blinken, as far back as last February, said very publicly that that China should not provide lethal military assistance to Russia for the war in Ukraine. We have not seen that happen. We watch it every day, but we've not seen it happen. As you know, you can look in the federal register, we have sanctioned Chinese companies for having deviated from the UN sanctions, for the sanctions regime against Russia, I should say. And so that's very clear as well. We have encouraged the Chinese to use their influence with Moscow to convince President Putin to end the war. That has obviously not succeeded. I don't even know what advice, can't even know what advice the Chinese have given, but it appears that the Chinese are very heavily tilted towards Russia in this conflict. They're not evenhanded. There's a new Ukrainian ambassador, Pavlo Riabikin, who's a good friend of mine in Beijing, and he arrived six months ago. And he hasn't had the access to the government of Beijing that he should have. We would hope the Chinese would be more evenhanded. Ukraine's leading trade partner pre-war was China, all that export of Ukrainian grain. The Chinese say - and the United Nations and international political meetings were neutral - but you read the People's Daily and from day one, they blame this war on the United States and incorrectly unfairly on the United States and NATO. So, you know, we're engaged in that kind of conversation with them. I have had talks with Ambassador Li Hui, who is a Chinese envoy, former ambassador of the People's Republic to, to Russia. We'll stay in touch on these issues. It's an important set of conversations, but obviously we have substantial differences when it comes to the Ukraine war.

HASS: We have a lot more questions that we would love to ask you, but I think it's time for us to yield to our audience, to have them have an opportunity to to engage with you. I just ask that that you raise your hand when you receive the microphone. Please be brief, introduce yourself and ask a question, not a statement. We'll start right here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you so much. Well, thank you so much, Ambassador Burns, for --

BURNS: It's a golden rule of conferences that microphones never work. It's not your fault, but second mic- microphones usually work.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Ambassador, thank you for coming to speak to us. My name is Jason Hsu. I'm a former legislator in Taiwan and currently a Harvard Kennedy School fellow. Thank you for for being part of this very important conversation. So it seems to me that you've described a very positive evolution of a U.S. and China relations. And they are areas that are optimistic the U.S. and China are working towards and also coordinating. But it seems to me that they are a fundamental difference of how two sides view the question of Taiwan. So my question to you is what suggestion or advice you would give or what more can be done on three sides, meaning Taiwan, U.S., and China, to mitigate the potential risks or potential conflict that might arise in the years to come? So thank you.

BURNS: Jason, thank you. And if I may, and very respectfully, I, I don't feel optimistic about the future of U.S.-China relations because I feel that we need to see how things develop. We had a very good and productive meeting in California. Can we now sustain that engagement? Can we meet our commitments to each other? And so far the Chinese have met their commitments on fentanyl and I think will in terms of our military-to-military contacts. But let's see that happen over time, because I've lived the past, the roller coaster past, where communication is cut off and then put back on. And so I wouldn't say I'm optimistic. I'm careful about this. Maybe realistic, hopeful, if you will, but hopeful's different than being optimistic. Just wanted to say that for you and thank you for your question. Obviously, the American position on Taiwan is clear. President Biden said in his press conference in California that our policy hasn't changed. And he said the policy of all

American presidents going back a half century, it's not changed. And as we look ahead to January 13th, to the Taiwan elections, our strong expectation and hope is that those elections be free of intimidation or coercion or interference from all sides. The United States is not involved and will not be involved in these elections. And our abiding hope on this whole complicated issue of Taiwan is that there be a peaceful resolution of cross-strait differences. That is the focus of American policy. That was the focus of all the administrations back to 1979, to President Carter's administration, even back to the Shanghai communique of 1972. President Nixon and and and Premier Zhou Enlai. And we insist on that. A peaceful resolution of dispute. There is a status quo in place., you know it very well, over the last seven decades, and that status quo has largely worked. It's kept the peace amid these cross-strait differences. And so we believe that's the way forward, and we hope very much that we're going to see responsible behavior on all sides as we lead up to the January 13 elections and afterwards. I hope that answers your question. Thank you.

KIM: We have a lady right here in that row, Mallie.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hello ambassador, Ambassador Burns --

BURNS: Try the second, second mic.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you. I'm Rebecca Keiser from the National Science Foundation. So my question is about U.S.-China scientific collaborations. As you know, we do have concerns about the lack of reciprocity in our collaborations with the PRC, where we feel that we give more than we get. And yet it's a complicated relationship, of course, and I'm wondering what your view is about scientific collaboration with the PRC.

