

Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT  
Press Briefing  
**“Previewing the G7 Summit”**

DATE  
**Tuesday, June 9, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. ET**

FEATURING  
**Victor Cha**  
*President, Geopolitics and Foreign Policy Department and Korea Chair,  
CSIS*

**Philip Luck**  
*Director, Economics Program and Scholl Chair in International Business,  
CSIS*

**Max Bergmann**  
*Director, Europe, Russia, and Eurasia Program and Stuart Center,  
CSIS*

**Will Todman**  
*Chief of Staff, Geopolitics and Foreign Policy Department; and Senior Fellow, Middle East  
Program, CSIS*

**Maria Snegovaya**  
*Senior Fellow, Europe, Russia, and Eurasia Program,  
CSIS*

MODERATED BY  
**Nina Prieur**  
*Director of Strategic Communications, External Relations,  
CSIS*

*Transcript By*  
*Superior Transcriptions LLC*  
[www.superiortranscriptions.com](http://www.superiortranscriptions.com)

Nina Prieur: – and leaders summit. I'm Nina Prieur, communications director here at CSIS. I'm joined today by a great lineup of CSIS experts who will share their expectations and thoughts on what to look for going into the G-7, what we can expect to come out of the summit, and more.

Just a couple housekeeping notes before we get started. Each of our speakers will offer several minutes of introductory remarks, after which we'll turn to your questions. If you want to ask a question, please type it in the Q&A window or raise your hand to ask it verbally and we'll unmute you so you can do that. We'll be distributing a transcript of today's call shortly after its conclusion, and the transcript will also be made available on CSIS.org.

So, with that, let's go ahead and get started. I'll turn first to Victor Cha, president of the Geopolitics and Foreign Policy Department and Korea Chair at CSIS. Victor, over to you.

Victor Cha: Well, thanks, Nina, and good morning, everyone. Thanks for joining the call. Let me start out with just some broad overview points about the G-7 and then let the real experts like Phil and others take over.

So the first point I would make is that this – in a sense, this G-7 is back to the future in the sense that the priorities today resemble some of the priorities that brought the – at least some of the G-7 finance ministers together in the early 1970s. And that is sort of coordinating economic policy/macro policy in response to disruptions of oil supplies. In 1973, it was the oil shock. And today, obviously, it's what's happened with the war in Iran and the Strait of Hormuz.

This is the – going to be the first assembly of the G-7 leaders face to face as a group with the United States since the major conflict in Iran. As you all remember, last year President Trump left the Canada G-7 summit early because of the pressing business in the Middle East, and we soon saw strikes several days after he returned. And of course, the trade and tariff tensions will sort of color the conversations between the leaders because those continue to be an area where the G-7 countries are having a lot of trouble with the United States.

In the past we've seen countries like the Indo-Pacific four – that's South Korea, Australia, New Zealand – participating in the – in the G-7. This year, France has chosen not to do that. They've invited a very geographically diverse group of economies: India, Brazil, Kenya, and South Korea.

One of the – one of the big questions I think that Macron is dealing with is whether Trump will leave early. Trump has a tendency to show up – he says he doesn't like these multilateral meetings, but at the same time I think he cannot bear for a(n) assembly of world leaders to meet and he not being

there, because then he would be irrelevant. So he shows it up at these things and he leaves early. He did it at the – he did it at the Canada summit last year. He did it at the East Asia Summit this – last year. He did it at APEC this year. So Macron has been doing everything possible to accommodate Trump's schedule. As you know, he pushed the G-7 schedule a day later so that Trump could do his UFC White House fight the day before. Macron wanted to invite South Africa and Trump said he would boycott if he did that, so he invited – Macron invited Kenya instead. And because Macron – everybody knows Trump loves all the pageantry, he's trying to entice and schedule things at the Palace of Versailles and other places to try to keep Trump engaged.

If Trump does leave early, one of the questions, at least in my mind, is whether Macron will push for a leaders statement without the United States. You know, Trump left early in Canada. There was a – there were – there were statements that came out from the G-7 leaders in Canada, but it wasn't your traditional sort of G-7 leaders statement. And you know, for what it's worth Macron has been one in the past who has pushed for the G-7, or in that case it would be the G-6 countries, actually coming out with a statement even if – even if the United States was not there. He actually wanted to do that in Canada last year. Macron in the past has called for what he – was called a G-6+1 framework, in the sense of it's important to get consensus among the six if we cannot get it among the seven. And this happened once before in 2017, when the G-7 leaders statement included something on climate change that the U.S. did not sign onto and so the six went forward.

Again, I'm going to let Phil and others talk about what the U.S. agenda is at the G-7, but I'll just flag one thing for all of you in terms of work that CSIS is doing on this. And we've done a bit of data work looking at who are the high-performing countries in the G-7 to address the issues that G-7 leaders think are important. We've also looked at countries outside of the G-7 who are high performers in issues that G-7 leaders have identified as important, going all the way back to the Hiroshima Summit in Japan. And the basic finding we've come up – we've come up with is that there are in particular two countries that are high performers in the Indo-Pacific. That is South Korea and Australia. Both actually ranked higher than some of the lower-performing G-7 members – apologies to Italy, but some of the lower performing G-7 members across many of the issues that G-7 leaders have identified as important. The other European countries that are high performers, and in some cases higher performers than the G-7 countries themselves, are Spain and the Netherlands. So in this regard, the invited countries – India, Brazil, Kenya, and South Korea – South Korea is a high performer. Australia, for whatever reason, was not included. They should have been, because they are a high performer. And India actually is not a high performer on G-7 issues. In our data they rank below – they rank below the lowest performing G-7 country, which is Italy.

