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TRANSCRIPT

Event

“China’s Military on Parade”

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CSIS EXPERTS

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Kari A. Bingen: Good morning. Welcome to the HTK Series, where we discuss national security developments and strategic forces issues of the day. HTK stands for Heather, Tom, and Kari, but for you defense wonks out there it also stands for "hit to kill."

On September 3rd, China held its Victory Day parade to mark the 80th anniversary of China's victory over Japan. The parade not only marked this milestone but also showcased China's military and nuclear capabilities for domestic and foreign audiences.

(Video clip plays.)

Chinese President Xi Jinping: (Through interpreter.) All servicemembers should faithfully perform their secret duties, speed up the building of a world-class military, and firmly safeguard China's sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity.

(Video clip ends.)

Ms. Bingen: The parade, for the first time, featured China's nuclear triad, including a new ICBM and long-range missile, as well as AI-powered drones and hypersonic missiles. Several foreign leaders attended the parade, notably Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Iranian President Pezeshkian, and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. So what new capabilities were revealed? What do they mean for China's strategic forces and posture in the region? How should the United States respond to China's modernization efforts?

I'm Kari Bingen, director of the Aerospace Security Project here at CSIS. Here to unpack these questions I'm joined today by Heather Williams, director of the Project on Nuclear Issues, and Tom Karako, director of the Missile Defense Project. We will ask audience questions as well, so please go ahead and submit those via the homepage.

Heather, let's start at the top. And I'm going to bring in someone not here, but a good friend of ours and colleague, Mick Ryan, who is a nonresident with our Australia chair and retired Army general. He actually is putting a piece out on CSIS today analyzing the parade as well, but he has a line in his commentary which I'll start with. Quote, "Analysts don't watch these events for the music," end quote. (Laughter.) But so let's jump in on that. As you analyze what you've seen in images, what you've read, what you've talked to other colleagues about, what were some of the big developments that you saw from this military parade? Were there any surprises, any omissions that might be noteworthy? And then, if you can put that into a big-picture context, what is the theme to the totality of those showcased weapons? You know, for what purpose and targeted at whom?

Heather Williams: Yeah. People might not watch it for the music, but they might watch it for the showmanship. The first thing I'll point to that supposedly was there were 80,000 doves and 80,000 balloons were released. So it sounds like they were really putting on a show here. I will do a kind of a quick run through of what we did see. It'll be a bit of numbers for different platforms. Then we'll stop with the numbers, and then I'll kind of shift to what does this all mean and how does it fit into China's bigger strategic picture.

So this was the first time that China showcased its full nuclear triad – land, air, and sea capabilities. And the one really new capability, the big reveal, was this new ICBM, the DF-61. And we've got two images of it behind me, and the one that clearly says DF-61 that you can see there. What you can't totally see isn't just how big this is. It's on eight axles. This is a huge tell, which means that it is mobile, can be obviously moved around. China already has mobile missile, but this is a really big one. ICBM, so range probably around 11,000 kilometers.

The other parts of the land nuclear capabilities within the triad that China showcased, one was this, DF-5C, which was the other image up there. And, again, just huge, huge missile going on here. The DF-5 is an older ICBM that China had, but we believe that this is a new variant. It's MIRVed. Some estimates say – that means that it can carry multiple warheads that are independently retargetable upon reentry. And it's believed that they could have 10 on there. So this is a really, really heavy missile. These are probably some of the missiles that are in the silo field in western China that were revealed by really wonderful open-source analysts a few years ago.

And it's really interesting because up until pretty recently the Chinese government has been saying, those aren't missile silos. Those aren't silo fields. Those are wind farms. And this parade is kind of, like, saying, yeah, you know –

Tom Karako: (Laughs.) Green energy.

Dr. Williams: Exactly, yeah. That's what China is all about, isn't it? And so I think that a lot that was being shown here was kind of saying what had been the quiet part out loud about what their strategic capabilities are. The one other part of the land capabilities and land leg that I want to point to is the DF-31BJ. Again, this was a – the DF-31 was an existing platform. This is a new variant that's an ICBM and also a silo variant. So as has kind of been the way with the Chinese, very heavy on the land capabilities. On the air leg, what we saw was a new ALBM, air-launched ballistic missile,

the JL-1. And then on the sea leg we saw the JL-3, which is sea-launch ballistic missile.