BURNS: Thank you. I'm smiling because I agree with you on the value, the word reciprocity and the value of reciprocity. It's kind of a golden rule in diplomacy. The Science and Technology agreement was the very first agreement that President Carter and and Deng Xiaoping signed back in January of 1979. And it's been the bedrock of our cooperation, research institutions, academic institutions, some of our great science and technology universities, Carnegie Mellon, Stanford, UT-Austin, Caltech and MIT have been involved. It's very important. That agreement lapsed a couple of months ago. We agreed to extend it by six months. I met with the science and tech, the newest minister of science and technology just a couple of weeks ago in Beijing, and we are beginning a discussion with them on whether or not to extend it, to have a new agreement and what would be the issues involved. And I think it's complicated. An agreement made in 1979 does not account for artificial intelligence. It doesn't account for a world of biotech and machine learning and quantum mathematics. And so it needs to be modernized. But we also have to -- here's why I'm in violent agreement with you. We have to make sure it's fair between both sides. So I cannot anticipate where the negotiations are going to go. I'm not trying to be too positive or negative. We're just starting it. But that opening conversation I had, you know, we put down our expectations that it had to be modernized, that it's not a given that we're going to agree. I think both sides agree on that. We're going to have to negotiate this and see where we are in the next couple of months. That's exactly where things stand now. Thank you.

HASS: Thank you. We have a question right here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thanks. Ambassador, thanks for sharing your time with us. My name is Alex Lennon, and I run the Washington Quarterly over at GW. I wanted to ask you, from your experience in China, about the quality of policy debate within China.

BURNS: Policy debate?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: You know, the old rule in China used to be you can criticize policy that the administration does, but not the party. That at least they used to be true until 2015, maybe 2020, somewhere in there. But more importantly, based on your experience, when you're not crisscrossing the country and train routes, when you're in Beijing and Shanghai specifically, among

intellectual the policy elite in China, to what extent do you see that policy debate? To what extent is it present in your ears? And do you think it gets to the leadership's ears when they have disagreements among economic, national security policy within China itself?

BURNS: Yeah, it's a good question. It's a difficult question to answer because, you know, I want to be respectful of my role there, which is, a lot of what I do, I don't talk about in public, obviously. But there's no question that China has an authoritarian system. And there's a centralization of power even over the last decade or so that's quite noticeable, different than 20 or 30 or 40 years ago. And so, frankly, in conversations with people outside the government or in just in reading the press in China, the state-controlled press, you don't see a lot of, you don't see a multiplicity of views. What I can talk about in a quite forthright way is how often our country is distorted in the media. The nature of our society, the struggles that we have here in our country, what we believe or don't believe, are often distorted. So, frankly, one of the major preoccupations of our mission, working with my very, very skilled colleagues in the public diplomacy realm, is to try to tell the truth about American society, American history, U.S.-China relations, to the Chinese people. And so it's kind of a cat and mouse game sometimes. We put Sec -- I'll give you an example, we put Secretary Blinken's speech, this is May of 2022, the big speech on invest, align, compete, on U.S.-China relations. We put it out on Weibo, on WeChat, and on Twitter. We have 1.2 million followers on our embassy Twitter account to the Chinese-speaking world, and within 2 hours had been censored, taken down. We put it back a day later under a different title, and it survived about 20 minutes. But, you know, it's interesting, given the scale of the netizen community in China, if you've got out there for 22 hours or even 20 minutes, you've got millions of people looking at it. We consider that a success. We are all about the free exchange of ideas in our society. That's who America, that's what America is. And we want the Chinese people to have a full and accurate picture of our society and not to see it distorted. And, you know, I have been and my colleagues have been dismayed by sometimes what we hear at the daily briefing in the foreign ministry, outright distortion of our country, of our values, of our people and of our policy. So part of what we have to do there is to defend our society and give people an accurate view of it. And we take that very seriously. Thank you.

KIM: Right here at the front, please.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Does it work?

BURNS: First, ambassador.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Julia Chang Bloch, U.S.-China Education Trust. Ambassador, it's a rare opportunity and privilege for me to hear you twice in person, two days in succession. My question relates to the question of keeping communication channels open and broadening it. From the perspective of an NGO, as you know, the, we're being hit by a double whammy. On the one hand, the operating environment in China has tightened to the degree, made so difficult that many of our other NGOs are leaving the field. We are still standing. At the same time, funding sources are drying up fast and almost completely. So with the American students now, not many are continuing to be interested in studying in China. The fact that, as you said, tourism is also dropping.

BURNS: Yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And you know who's left to talk about America in its full --

BURNS: Dimensions, yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: -- picture. I, we really need your advice. How do we stay in the game?

BURNS: Thank you. And ambassador, thank you for your remarks. And Ambassador Bloch spoke last night, and I agree with everything you said. We need bring in more American students to China. It's a real passion of ours and of mine personally. Again, the way I look at this relationship is we have a highly competitive relationship with the government of China where we defend our national interest, but we have an absolute national interest to engage the people of China, 1.4 billion Chinese. And COVID pulled us apart, so we've launched a major effort to try to convince American universities to come back to China. NYU Shanghai's there, Hopkins Nanjing is there. The Tsinghua program, the Schwarzman program at Tsinghua is there. I know Duke is coming back to its magnificent campus in Kunshan, north of Shanghai. Arizona state leadership, I think, wants to bring students back. All good. But so many universities, for good reasons, shut down during zero COVID. It wasn't a place that students should be. I think engaging the younger generation of the two countries is pivotal. If you agree with my assumption that we'll be the two leading most powerful countries 20 and 30 years from now. So therefore we want to compete peacefully. But the people of the two countries have to understand each other. It's so important. I think we've all seen that as we travel around the world. Whatever part of the world we're talking about, people are a big part of international politics, not just people with titles like me. So we're trying to do that from the grassroots level. I agree with what you said last night. President Xi, the last thing I'll say, in San Francisco put out a big vision. He said there should be 50,000 American students in China. I think he's right to say we should have a big vision. Getting there from 700 people now to 50,000, we've never had 50,000 American students in the history, going back to 1784, which was when we began our relationship with the Qing Dynasty. It's a big vision. Let's work towards it. I think we agree with this that we've got to bring the people together. And thank you for what you're doing with your foundation.