So some of that research is available on our website. If people are interested, we can certainly – Nina can certainly send you the link to that.

So, thanks, Nina. I'll turn it back to you.

Dr. Prieur: Thank you, Victor.

Next, we have Philip Luck, director of the Economics Program and Scholl chair in international business at CSIS. Philip, please go ahead.

Philip Luck: Great. Thanks so much, Nina, and thank you all for joining.

So I'd love to talk a little bit about sort of the economic priorities going into and potentially coming out of this G-7 meeting. So, you know, the French have really focused on a particular sort of core set of issues that I think no one will be surprised about. It's around derisking of supply chains, critical mineral supplies, energy security, AI governance, Russia and the program around putting pressure there economically, trade and tariffs, and development and debt issues.

Of these, I think there's probably – you know, the largest sort of holdout and the challenge here, of course, is going to be the U.S. I actually am relatively optimistic and hopeful for the discussions around derisking critical minerals issues and potentially some around AI governance. You know, we're going to have some real challenges around Russia, and trade, and potentially development issues.

You know, it's important to note that, you know, while the U.S. a few years ago was really out in front on sort of sanctions on Russia, over the subsequent few packages we've seen, you know, we've seen Europe sort of move ahead. So that's something we're going to need to see about.

Again, I think there's a lot of consensus on the sort of challenges we have on critical minerals supply chains, but solutions are more elusive. So I think meetings like this can be quite useful for at least getting high-level agreement on those.

One issue that France has put on the agenda that has sort of not traditionally been there – it's, candidly, a little bit more of maybe a G-20 issue – is macro imbalances. This is a way for the French to put on the table the issue that in some sense is the same issue that the Americans are concerned about, which is imbalances relating to U.S. overconsumption, Chinese overproduction, and potentially European lack of investment as sort of a third piece of the puzzle. That's, of course, a little bit awkward with China not there. I think that there was a hope that the U.S. would be willing to come onboard with this focusing on sort of the China aspect of it.

My understanding is that this has gone less well than the French had hoped; that this has not gotten the sort of traction that they had hoped; and there is some interest in sort of pivoting away towards other issues including, you know, using the sort of events of the day – the issues around food security and all issues related to the Strait of Hormuz closure. This is one area where I think there actually is opportunity – you know, putting no odds on it – for some alignment with the U.S. The U.S. currently in their G-20 priorities has a pillar in their trade track on avoiding or discouraging the weaponization of food, which includes the weaponization of food inputs like fertilizers which we are starting to see being weaponized by countries like Russia currently. So, you know, one hope would be that there's a way – a way to sort of bridge those conversations. Again, as Victor noted, having India, Brazil, and the ROK – all G-20 countries – who responded relatively positively to the U.S. proposal – you know, some limitations there, of course – will be quite helpful.

So, again, I think, you know, look, last year's G-20 showed us the limitations and the challenges of this format. I think there are significant challenges remaining. And within a narrow set of the French priorities, I'm hopeful that there may be some space for consensus among the members.

I'll stop there and hand it back over to you, Nina.

Dr. Prieur: Thank you, Philip.

Next, we have Max Bergmann, director of the Europe, Russia, and Eurasia Program and the Stuart Center in Euro-Atlantic and Northern European Studies at CSIS. Max, please go ahead.

Max Bergmann: Great. Thanks, Nina. And thanks to Victor and Phil for really setting this up well. Maybe I'll talk a little bit about the political dynamic right now for President Macron, and for Europe, and how I think Europe is seeing the G-7 summit.

For Macron, I think this is in many ways his swan song on the international stage. He was elected in 2017, and so this is – this is his final year in office. He is incredibly or increasingly unpopular at home, not uncommon for second-term leaders, but is still quite well-respected on the international stage. I think from Macron's perspective he has tried again and again to throw out lots of ideas and be very innovative on the international stage, oftentimes being thwarted – whether that's by American presidents not signing onto what France is proposing or, frequently, Germany sort of not going along with what he's advocating.

But the great irony is sort of as Macron is increasingly sort of unpopular in France that the French vision for Europe of increasing Europe's,

quote/unquote, “strategic autonomy,” its ability to be independent of the United States or China, is increasingly catching on. And I think there’s a narrative that Macron has been right, basically, since 2017, and that European leaders would have done better to listen to him and to follow some of the French direction.

That doesn’t mean that he’s going to make major headway here at the G-7. It just means that it’s sort of this irony where he’s politically unpopular at home, yet I think sort of winning – has sort of won the overall battle of ideas in Europe about Europe’s trajectory.

Maybe just to take a step back and assess the kind of transatlantic relationship in Europe’s current political economic situation. Transatlantic relations are, obviously, incredibly strained. Part of what is leading Europeans to increasingly agree with the French idea of European strategic autonomy was in the U.S. pursuit of Greenland, of making Greenland American territory was quite shocking to Europe. That has led to a real breach of trust and a sense that the United States is not really a reliable partner.