But I also do want to briefly point to some nonnuclear capabilities that they showcase, and I am probably going to pick both of your brains on what that all means as well. But a couple of the things that we saw, one was this DF-17, which is a road-mobile intermediate range ballistic missile. This one is important because it's going to carry China's hypersonic glide vehicle, the DF-ZF. It's a lot of acronyms going on here. They also showed the DF-26D, which has swappable warheads. What I found interesting, and I'll say a bit more about this in a second, they only showed the nonnuclear variant of this, the conventional one.

Some other things that we saw, a lot of lasers and a lot of directed energy weapons, many of which seemed to be designed for ships. And so, the naval theme was very prominent for me throughout this parade. Also a lot of hypersonics, the YJ-21, a hypersonic that is air launched. There's also a ship-launched version of it, 1,500-kilometer range, drones, underwater drones, multiple rocket launchers. And so there was a lot that they were putting out there and putting on show, a lot of strategic capabilities in particular.

I think it's really interesting what they didn't show, particularly on the nuclear side of things. So they didn't show the DF-27, which is a missile that supposedly was tested in 2023 and deployed in 2024. And so, when I saw what they showcased I was, like, that was the one thing I was really looking for. And it wasn't there. And I was like, huh, well, that's kind of curious what might be going on here. And so, I think one possible explanation, the pattern that I saw, they did not showcase any non-ICBM-range systems. The only nuclear platforms they showcased have a range of around 10(,000) to 11,000 kilometers, which is really important. And I'll come to that. And then also the same with the DF-26, also known as the Guam killer. They only showed the nonnuclear variant of that.

So, what does this all mean? My three big takeaways from what I saw. The first, it's a whole lot of nuclear platforms for only 600 warheads, which is what DOD estimates China's arsenal currently is at. They project that they could get to 1,000 by 2030. SIPRI and other think tanks and researchers estimate that China's nuclear arsenal, the stockpile, is growing by rate of 20 percent a year. This is rapid. This is a massive quantitative and qualitative buildup that we're seeing. But for that many platforms, I would think that China is just going to keep expanding. So the thing that I would say to watch, in that sense, is watch their fissile material production. They are going to have to start producing more plutonium to get those warheads. They're probably going to run out

around 2030. So, for me, that's the big thing with China that I want to keep watching after this parade.

Second big takeaway, it was the mobility that they showed on those DF-61s. Those are on TELs. They have other mobile capabilities. And a lot of this was about the ocean, was about naval competition. And so, getting more mobility and some forward force projection, along with deterrence purposes – or, deterrence functions within that region. The final one that I'm really curious to what you both think about this one, it is that they only showcased nuclear capabilities that can hit the West Coast of the United States. And so my take on that is that they are trying to say, we stand by our no first use pledge. And, you know, we might have regional ambitions. Their capabilities suggest that they do have regional ambitions. But that they want to keep those conventional, and their nuclear arsenal is specifically being designed to deter the United States from getting involved in that conventional conflict if and when it comes.

However, I'm curious what you think about that, Tom, and also just what you took away. Also, Kari, yeah.

Dr. Karako: Yeah. I think that's a very interesting observation. And I think perhaps the nuclear for the United States and the nonnuclear for the region, I see that as playing into, I would call it, the three Ps that we saw on display here – politics, propaganda, and pageantry. I mean, starting with Xi's cesarian, triumphant entrance in the limousine, to the "Reservoir Dogs" walk, with all the world leaders, kind of leading them behind in this, you know, triumphant, peaceful, again, pageantry, kind of thing. It was very carefully choreographed. And if you listen to Xi's speech, which, if I had a nickel for every time he said the phrase "Japanese war of aggression," meaning he laid on the we're here for peace thing with a trowel. Laid it on very heavy, just in case anybody was going to miss it.

