

Center for Strategic and International Studies

CSIS Press Briefing on President Obama's Asia-Pacific Trip

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H. ANDREW SCHWARTZ: Good morning, everybody. We're going to get started just because – in the interests of time. Good morning and welcome to the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

We've got a terrific briefing for you this morning. We've got just about all of our experts from Asia – you know, the Asian region here. And as you can see, we have extremely deep expertise in all the different areas. And I think – please, you know, don't hold back with your questions because these guys have a lot to say.

So with that, I'd like to introduce Dr. Michael Green. Mike Green is the senior vice president at CSIS for Asia and he's also our Japan chair. With that, I'm going to give it to Mike.

MICHAEL GREEN: Good morning. Thank – can you hear me? Good morning and thanks for coming. So the president is going to Japan, Korea, Malaysia and the Philippines. He's in Japan the 24th and 25th for a state visit, including a formal dinner with the emperor, Korea on the 25th, Malaysia on 26, 27 and the Philippines on the 28th.

This trip is basically the do-over trip after the president had to cancel last October his visit to the region for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, APEC, summit and the East Asia Summit because of the shenanigans back in Washington over the budget. And in terms of the overall purpose, I think the White House and the administration and going to try to show that the so-called pivot or rebalance to Asia has legs and that the president's committed. And certainly getting the president to travel to the region goes a long way towards demonstrating that.

The good news, I think, for the president going out to the region and the credibility of the so-called rebalance to Asia is that for the past several years a majority of Americans in polls have said that Asia's the most important region to the United States. For decades before it was Europe. But now Americans get it, generally. You know, not too long ago when a president traveled to Asia, somebody in the Congress or the press would say, why's he going all the way to Asia? The American people get it and that's clear in the polls.

The Pentagon seems to get it. The Navy is shifting 60 percent of its surface combatants to the Pacific, the Air Force, over half of its fifth-generation fighters. The Army has created a new Army corps that's going to be focused on the Pacific – it's actually an existing Army corps, the 1st Corps, but it's going to be realigned to the Pacific.

The president's pretty popular in the region. And everybody, except perhaps North Korea, wants more engagement with the U.S. military, wants more trade agreements with the U.S. And in particular, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, TPP, which was going nowhere a few years ago, is now the center of attention in Asia with respect to the trade and economic architectures. And we'll touch on all of this when my colleagues go.

Let me just mention the bad news for the president going out. There are questions in the region – both in the media but also within governments, particularly among allies – about American staying power and the credibility of American commitments. A narrative has built after Syria when the United States drew a red line and then ignored it, the Crimea, the defense

budget cuts, questions, particularly in Japan but elsewhere in the region, about who's the go-to guy in the administration, who's the very senior person who's doing Asia in the way that Rich Armitage or Hillary Clinton or Bob Zellick (sp) or others have in the past.

And there's some confusion about the administration's narrative about the region. In particular, Xi Jinping, the president of China, has put forward this idea of a new model of great power relations between the U.S. and China, which the administration has embraced. Vice President Biden, Susan Rice, John Kerry have all embraced this idea and said we want to implement it. The problem is that in Japan in particular, but in other parts of Asia, this looks like a U.S.-China condominium. And so the administration's going to have to try to find a way to explain its priorities, how it wants to strengthen ties with allies, but also cooperate with China. It's a tricky balancing act and it's a little bit off-kilter right now.

TPP is also stalled. Matt will say a bit more about that. We're particularly stuck in the U.S.-Japan negotiations in this 12-member negotiation to create a Trans-Pacific Partnership – beef, pork, rice, sugar – things like that. There are no big deliverables on this trip. There will be an agreement in the Philippines on the security side Murray might say something about, but there's no big treaty or deliverable, at least that the White House has given a hint about, and so the message is going to be very important – the narrative that the president builds in his speeches or joint statements.

My sense is that the Japanese would like the president to give a very clear statement on the importance of democratic values and alliances, of course, cooperation with China, but to clarify, after the new model of great power relations discussions, that the U.S. is really focused on rule of law, democracy. That's a good theme. The question is where does the president do this speech?

The speech won't be in Japan or Korea. It's either going to be in the Philippines or Malaysia. A full-throated speech on democracy and values in Malaysia is a little risky. (Laughter.) Philippines may be easier. So where the president does his speech is something of great interest to me. And I think the entire region will be watching to see how he describes what this rebalance is aiming towards. Presumably, the theme will be something about a rule of law-based Asia that's win-win, but all of the region will be watching to see where the emphasis is.

In Japan, a few quick points: I think the president will probably emphasize some of these themes with Prime Minister Abe. He hasn't had a lot of quality time with Abe. They've had fairly short meetings. So I think one important opportunity with this longer trip is to spend time getting to sit down with Abe and talk things through. There have been a lot of press stories about how the two leaders don't quite click. Having been in the White House and been in these summits, the press doesn't always understand whether relationships click, but often the press can sense when something's not quite right. So I think quality time with Abe is important.

Will the president do a joint statement in Japan? I don't know. I think it'd be useful to try to clarify the importance of alliances and our commitment. The defense guidelines review, revising our defense guidance for U.S. and Japanese forces, is a big theme this year for the U.S.-Japan alliance. It's supposed to be done by December. And that will be important.