Macron, I think, is very eager to have President Trump attend the G-7. He’s – the event, I think, is going to be very lavishly held. There’s going to be, I think, a dinner or lunch in Versailles.

But what we are increasingly seeing is Europeans beginning to think about a life with less America. We’re seeing this when it relates to Ukraine in particular where the European Union has stepped up and has become the major financial backer of Ukraine.

This was done at a European Council summit last December where they agreed to a 90 billion euro package for Ukraine. With the defeat of Viktor Orbán in April that is now able to move out the door. The money is moving to Ukraine.

And increasingly we see that Ukraine’s focus is on its EU membership. A lot of its internal focus inside of Ukraine is about how it can adopt all the EU laws, doing all the things that it needs to eventually become an EU member. Maria and I saw that firsthand when we were in Ukraine a few weeks ago.

But we see Europe really stepping up to act as Ukraine’s main benefactor and supporter. That’s a big shift from the previous period.

We also see the war in Iran, which Will will talk about, I imagine, creating real – another economic blow to Europe, causing major increases in fossil fuel prices and natural gas prices and oil, and this is causing a real hit to the

European economy. The European Central Bank has increased interest rates due to the inflationary increase.

But I would just say that Europe, in some ways, is quite prepared or better prepared for this energy shock, in part because it already experienced a major energy shock in 2022, and we're actually seeing Europe I think respond quite well as energy prices, especially in places like France with its fleet of nuclear power plants as well as in Spain with its investment in renewables, cushion the blow from some of this energy shock.

Maybe more broadly politically where Europe is right now is there is concern, obviously, about the potential for far-right parties to gain power to replace Macron in France. In the U.K. – in Germany, the AfD has now taken the lead in polling, and so there is real concern about the far-right.

That said, I think some of the concern is slightly – has been overblown as seen by the defeat of Orbán in Hungary, and that what you really have is now a mixed picture on the far-right with leaders like Giorgia Meloni, who will, obviously, participate, adopting a more sort of pro-European far-right line that is sort of shifting the dynamics inside of Europe.

Maybe lastly, there is increasing focus in the – at the European Union level and in Germany on China. The EU has constantly been trying to figure out what is its economic approach toward China. The U.S. during the Biden administration had been pulling Europe along to take a harder line when it came to China.

Now that the Biden administration has left, what we see is the Europeans moving toward a harder line toward China and that's in part because of the economic shock that China is causing, particularly the German manufacturing sector, the German auto sector, where Germany is hemorrhaging jobs, and this is leading to a potential shift in Germany more toward the French approach, which is to take a slightly more protectionist approach toward China, by European.

And so there is a real live discussion in the European Council. This is not the first time. The EU has constantly been trying to put China on the agenda and has found again and again, something like Ukraine, Iran, energy crisis will come. But now over the next few weeks, there's going to be increasing focus on what should Europe's approach be toward China.

And I think what we can see is France and the European Commission, led by Ursula von der Leyen, increasingly advocating taking a much more robust approach, a much harder line toward Chinese economic imbalances, and we see that coming across here with the G-7 agenda.

And I think the effort to try to engage China directly by Macron – there’s talk of a phone call with Chinese leaders – I think in part is to demonstrate to Germany that – and others in the EU that the G-7 is trying to engage in a constructive dialogue with China, and then if that doesn’t result in anything, well, then you’re left with needing to take a stronger response.

I will leave it there and turn it back to Nina.

Dr. Prieur: Thanks, Max.

Next, we have Maria Snegovaya, senior fellow for Russia and Eurasia at CSIS.

Over to you, Maria.

Maria Snegovaya: Hello, everyone. Thank you very much for having us.

So I will discuss the situation pertaining to Ukraine and how this dynamic affects Zelensky’s participation in the G-7.

So the G-7 summit takes place against the backdrop of really significant shifts ongoing on the battlefield, with Russian Spring 2026 offensive having produced to date the slowest territorial gains in three years. The frontline has largely stabilized right now despite continued high Russian personnel losses, which by Ukraine’s Defense Ministry assessment are of roughly 200 personnel per square kilometer captured by Russia.

In the meantime, for the first time since 2023 Ukrainian forces are reportedly regaining more territory than they’re losing, and they’ve been also achieving successes in targeting Russia’s railway infrastructure and logistics with the goal of potentially cutting off Russian logistical supplies, going forward.

The balance has tilted primarily due to significant technological developments on the battlefield recently. That includes, first of all, the loss of Starlink access for Russia, which severely degraded Moscow’s command and control structures – systems.

In addition, Ukraine has significantly boosted its drone production specifically through new systems such as the Hornet drones, which enable more effective intermediate range strike operations for Ukraine.

In addition, we also see that Russia’s economy has been slowing down. The period of the wartime growth surge has declined, and perhaps we all have seen those very symbolic pictures of the St. Petersburg Economic Forum opening against the black smoke in the sky, a metaphor of the challenges that

Russia is facing right now as Ukraine strikes are exposing growing vulnerabilities in Russia's military and energy infrastructure.

Against this backdrop, Kyiv is intensifying its diplomatic engagement with the G-7 countries, trying to achieve more financial and military support as well as certain diplomatic breakthroughs.