And so what I what I see there is, again, on the geopolitical side, that we are holding the United States, the aggressor, way over there at bay, and that we're here to be the leader for the region. And I got to tell you, not – he wasn't there at the parade, but from India, Modi, gladhanding with Xi a couple days ago, boy, that was an interesting look. You know, yes, there was the four, you know, Axis of Autocracy – Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea – all there, you know, dutifully paying tribute. But to see Modi there, in the wake of the United States just slapping a 50 percent tariff on India – total own-goal. Look, we just renamed one of our combatant commands to include India, INDOPACOM as opposed to PACOM. So that's, I would say, very unfortunate. And then I do have to say, just staying in the political side, it was a little unfortunate and disappointing to see the prime minister of Slovakia there, kind of, again,

paying obeisance to – at least to Putin, for instance – as a member of NATO, I'll say.

And on a capabilities side, you know, look, I always look for the conventional strike and the missile defense things first. You're right. They didn't want it to be lost on us that, hey, this is a DF-61. They painted in big letters just for our benefit. Couple other things. You mentioned the DF-26, right? Why is that so – the Guam killer – why is that so important, kind of going along with the DF-21D, the carrier killer? It's because Guam is so important to U.S. operational plans in the region. And they want to tout that in a big way, of holding that – holding that at risk. And there was a half-dozen different types of low- and upper-tier air and missile defense capabilities. One of them that was put on display, apparently for the first time, was this HQ-29. We've heard about this in the People's Military – People's Republic of China reports and the like that we've done on the show, for instance. But this is a – reportedly, a very large, or a couple large, exoatmospheric ballistic missile midcourse interceptors/potential ASAT capability.

I do want to make the observation that, you know, if China can have a road mobile midcourse exoatmospheric missile defense system, I'd kind of like to have one of those as well. That mobility thing is an important one.

Dr. Williams: Sneak in Golden Dome, yeah.

Dr. Karako: Transportable GBIs, they're coming back.

Ms. Bingen: Yeah, I think they showcased something like half a dozen air and missile defense systems, both lower tier, upper tier, right? Exoatmospheric intercept capabilities.

Dr. Karako: Yeah. And in addition to those, they had these probably lower-tier HPMs, high-powered microwaves, and lasers. And look, directed energy is useful for various domains, hold at risk all kinds of different things, but they appeared to be pulling out some counter-UAV kind of capabilities there.

I'll just end with a fourth P. And this is a question mark, is, you know, how much of this is really real? How much of this is not just fielded, but has a high readiness level and all that sort of stuff? Or is this a Potemkin parade? And I don't know the answer to that. But I think there's at least a question on that front.

Ms. Bingen: Well, I want to come back to that, but I'll add my bit of commentary on this as well. And, Tom, I was actually, as you were looking at how often

they said the word "Japan," I was looking at how often President Xi said the word "peace." And I very much saw this event as China and their axis partners here, their opportunity to reshape historical narratives as well as present day narratives. So, this quote from Xi, you know, "We have a choice now of peace or war, dialogue or confrontation, and win-win outcomes or zero-sum games." Choice of peace I thought was deeply ironic when he was flanked by Putin and the Iranian president. And, you know, Putin's just unending aggression against and, you know, attack against Ukraine.

Dr. Karako: And the day after the parade, I think, he launched some giant drone attack on Ukraine, just to kind of dig in the irony.

Dr. Williams: Yeah. Like, the biggest day of strikes possibly in the war since the very beginning of the war. But let's all get together and talk about peace.

Ms. Bingen: But then the other thing I wonder is, you know, you have Xi at the center, Putin standing next to him. How is Putin thinking about this? I mean, this is clearly – was he looking at China's military force now with a bit of envy? I mean, this was a bit of we're now the – you know, the preeminent power in Russia. You're now the junior partner. So how did Putin react to that?

Some of my big takeaways from all of the different systems and capabilities, Heather, you outlined were, one, is this was very much messaging on U.S. counter intervention capability. So anti-ship, hypersonic missiles, torpedoes, that extra, extra-large underwater drone, wingman drone. This is, you know, U.S., we can reach you. We can reach you in Guam. We can reach you undersea. We can reach you from air to surface, and hold you at bay. Second area was, given all the nuclear capabilities you highlighted and the mobility of them, they very much are focused on a second strike – survivable second-strike nuclear capability.