HASS: Well, in the spirit of that, I want to see if we can ask anyone under 30 to offer a view or perspective.

BURNS: You've got to be under 30.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 26. I'm Noah Silverman, I work for the World Bank. And you talk about the need for more person-to-person engagement. I'm actually going as a tourist to China next week, but I have to fly to London to get a flight to China. They brought back the Beijing flight, I think it's \$4,000 in economy if you want to go. So is there a plan to bring back all the flights we had?

BURNS: We don't set the prices. Can I just, that's a really important question. If we're going to bring the people back, we've got to have flights. The Empress of China left New York Harbor in the first year of our independence, and it took about nine or ten months to get that ship to Canton. Now we fly. Data point, pre-COVID, three and a half years ago. They were 345 direct flights per week between the United States and China. Last April? 12. Right now, 70. We hope in 2024, can we double that number? Getting back to 345 is difficult. I've learned a lot about aviation negotiation. It's got to be reciprocal. And the American airlines have to be defended so they can operate on a level playing field with their Chinese competitors. So our Department of Transportation, our great secretary, Pete Buttigieg, is doing the right thing by insisting on reciprocity. And so we're inching forward. But what that means is, when I had to fly, I was coming to New York and Washington from Beijing. The only route I could fly on Sunday was to San Francisco and then across the country to the East Coast, because there are no American airlines, American, Delta, or United to the East Coast right now direct from Beijing. So in June, it took me three flights and 32 hours to get from Beijing to Washington. And I think for the average person, if you look at the the cost of travel is prohibitive. So this is our job, the two governments, to have successful negotiations, particularly in this next 12-month period, to get this, to get the flights expanded, because you're not going to have people-to-people coming together unless the flights come back. And we're trying hard on this. And Department of Transportation is doing a really good job for us.

KIM: We have time for one more question. And how about the woman right here, in the, yes, right here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Good afternoon or good morning. Thank you. Brookings. I'm Niamh King. I work with the Aspen institute. Great to see you, Ambassador Burns. As Suzanne mentioned in her introduction of you, you've thought about a lot of vexing problems. I am wondering your thoughts on India, because I think there's been some democratic backsliding. Mike Abramowitz and Freedom House would agree with that. But it seems to be kind of pivotal in some of the strategy of how America's thinking about China. Do you think this is an opportunity for Modi to behave in a more difficult manner? Elections next year, are you worried about that at all?

BURNS: Thanks for that easy question. Let me answer it this way. Obviously, I'm not the American ambassador to Delhi and my friend, Ambassador Garcetti is. I will leave for him to talk about U.S.-India relations. But I can say I was the India negotiator for the George W. Bush administration as we were trying to expand our strategic relationship, the civil nuclear deal, which was three years in the making back in that administration, and then to see the uniformity of interests really going back to the Clinton administration, to George W. Bush, to Barack Obama, to Donald Trump, to Joe Biden. Each of those presidents has seen India and the development of a strategic relationship as an unqualified good for American national security. And each of them has worked on it. There's been a baton passed, if you will, from president to president. And President Biden, I think, has significantly strengthened our strategic relationship with India. Why does it matter? We need the democratic countries of the world to be present in the Indo-Pacific, to be working together. And India, not a formal treaty ally, India and the United States are working together in the Bay of Bengal, in the Western Pacific, in both the air and the navy, and working closely with Japan, working closely with Australia. And that's significantly strengthening what we need to strengthen, the health and the military power and effectiveness and in other realms of these two democratic countries. So I think this is one of the most significant strategic developments of the last several decades. The emergence of India as a partner of the United States and the other countries that I mentioned. And I hope it goes forward. As I sit in Beijing, it certainly helps us to do our job knowing that we've had this strengthened set of both alliances and in the case of India, a strategic partnership. We want to maintain the openness of the sea lanes. We want freedom of navigation, whether it's through the Strait of Malacca, but significantly through the Spratlys and Paracels and Senkakus and the Taiwan Strait. It's critical for international law, for the liberal order and for the global economy. And you can see how hard, and I think successfully, President Biden has worked on this.

HASS: Well, Ambassador Burns, this has been a tour de force. You've given us a framework to think about the relationship and signposts that we can observe to see if we're on track and making measurable progress. You've also challenged us to get beyond black and white thinking, to be comfortable in shades of gray, to understand the need to hold thoughts that are in tension with each other about the competitive dynamics of the relationship, as well as the areas where mutual self-interest should guide us towards some form of cooperation. So I thank you so much for your time and your insights. Please join me in thinking Ambassador Burns.