Specifically, ahead of the summit President Zelensky has intensified his diplomatic engagement. On June 4th, he has published an open letter addressing Vladimir Putin, president of Russia, offering a face-to-face meeting in a neutral country to restart peace negotiations, along with an immediate ceasefire for the duration of the talks against Russia's battlefield losses and economic troubles.

In addition, Zelensky also recently met in London with Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron, and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz to discuss military assistance, additional sanctions on Russia, possible European diplomatic engagement into peace talks.

And, perhaps most importantly, on June 8th Zelensky held what he described as very successful talks with Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner as part of his broader effort to maintain both international support but also re-engage the United States, and this is really important for the G-7 since it serves as a good omen ahead of the summit, which may feature, eventually, a Zelensky-Trump meeting, unlike the June 2025 G-7 summit where Trump departed early and missed the meeting with Zelensky, which was the bad – essentially bad news for the Ukrainian delegation at the time.

So what are exactly the topics that the Kyiv delegation expects to cover during the G-7? Clearly, the main focus will be war diplomacy and air defense. Ukraine, inside Kyiv, very actively demonstrates its willingness, its openness to hold peace talks with Russia, exposing Russia's unwillingness to do so. And accordingly, will use that as leverage to pressure allies to provide more financial and military assistance. Additional Western support will, at this point, perhaps, as the argument can go, provide really significant impact for Ukraine, now that Russia is facing troubles on the battlefield and economically. More specifically, we are likely to anticipate a request for air defenses, especially additional Patriot systems and interceptor missiles now that Russia has intensified its strikes on Ukrainian cities, including on Ukrainian citizens. Expanded European antiballistic missile capabilities are likely to be discussed, especially licensing, co-producing together with European states, which would allow Ukraine to produce more missiles domestically.

Energy resilience is another big topic. Ukraine just survived a very difficult winter. And another one is coming. And Russia, no doubt, is preparing for

that as well. So emergency funding, equipment to repair damages by Russian strikes to Ukrainian energy infrastructure, enhanced protection of critical energy facilities against future Russian strikes, and long-term investment in strengthening the resilience of the Ukrainian energy infrastructure. Economic and military sustainability. Ukrainian finance ministry recently estimated that it will require \$95 billion in external financing for the period of 2026-27, with about half of it secured but another half is needed. Ideally for Ukraine there would be some multiyear financial commitment provided by the allies in order to be able to both sustain its financial resilience and also to continue the battlefield momentum.

And, of course, increased pressure on Russia. Now that Russia's economy finally is starting to experience difficulties, tougher sanctions on Russia's oil exports, in particular, especially as high oil prices were driven by – that were driven by Iran conflict have increased temporarily Moscow revenues, and recent sanctions waivers have provided limited relief to Russian oil trade. This definite – intensification of the oil sanctions definitely would help Ukraine to reinforce the pressure on Russia, as well as targeted measures against Russia's banking sector and sanction evasion networks. The expanded use of revenues from the frozen Russian sovereign assets is likely to come up, as well as stronger enforcement against Russia's shadow fleet, and third country sanctions evasion. Altogether, the momentum currently seems to be on Ukrainian side. And it's likely that the G-7 summit will demonstrate the efficiency of Ukrainian diplomatic effort in that regard.

Thank you. And I will turn it back to Nina.

Dr. Prieur: Thanks so much, Maria.

Let me quickly mention that after our next expert we'll be turning to your questions. So if you'd like to ask a question, please type it in the Q&A window. Or you can raise your hand to ask it verbally.

But without further ado, it's my pleasure to introduce our final speaker, Will Todman, senior fellow in the Middle East Program and chief of staff for the Geopolitics and Foreign Policy Department. Over to you, Will.

Will Todman: Thanks so much, Nina. And good morning, everyone.

So, yeah, as Max said, I'm going to be talking mainly about Iran. And Iran is probably going to be a significant source of tension at this summit. Not just because of the economic hit that Max discussed, but I think there are key differences between the G-7 leaders on how they view the war and what to do in its aftermath. So the leaders are probably hoping that the summit will be an opportunity to lessen the tensions, but I think it's unlikely that we'll see any significant breakthroughs on Iran at the summit. So three things I'm

watching for. President Trump's efforts to get the Europeans to bolster his leverage in the talks with Iran. Second, U.S. allies' efforts to show President Trump that they can contribute to his Iran efforts, but on their own terms. And then, third, the reported attendance of the Syrian president and his effort to pitch a new vision for his country.

So first, on the leverage. So these talks seem to still be stuck, although President Trump this morning just said that he expects a deal to be signed in a few days. We've heard that before. But I think Secretary Bessent has called for European states to crack down on illicit financing. And just yesterday we saw the EU take some steps that I think are in advance of these aims. The EU just imposed sanctions on Iranian individuals and a unit of the IRGC for threatening the freedom of maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. And this was using a new sanctions regime that the EU has. But I think, you know, it's unlikely that we'll see anything major on sanctions that fundamentally shifts the balance between the U.S. and Iran in a meaningful way. So I don't think that's going to be too significant.