And then the third piece for me was the speed and scale of China's defense establishment, and the variety of weapons that they showcased. I think, you know, plenty of weapons, a big change from 10 years ago when they last did this kind of parade, but something, like, a dozen or so weapons were debuted – publicly debuted for the first time. So just the scale of what they're doing, as well as the speed in which they've – you know, Xi made it a point of modernizing his military, leveraging advanced technology. And you're seeing that showcased.

But it does beg the question, to your point on the Potemkin village, are these systems in production? Are they fielded? What does this say about

operational capability and warfighter readiness? I don't know if either of you have thoughts on this.

Dr. Williams

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, a lot of – at least on the nuclear side, a lot of what they showcase there isn't – we don't believe – I haven't seen in any of the open-source reporting that it's been tested. The DF-61, I mean, we had no reports of that at all, really. And so no reports about whether or not that's been tested. And so, a lot of what they were rolling out – I have a lot of questions about readiness. Some of their previous platforms, they have had some testing challenges. And so, I think we're absolutely right to question that.

But just to pick up on your point, Kari, about optics, particularly for Putin. You know, does Putin have a little bit of envy going on here? You know, you talk about having a lot of nuclear-capable platforms. The Russians have a lot. The Russians have a lot of dual capable platforms. But that "Reservoir Dogs" image, I love that reference to it, it was Xi is always in the middle. He is flanked by Putin, and then he has Kim on the other side of him. And it was very clear, this is a China show. This is all about the Chinese Communist Party, their leadership amongst this Axis of Upheaval.

One thing that did jump out at me was in a lot of the images I saw – maybe it was just coincidence – but the Iranian president was not as visible in all of them. And when we, sitting here in D.C., talk about the Axis of Upheaval, it's usually those four – Russia, China, Iran, DPRK – together. And Iran seems to be a little bit – was, like, the junior partner in all of this. So that made me wonder, following the 12-day war, I mean, if those are your allies they didn't really –

Dr. Karako:

They're not with him center stage.

Dr. Williams:

They didn't – they weren't great friends, let's just say, during the 12-day war, in the way that Tehran might have been expecting. So, you know, you said, Potemkin arsenal. I see this as a bit of a Potemkin alliance. This is not something like NATO. This does not run deep in terms of, you know, coming to each other's aid, collective security agreements. It very much seems to be an alliance of convenience.

Nonetheless, the optics of them all together, looking at this massive Chinese arsenal, sends a very strong message to the U.S., to the rest of the world, that this is not just about the U.S. military and a U.S.-led world order. There is an alternative order that we are forming and that China is leading. And so that was, for me, the big picture message that they were trying to send. But we should be questioning the readiness of a lot of these capabilities and the depths of the alliances, I think.

Ms. Bingen: This is the first time all four of those leaders were together.

Dr. Williams: Mmm hmm, right.

Dr. Karako: But that kind of group walking, I mean, you saw the leader from Belarus, for instance, kind of dutifully in tow. And you saw the Slovakian way in the back kind of, you know, trudging along. I think the Potemkin alliance thing is a good thing there. But, you know what? It may just be enough to – they don't have to actually like each other – (laughs) – or care about each other personally. But, you know, they can coordinate and cause a lot of difficulty for us, and shenanigans that would be very difficult for us to deal with.

Ms. Bingen: And I also think about the messaging. You know, we talked about there's clearly a projection of power messaging to the United States and the West. But there is some regional messaging here as well. And it is very much we are open for business. And China, for a long time, was a net importer of weapon systems. And many of these capabilities that they showcased, these are domestically designed, produced. You know, we are – we are open for business. And so you're seeing that shift as well, from importer to exporter.