Second, we'll see a pitch from the U.K. and France to get President Trump's buy-in for an initiative they have come up with to secure the Strait of Hormuz after a deal is signed. They have come up with a demining initiative that includes 15 countries. And, of course, they are trying to demonstrate that they are willing to share some of the burden. Trump has had fierce criticism of them for not doing more to help him on Iran. And we could see others as well contribute to this. Turkey and Japan have both said that they could be willing to contribute to this. But this initiative is only going to come into place after a deal is signed. And President Trump has downplayed its utility, saying he's already cleared most of the mines anyway. So I don't think this is fundamentally going to bridge the gulf that exists between the U.S. and European members of the G-7 on Iran.

So then, lastly, there are reports that the Syrian president will be attending. And this is quite a big deal for him. This further bolsters his legitimacy, part of his campaign to integrate further into the international community. But he knows now, at this stage, that legitimacy is not enough. He now needs material support. And Syria has struggled to attract foreign investment. And it knows that it's not going to receive anything like the scale of international development assistance that it needs. Typically, G-7 countries could have been large donors to that, but no more after the aid cuts. So instead, Sharaa is going to be pitching Syria as a hub of connectivity for trade, logistics, and transportation, saying that Syria can help mitigate the risk of the Strait of Hormuz. And I think, you know, that will be welcomed by some European states.

But this isn't without risks for Sharaa. Just this weekend, President Trump said he wants Syria to play a role in Lebanon supporting Israel's efforts to

disarm Hezbollah. That is not something that Sharaa wants to do at all. So I think he's probably going to be quite wary of being put on the spot by President Trump and being asked to do more in Lebanon. So, all in all, I think Iran is going to dominate this when it comes to the Middle East, but I wouldn't expect any major breakthroughs. Back to you, Nina.

Dr. Prieur: Thanks, Will. And thanks to all of our speakers.

At this time we'll go ahead and open it up to questions. One more reminder that if you'd like to ask a question, please type it in the Q&A window or raise your hand to ask it verbally. And to kick us off, we already do have a question here in the Q&A. I think this one might be a good one for you to start us off with, Victor, and then over to Max and others as you want to join in.

This is from John Leicester. He says: Greetings from the AP Bureau in sunny Paris. Could you expand, please, on the personal chemistries in Evian, and their potential impact on the summit's success? Thinking specifically of Trump's recent tussles with Meloni, Merz, Starmer, and others. Might bygones be bygones behind closed doors with pages turned? Or is there a real risk of unresolved grudges poisoning the atmosphere? What do your crystal balls see when Trump is in the room with invited guest Zelensky on Tuesday morning and Lula in the afternoon? Or are these all seasoned statesmen and -women who put their personal interests aside?

You want to kick off on that one, Victor?

Dr. Cha: Sure. I mean, I think this is really more – this is much more in Max's AOR – it's much more Max's AOR than mine. So, you know, I think – again, I think what we have seen from Trump in the past is that these multilateral gatherings – he has to be there because he wants to be the center of attention. But he gets his business done, whatever that might be, and then he – and then he leaves early. And to me, the real question – and, you know, and there – of course, I think there will still be tensions. There are constant residual tensions because of the tariffs and all the other disputes that many of my colleagues have mentioned.

But, to me, the real question is, like, whether they – the G-6 – whether Macron will push for a G-7 leader's statement. It was very unusual in Canada last year for them not to issue the traditional collective G-7 leader's statement. As you may remember, Trump agreed to some very generic language before he left, and it was changed after he left, and then the United States refused to sign on. So they had some individual statements on – issue-specific individual statements. And I just don't think Macron is going to go for that. Because in the past he's been an advocate of just going forward. Maybe Carney will agree with that too.

So, like, that's going to be interesting. If he stays for the whole thing, there's still going to be a question of whether the United States can agree to – you know, what the G-7 countries want to – may want to say on sort of AI and digital regulations, or what they may want to say about, like, the environment and energy footprint of AI. So there – as Phil said, there are some big differences there that won't be easy to paper over. Over.

Dr. Prieur: Thanks, Victor. Do you want to say anything, Max? Yeah.

Mr. Bergmann: Sure. So I think maybe, to start from the European side, you know, it has not been the case – it's not always been the case that European leaders have been sort of quite united. Obviously, in the post-Brexit period, when – especially when Boris Johnson was U.K. prime minister. But the current array right now of G-7 European leaders, with Ursula von der Leyen, Macron, Friedrich Merz – Merz and von der Leyen are of the same CDU party – and then Giorgia Meloni, that has been a quite productive actor on the EU level. And rumor has it that she's actually quite close with von der Leyen. And Meloni has an election next year. And, you know, being seen as close to Donald Trump is not exactly a political winner in Italy, which is, I think, part of the reason why you've seen Italy, when it came to Iran, really distancing itself from the U.S. action and use of Italian – or, bases in Italy for those operations. They moved in the direction of Spain and Pedro Sanchez.

So I think you have European leaders quite united. However, I also think that there's not really a desire to have a full-on confrontation. I think the way I sort of see these as sort of the awkward family gathering, whether it's Thanksgiving or Christmas, whatever big holiday it is, where you have to go to your in-laws and there's an uncle that you don't quite like. And no one wants to have a confrontation, even if things get quite passive aggressive at times. But, you know, there's always the possibility that things might snap, and it might get rather dramatic. During Trump's first term, a lot of the big formal gatherings became – they tried to strip a lot of the content from those summits. And that was sort of true at the last NATO summit. There's the – Alec Baldwin had a great skit for SNL when he was sort of Trump is sort of alone at the lunch table. And so I kind of think leaders will keep their distance.

The one thing I will say is that there has been a lot of – I think part of the friction in transatlantic relations has prompted Europeans, as well as Mark Carney of Canada, to really try to strengthen ties. Mark Carney is probably the biggest advocate of European strategic autonomy. When he talks about middle powers, he has frequently called for the Europeans to step up and play a bigger role, because Europe collectively is not a middle power but potentially a great power. And so I think going to be very interesting to see how Takaichi in Japan, how they play in this dynamic, because there has been an EU effort to increase its outreach with Japan, with Korea, and others to see

if they can get – all get on the same page, and have some – in some ways, a common front vis-à-vis the United States. I don't expect that to necessarily materialize here, but that is an under – that dynamic is playing out, where they're – you know, these countries are working – countries in the EU are working more closely together in the wake of the estrangement with the United States.

Dr. Prieur: Thanks, Max. We have another question here in the chat that takes a similar tack. So let me ask that one and see if anyone else in the group has further reflections you'd like to add.

George Condon asks two questions on the personal dynamics. Victor mentioned the start of these summits in 1975. Given how much President Trump has insulted all the rest of them – except the Japanese PM – since the last summit, does this have a chance of being the most awkward of them all? And after Iran, are the allies getting tired of trying to placate him and play to his whims? Any further reflections?

Mr. Bergmann: I think, maybe, just quickly, one thing to note is that I think if 2025 was the year that Europeans just sort of agreed that they had to bend the knee to Trump because of Ukraine, and Ukraine was a big factor here, because Ukraine needed U.S. military support, we're just in a different dynamic where Ukraine is not as dependent on the United States. Maria is right about the air defense, but the Europeans are providing the main support. So from a political standpoint, Keir Starmer is in a very rough spot. His leadership is going to be challenged.

And so, you know, if you think back to the movie "Love Actually," and the sort of confrontation that occurred between Prime Minister Hugh Grant and Billy Bob Thornton – (laughs) – you know, that dynamic now plays really well in European domestic politics. So you do have the kindling for a potential fire, you know, to emerge. I don't think any leader particularly wants that, so I don't expect it to happen. But some of that will be dependent on how Trump – how Trump acts during this summit.

Dr. Cha: Yeah, I mean, a couple of things I'll add in there. I mean, what Max said is much more substantive than what I'm going to say. Is I think the – well, as Max and Maria said, the Ukraine situation is very, very different now than it was a year ago. And, again, this is the first meeting – assembly of the world leaders after the U.S. military actions in Iran. So there will be very pointed discussions, I think, of the group to the president about what is his endgame when it comes to Iran. You know, whether he'll actually reach an agreement before he goes to the G-7, I'm skeptical. But, you know, this will be a very big question, because it's obviously having – its impacting the entire world, and all the G-7 economies.

I'll just say, on the – on the, you know, sort of Carney, versus Meloni, versus Starmer versus Macron, like the – as I think Max said – like, the one relationship that is very good of those leaders is that between President Trump and Prime Minister Takaichi. And I think so she will try to do her best to avoid any massive ruptures or, as I said before, if there is a move to try to do a G-6 statement, that's going to put Japan in a very difficult position. Because, if anything, they want to try to maintain unity among the group.

The other thing I'll say, just on the Japan piece, is it wouldn't surprise me if G-7 countries also were approaching the Japanese prime minister as well as the South Korean president about their recent outreach to Russia – again, derivative of the war in Iran – and the desire to try to be able to access crude oil at a time when the European – at a time when there are G-7 sanctions on Russia. Japanese officials went to Russia in May, despite these sanctions. Korean officials have been having conversations with them. So I think this will also be a conversation that G-7 leaders will have with the two – with these two Indo-Pacific leaders.

And then the last point I'll make, just, again, to sort of round out the Indo-Pacific side of this, is I think what Macron is trying to do with China is actually a good thing. You know, obviously one of the criticisms of the G-7, this, you know, elite group of advanced industrialized economies, is what about the rest of the world, and in particular, countries like China? And so in our own work on this, one of the things that we have recommended is that the G-7 establish – not a formal – but a sort of semiformal process of consultation with China before and after G-7 leader's summits. It's not to say that Macron is taking our advice. But seeing him doing that, I think, is a – is a good thing.

Over.

Dr. Snegovaya:

Maybe I can add a couple of words about the possibilities, what to expect from a possible meeting between Zelensky and President Trump.

We definitely all know that the relationship between and meetings – past meetings between President Trump and President Zelensky, have had its ups and downs. But, as has been mentioned before by my colleagues, Zelensky this time does happen to come to the summit – to travel to the summit with a significantly stronger hand, to cite President Trump's own previous description. And, from that perspective, we know that this administration does tend to look more favorably at those states that have certain positions of power tilting in their favor. We have seen that Kyiv, in particular, has tried to position itself ahead of the summit, emphasizing its current advantages, I would imagine from that perspective as well. In addition, one can anticipate that Zelensky will try to leverage the presence of the European leaders during the meetings with the U.S. representatives in order to again position

the European side as the important – play an important role in this dynamic in negotiations – possible negotiations with Russia.