Dr. Karako: On that point, when it comes to there for instance, is the HQ-9, right? Some of these older Chinese AMD systems, you know, are probably kind of knockoffs from the – say, the Russian S-300 or S-400, something like that. But there's a new generation there. And so, back to your question a minute ago, Kari, about kind of what's the body language between Xi and Putin, is very interesting. But the economic, the military export all – the energy trends are just so profound in the direction of China, that Putin also looks like a bit of a junior partner there. You know, he has to be worrying about his Siberian border in the coming decades.

Dr. Williams: Hmm. The other audience that I just really quickly want to bring into this, because we talked about the U.S. as an audience, the region, and potential buyers as an audience. I do also think there was obviously a domestic audience for this one.

Ms. Bingen: Absolutely.

Dr. Williams: And they were trying to send this message, especially coming up to the anniversary of the founding of the party, the anniversary – continuing anniversaries of World War II, that they will want to keep pushing this message really hard. Just one interesting thing that my colleague, Joseph Rodgers has highlighting and is publishing on is the domestic audience

that, up until now, probably believed a lot of the party's message, which was, no, no, those are not missile silo fields. Those are wind farms. No, no, we are not massively and rapidly expanding our nuclear arsenal. We are completely – you know, we're not the ones who are going to start this arms race. And for any of us who have been in diplomatic settings, multilateral diplomatic settings, we also hear those messages.

And this really just took the light off of all of that and just said, you know, let's – as I said before – say the quiet part out loud. But this is going to be really important for the Chinese domestic audience. There are some really fantastic Chinese scholars on nuclear issues, some of them in China, some of them are abroad. And now that those these capabilities are fully out there and on show, I'm actually really hoping that that inspires a bit more internal transparency in getting those Chinese experts to help us better understand what is the point of these capabilities? What is China's doctrine? Because thus far, in terms of its nuclear doctrine, China has just been completely opaque.

They say, our doctrine is no first use. Next question. And, you know, forgive me if I don't totally believe that no first use is your doctrine, and there might be more to that. They refuse to engage in arms control dialogues. They refuse any transparency measures. And so now that this has been put out there, I hope that some domestic experts, I hope that the rest of the world, I hope the Global South starts asking them some hard questions. Like, if you really have no first use, how can we verify that? How can we come see that? Why do you have this many ICBMs? Why do you need that many MIRVs on your ICBMs? And so the international community, particularly in multilateral diplomacy circles, really needs to be asking a lot of questions here.

Ms. Bingen: Well, that ties in well to a question from the audience. This is from a Japanese researcher, who asks: From the observation of the lineup of all of these weapons in the parade, do you see any possibility of a change in the PLA's doctrine, particularly related to nuclear forces?

Dr. Williams: I mean, for me, no, because it wasn't really clear what their doctrine was. No first use is – you can say that that's your doctrine, but when you are building an arsenal and you are demonstrating some regional and geostrategic ambitions that might rely on threats of first use, it really begs plausibility there. And so, I take this as just yet more evidence that we need more transparency into what China's intentions are for its strategic arsenal. In the absence of that transparency, you really have to forgive the U.S. and its allies for assuming a worst-case scenario, which would be intentions towards Taiwan, intentions – nefarious intentions towards U.S. allies in the region, and wanting to threaten the United States with nuclear weapons in the event of a regional conflict. And so, if

China continues to be opaque and to refuse to engage in any sort of dialogue on this, then that – as I said, I think it is reasonable for the U.S. and other countries and allies to have to assume the worst.

Dr. Karako: So, I would say, in terms of – in terms of – I think that's exactly right. Again, in terms of the messaging about the nuclear force, it would appear to be, look, we're trying – we're trying to make the world safe for a conventional war that we can fight and win – that China can fight and win, number one. That's why, for instance, I paid attention to the anti-ship missiles, you know, so conspicuously on display, to hold U.S. military and allied maritime capability at risk.

And I'll go back to your comment about the audiences. First of all, on the domestic audience side I guess I'm a little less sanguine in the sense that, you know, when I see the, I don't know, thousands of folks dressed in white clapping in this meticulously choreographed way, had very North Korean vibes on that front. And I guess I can't help but think that they're pretty good at – with some notable exceptions – pretty good at population control and pushing people down. And so, yes, there may be some glimmers of insight of what they're really up to, but I think they've done a pretty good job of the propaganda piece of this.