While Ukraine is in need of Patriots, unfortunately, given the global shortage, I would be skeptical about the opportunity for President Zelensky to secure a successful deal in that regard. But there are other possibilities to be explored in terms of perhaps swapping more Ukraine’s advanced combat drone options for perhaps cheaper options on the U.S. side that can also provide the opportunity for Ukraine to secure some interceptors, even if perhaps it’s not going to be necessarily Patriot missiles. But this is something that I’d be watching very carefully.

Thank you.

Dr. Prieur: Thanks, Maria.

We have one more question here, Kitty Wang with Sound of Hope Radio: It’s reported that China’s rare earth exports to Japan have plummeted by over 80 percent and Washington has formally urged Beijing to resume exports. Do you expect any joint statement on the rare earth issue in this summit?

Phil, you want to jump in on that?

Dr. Luck: I don’t –

Dr. Prieur: Or, Victor, please go ahead.

Dr. Cha: Oh, I was just going to say Phil should jump in on that one. I mean, I don’t know if there will be an explicit statement about the situation with Japan. You know, I’m sure Prime Minister Takaichi will talk about it. But it’s clear – you know, it’s clearly been a priority for the G-7 in the past, and I don’t – I expect that to be the case in Evian.

It was really the G leaders in I believe it was Hiroshima, when Japan hosted, where they made the very important statement to say G-7 leaders don’t just need to defend against supply chain vulnerabilities, but need to organize to try to deter it. And that was a very, very important statement going forward. To say that it’s not just a matter of everybody when they’re hit by some sort of chokepoint by China does their best to try to limit the damage, find alternatives, but as a group to collectively think about how best to deter this was a big step forward in Hiroshima.

And so, you know, I would certainly hope that they continue with this – continue with this as a key topic for the G-7 leaders. And then if they – if they had a statement actually talking about trying to not just defend against

critical mineral supply chain vulnerabilities, but to try to deter China's use of it as a chokehold, that would be a major step forward.

Dr. Luck: Yeah. Just jumping in here. Phil Luck.

Completely agree with that. So that's actually part of the T-7, which is the think tank seven, sort of suggestions for the G-7, that that was a major pillar of the economic security discussion that we put forward. I agree and really think that that's valuable. I'm a little hesitant – I'm not sure that's going to happen. I think the U.S. is definitely going to be the holdout here in that, you know, I think there's just a really strong preference for sort of keeping the options open for the administration as they try to negotiate further with China.

And you know, candidly, I think that the administration seems – feels a little gun shy about how to engage on these matters, and I think you can see that in the lack of sort of high-level comments about the situation currently in Japan. If we see that, I think that would be immensely productive and positive. I'm not overly optimistic, but agree completely with Victor that this sort of proactive framing and proactive stance is really what's required to deal with the underlying problem at hand.

Dr. Prieur: Thank you.

We have one more question. Will, you might want to kick us off on this one, and then Max and others can chime in. This is from John again with AP in sunny Paris. He says: Thanks for the insightful answers. France and the U.K. have done a lot of prep on their proposed multilateral mission for Hormuz, but they've also said that they want the shooting to stop first. It's a bit of a chicken-and-egg situation. Do you see a possibility of Macron/Starmer getting Trump to agree to lift the U.S. blockade, perhaps in exchange for an Iranian pledge of free movement in Hormuz, so Hormuz could be parked as an issue with the U.K./France then launching a Hormuz escorting mission and the U.S. and Iran talking on all the rest – nuclear, et cetera? Or is that pie in the sky?

Mr. Todman: (Laughs.) Yeah. Happy to take a stab at this one first.

So I think President Trump has shown that he doesn't really want to resume the military operations in Iran. In part, this is because of heavy lobbying from the Arab Gulf states, who very much do not want to see that. But I think that means that the blockade remains his key source of leverage over the Iranians, and so I have a hard time imagining that he would agree to lift the blockade and detach Hormuz from the rest of the negotiations, the nuclear file, and, you know, perhaps Iran's support for partners and proxies across

the region, because I think that would be in a way kind of giving up the main remaining source of U.S. leverage over Iran at this – at this stage.

So I think Trump is probably going to want to have this MOU signed that at least refers to commitments from Iran on the nuclear file, and then, of course, Hormuz will be reopened as part of that. But I don't think he would want to separate it and allow the U.K. and France to begin that operation absent at least the parameters of an agreement on the other issues.

Mr. Bergmann: Yeah, maybe just a few quick thoughts. I think to some extent the U.K./France Hormuz naval discussions is a bit of a make-work exercise to sort of show the United States, when Trump was sort of advocating for Europe to have an increased military presence, that Europe is ready to do something. I also think it's not just about us. It's also signaling to Gulf states, in which European countries have developed relationships but also are looking to expand those relationships, that they're reliable partners.

I think from just a pure military perspective, you know, I think from the U.K. – the U.K. and France look at this and say, well, as long as – as long as Iran is not going to – (laughs) – doesn't want to open the strait, we're not putting our ships near it because they would be targets. And Ukraine has shown that a country without a navy in the Black Sea can have real effects in naval warfare, and there's a reason why our ships are also sort of pulled back and are quite far away as well. So I do think there's a bit of a signaling exercise here to the United States, to Gulf countries demonstrating a willingness but not really demonstrating a willingness. It's something that both the U.K. and France have done when it came to Ukraine and inserting – the talk of inserting forces. All of that said, I do think that the Europeans in particular have a keen interest in not – in having the strait open but also not – but ensuring that the Law of the Sea/freedom of navigation is respected once this is all done with. And so they would not be keen for Iran to have a, quote/unquote, "toll booth."