And then on the international side, you know, what this makes me think about is when China hosted the Olympics. And they put tons of money into the pageantry of hosting the Olympics. And one of the results of that was more foreign investment in China after that. Like, wow, this is – this is this is important. This is a growth area. So it's going to be interesting how this is perceived on the outside.

Ms. Bingen: So, there's another question that came in. And I'll frame it here by saying, you know, we are less than two years away from 2027. So China is showing us that they are on track from a military readiness perspective, right? Xi charged that his military forces should be ready or prepared, come 2027. So the question here is, if the PLA's new and existing anti-ship, anti-air, and maritime capabilities, do we see these eroding the U.S.' qualitative edge in these domains? And what will this mean for us regional deterrence and escalation strategies? So now let's talk about the security implications for our capabilities, our posture, our investments.

Dr. Karako: I guess my reaction is kind of like Heather's a minute ago, which is these – there's pictures here that we may not have seen before, but we kind of knew a lot of all this was already kind of in development or already kind of there, again, back to the previous reports put out by DOD and other folks. So not a lot of big surprises. It's just new pictures that kind of go along with it. And so not necessarily in itself a change of either doctrine

or, you know, oops, they've got some new thing we didn't – we didn't anticipate, as much as it is kind of a ratification. Just in case you weren't paying attention for the past five years, just another ratification of where they're going in terms of this stuff, and just how much of a challenge it is on the conventional deterrent side. And how important it is for the United States, with our allies, to continue pushing on the conventional blunting deterrence capability in terms of shipbuilding, right?

And it's great to see that the Department of Defense is pushing after an approach to submarines, for instance, on that front. But we need lots of Mark 41-equipped vessels all over the Pacific, ourselves, the Japanese, the Australians, and, yes, also the Koreans. And then, likewise, lots and lots of conventional fires. And news reports suggest that Deputy Secretary Feinberg is pushing like nobody's business to get after a massive munitions surge. You know, we've kind of been – we had been increasing over the past couple years and over the Ukraine conflict, but now it's – the pedal is going to the floor even more.

So hopefully, and I think in the coming weeks and months, we're going to see maybe a supplemental, maybe it's in the reconciliation bill or something like that. But I'm hopeful that a munitions – and to include defensive munitions – to replace the enormous number that we spent in the 12-day war and in the Red Sea operations, and all that. But also, now that it's sunk in, oh, we really need a lot more – a lot more PAC-3s, a lot more THAADs, Standard Missiles, et cetera. We probably need a lot more than our previous objective requirements suggested.

Dr. Williams: I'll pick up there, on the nuclear – right up where you left off on the nuclear side, I think, because deterrence in the region, its capabilities – and obviously I have my wish list of regional capabilities, but also on the credibility side of things, I think we have to have that conversation as well. But on the capability side, this is – you know, to me this demonstrates all the more the case for regional things like SLCM-N, which I'm – you know, I'm still waiting for the –

Dr. Karako: Oh, are you for SLCM-N, Heather? I wasn't sure. OK, yeah. (Laughs.)

Dr. Williams: I am. Yeah, I know. Like every episode, I'm like, how about SLCM-N? But also –

Ms. Bingen: We're still waiting for that EO.

Dr. Williams: I still am waiting for that EO. I think I might be waiting for a while. But also, things like standoff capability – nuclear standoff capabilities, because the difference obviously, in the Indo-Pacific and our Indo-

Pacific alliances from Europe, is in Europe there are forward-deployed U.S. nuclear weapons and there is a NATO nuclear mission to accompany – to accompany that. And in the Pacific region we don't have that. And so, I think that having some sort of nuclear assurances in that region are just going to be really important.

But on the credibility side of things, you need the political commitment to go along with those capabilities. And so, things like, you know, continuing to participate in dialogues with the Japanese and South Koreans, things like AUKUS, those are really important signals to say, even if we do have these additional capabilities, there's a political commitment that comes along with them. And that that is what should really not only deter the Chinese from causing mischief in the region, particularly with our allies, but also reassure those allies as well.

Ms. Bingen: Well, and that's a great way to end this segment here, because I want to pick up on those regional cooperation paradigms. I had the great opportunity to travel to Japan last weekend and participate in the Pacific Future Forum. This was a forum discussing security, economic trade issues, hosted by the U.K. government aboard their beautiful aircraft carrier, the HMS Prince of Wales. And for me, it was another reminder of just the stark contrast in alliances. You have this Axis of Convenience or Upheaval. These are autocrats perfectly willing to invade other sovereign territory. They suppress their people. They suppress information. They disappear their people, right? And on the other side of the ledger, you know, Japan. I know theirs was a celebration of their victory over Japan. But where is Japan today?

This is one of our closest allies, who shares our democratic values, free market economies, the rule of law. And this conference over the weekend with the Brits, the Japanese, us, other regional partners, we were discussing just how intertwined our security and economic interests are in the Indo-Pacific, in the transatlantic. How we deepen military cooperation, not through – not just through parades, but really at a system, data, interoperable level. How do we make our – how do we bring our industrial bases closer together in partnership? So, things like AUKUS is a great example of that. How do we better exercise together? But really, at that interoperable level, not just in showy parades. And for me, that's really the measure of alliances, and then the combinatorial capability that we bring as partners.

Dr. Karako: Can I just say, I perfectly agree. And that plays into, Heather, your comment about commitment. And I'm going to perhaps end on a slightly less optimistic note, which is that we've got lots of our capability. American hardware has been proven to the hilt in various conflicts. People understand its capabilities. But there's questions about

capability. What comes to mind here is, you know, how many rolling two-week windows are we going to give Putin in Ukraine? We keep hearing about the White House being disappointed about Putin, you know, not meeting with Zelensky, not honoring a ceasefire, all this kind of stuff. So, he has two weeks, right? So, it's the commitment and it's the credibility that I still have some concerns.

Dr. Williams: Well, then I'll take us to a positive note to end on, or I'll at least try to. Which is, if we really want to draw on the strength of those alliances, to show a response and stand up to this Axis of Upheaval, however superficial or deep it runs, I think the pathway forward for that is bringing together those two theaters of alliances. And the positive note that I would put out there is that NATO is already moving in that direction. If you look at the U.K. Strategic Defense Review, for example, it fully recognizes how much security in the Indo-Pacific is in their national security interest as well. NATO is already talking about more dialogue and more sorts of exchanges and conversations with Japan, South Korea, Australia. AUKUS is, like, the most obvious example of that, but I think the more that we can try to facilitate those cross-regional engagements among our allies – because our alliances are not superficial. We do share unprecedented amounts of information and technology with each other. And so just really building in a resilience to that, and making sure that those roots run deep and that they're strong, that's a really sharp juxtaposition to the "Reservoir Dogs" show. (Laughter.)

Ms. Bingen: I want to end on that, but I'm going to just throw out one other bit of observation here. This may be a bit of a non-sequitur, but I think there's also an important role not just our governments but our private sector here in terms of cybersecurity, information security. There were several images up there that looked eerily familiar to some of the weapons systems that we have. (Laughter.)

Dr. Karako: IP problems.

Ms. Bingen: Yeah, exactly. There might be a stealthy drone there that looked a bit familiar, another air-based drone that looked familiar. So I think this is also a good reminder for us and our partners, you know, the Chinese, are after our advanced technology and our intellectual property. Which to me still tells us that we have phenomenal technology. I think we still are in the lead from that perspective. But we have to watch our six, because they're after it. And so –

Dr. Williams: We have to protect –

Ms. Bingen: We have to have technology protection, industrial base security, cybersecurity. All those things do matter. And it's not just us, but it's our allies as well that have to take the same approach. So-

Dr. Williams: That's right.

Ms. Bingen: So, on that note, cybersecurity, on behalf of all three of us and our programs, thank you all for tuning in. Thanks as well to our superb teams in the Missile Defense, PONI, and Aerospace Programs, thanks to our streaming and broadcasting team. So stay tuned. We have more joint discussions coming up on HTK. Have a good day.

(END.)