So I think right now Europe is really taking a backseat to everything that's happening in the Gulf. If the U.S. were to just simply sort of walk away, I think that would shift the dynamic and prompt Europe to get much more engaged, at least diplomatically, in what is happening.

Dr. Prieur: Thanks, Max.

We're just about to hit time here, so I think we have time for just one more question. And I'll say in advance I am sorry to those whose questions we didn't get to. Of course, please feel free to reach out via email or phone and we'll be happy to connect you with our experts.

Our last question, I think, a number of our experts can jump in on this one, from Erica Green: How much do you think Trump's softer approach to Russia/Putin and China/Xi Jinping over the past year, at a time that European leaders have sought to take a harder line, will impact the dynamics of the summit? What do you think his approach to strengthening relations with these two countries and their leaders has signaled to the rest of the G-7?

Dr. Cha: This is Victor. I'll go first, since I have to jump off.

So I think this is an interesting question, particularly with regard to China. You know, Trump has just come off his big meeting with China. There's basically an agreement to sort of maintain the tariff truce/critical minerals truce until at least their next meeting in September, so he might not really have an appetite for a really strong statement from the G-7 on supply chains or critical minerals or anything in particular that named China.

On the other hand, like, inconsistency is part of what is consistent about Donald Trump. And so he may have no problem with saying, yeah, that's what the group wanted so I went along with it, as another form of leverage on China to reinforce the idea that somehow he can deter China's chokehold – exercising its chokehold on critical minerals against the United States.

But I think – you know, I think, again, part of the answer to this will depend on the degree to which Macron and others are going to be willing to be very forward-leaning on this despite what the United States may want to do, or even if the United States is not even present for – when we get to this point of releasing the communique.

Dr. Prieur: Thanks, Victor.

Did you want to jump in, Phil?

Dr. Luck: Yeah. Sorry about that.

Yeah, I totally agree with what Victor said. I mean, I think on a lot of different areas, again, these are not purely G-7 issues, but everything from what we've been hearing from colleagues, from export controls, to trade, to imbalances and supply chain security, there's just a huge amount of uncertainty about where the U.S. is going to come down on these issues. And that's really impacting sort of where partners are willing to come to, because, you know, I think there's a genuine concern that, you know, nobody wants to go out on a ledge and then have that ledge be sawed off by the administration.

And then more generally I think the U.S. really wants to preserve as much sort of decision space for the president as possible. I think that's sort of a hallmark of this administration, is make no decisions that would go against

where the administration wants to go. And that just makes it really, really difficult.

And again, I totally agree with what Victor said, that I think where we are right now with tariffs, you know, China got a 10 percent tariff on the forced labor – or, sorry, 12.5 (percent); others got 10 (percent). That's a tiny delta. If you think about where we are today versus where we were a year ago, the difference between Chinese tariffs for the U.S. versus all other partners has compressed significantly. It's compressed by a factor of basically half, and so we've basically halved the gap between the United States – or, between China and our other partners. So there's just really a lot of mixed signals about where the U.S. is on these issues, and I could imagine that becoming a challenge.

Over.

Dr. Prieur: Anything further you'd like to add on that question, Max or others?

Dr. Snegovaya: I would love to add a little bit on Russia, if possible. So –

Dr. Prieur: Please. Go ahead.

Dr. Snegovaya: Thank you.

The key takeaway for me in this dynamic in Trump position on Russia is actually his shifting posture vis-à-vis Russia that's been unraveling since approximately mid-2025 and culminated in the imposition of the U.S. sanctions on some of Russia's major oil producers. So altogether, I would flag that Trump's – essentially, the White House's posture has demonstrated a significant shift on Russia over the last year.

What has changed this dynamic, however, is the war in Iran, which both necessitated the increase of the oil on the markets, which created more favorable conditions for Russia's oil trade, and also distracted the White House's attention. So the key question, frankly, for this upcoming summit is to what extent are Ukraine's effort to showcase its stronger battlefield positions right now, together with the EU allies' pressure, is able to alter the U.S. posture in that regard. I would flag that Marco Rubio's shifting position on rhetoric vis-à-vis Russia, recently showcased by his argument that Russia is experiencing essentially strategic defeat in Ukraine, does signal good sign. Plus, we see that the Republican electorate in general is supportive of Ukraine.

So all of those are definitely the cards for Zelensky to play here. But ultimately, I think the war in Iran will determine to what extent the U.S. administration is willing to make certain concessions for Kyiv.

Thank you.

Dr. Prieur: Thanks very much, Maria.

And we have, indeed, reached time here. So I want to thank our speakers and all our participants for joining us today. Please do reach out for anything we can do to be a resource on this issue. We are here to help. And, as I mentioned at the top of the call, we'll have a transcript distributed to all of you. And it will also be available on CSIS.org. So with that, I hope everybody has a good rest of the day. And thanks again for joining.

(END.)