Korea-Japan relations have been a problem. I think the president helped himself quite a bit in The Hague when he orchestrated a trilateral meeting with Park Geun-hye of Korea and Abe of Japan. But there are a lot of landmines in that relationship and it's not clear that since The Hague Korea and Japan have moved towards dialogue quite yet.

And then TPP, which I think last October people in Japan, many people in the U.S., thought would be the deliverable for the president's trip to Japan – a trans-Pacific architecture that locks in 21st century rules. Betting is against any break-through. The Japanese side argues that the president's not willing to make the case for trade promotion authority or fast track, so why should Japan take a hit and do all of the hard politics? The U.S. side is arguing Japan is getting more rigid on agriculture, an area that Japan knows it has to liberalize because the average farmer in Japan is 65 years old.

The betting is against it, but I would end by saying this: When the president cancelled his trip, Matt Goodman and I wrote a piece of the Post saying the president ought to reschedule in April, and the administration did. (Laughter.) When they announced the trip, they didn't include Korea, so Victor Cha and I, with Rich Armitage, wrote a piece in The Washington Post saying they ought to include Korea, and they did. And Matt Goodman and I have a Post out saying they ought to finish TPP on this trip. So most of the betting is against it, but by the CSIS op-ed barometer, maybe there's a chance. (Laughter.)

MR. SCHWARTZ: Dr. Victor Cha, our Korea chair and senior adviser is going to go next.

VICTOR CHA: Thanks, Andrew. So after Japan, the president will go to Korea. He'll be there probably the afternoon of the 25th, have a meeting and a good long dinner with President Park and then leave the morning of the 26th. The two leaders have a very good rapport – President Park and President Obama – in all of their previous meetings. They do, I think, at a personal level like each other.

I would agree with Mike that I don't think that there are many policy deliverables on this trip overall, as well as in Korea. But still, I think it's a very important trip for three reasons. The first is the timing of the trip. As Mike said, this is – this is kind of the makeup trip for the missed trip to APEC last year. It's also important because it's coming on the heels of the meeting among the three leaders, the three allies, at The Hague: President Park, President Obama and Prime Minister Abe.

And so at least in terms of optics and messaging, it's important to sort of keep that signal going of this trilateral coordination, given the difficulties that we've seen in Korea-Japan relations, particularly between the two leaders. So, you know, after The Hague, having the president be in Japan with Prime Minister Abe and then Korea right after that I think it is important to sort of keep this – try to keep the momentum going, keep the ball rolling in terms of re-establishing strong communication channels and sort of a fluid relationship among these three countries.

I think that the timing is also important because of the fact that the region does, I think, feel like there's a bit of distraction here in the United States. In polite company people won't say it, but behind closed doors I think they'll openly ask where the pivot is – they don't know where it is – or the rebalance in the second term. And so being out there present, strong messaging on the U.S. commitment to the region I think is an important way to try to compensate or try to fill that gap.

The timing is also important because of the events in Crimea. I think there are some in the region that see what has happened in Crimea and they worry about a so-called demonstration effect in Asia, that there might be others who believe that it really doesn't matter how much power you have. What really matters is whether you have the first-mover advantage and whether you have the political commitment. And if you have both of those things, then you may be able to pull off feat accompli actions without suffering much in terms of punishment.

So again, I think in polite company folks may not say this openly but, you know, I certainly worry that North Korea might feel like it's learned something from the Crimea example. It could seize a couple of islands in the West Sea and see if they can – they can pull off their own feat accompli. So having the presidents in the region sending strong messages, you know, not directly addressing this but just being there and talking – and being with all the allies I think is a – it helps to shape the strategic environment in which nobody comes up with crazy ideas like this possibly in Asia.

The second reason I think that the trip is important, despite the absence of deliverables, is deterrence and defense, so kind of related to the first. On the Korean Peninsula in particular, the president will be there a week after the conclusion of U.S. – annual U.S.-ROK military exercises. For those of you who follow this closely, these exercises this year in particular have been distinguished by the fact that the North Koreans have been consistently doing missiles tests and live-fire artillery exercises during these exercises.

We know that the North Koreans always complain about these exercises and do things before and after them, but this year has been particularly interesting because they've launched or tested about – by our count, about 90 missiles ranging from short-range ballistic missiles to antiship missiles. And then last week they did a live-fire artillery exercise, firing over 500 artillery shells and some of them landing in South Korean waters. So, again, I think the meeting between the two leaders will be an important moment to show strength in the alliance, a strong show of deterrence, and that will also be important for helping to stabilize the region.

The final reason I think that this trip is important, despite the lack of major deliverables, is because there's a lot of homework, and the bilateral relationship between the – between the United States and Korea. OPCON transfer, the United States and South Korea, by 2015, are supposed to transfer wartime operational control over South Korean forces back to South Korea. The South Koreans have started talking about asking for a delay in that transition given the events on the ground.

And I don't expect any announcement on a delay in OPCON transition, but I certainly think that we'll hear some good words about conditions-based, about focusing – the two

militaries focusing on the right conditions for turning this back to the South Koreans. And my guess is that eventually there will be another delay, but that will probably work its way through to October when you have the major annual U.S.-South Korean military meetings.

The 123 agreement, the U.S. and South Korea are in the middle of a big negotiation of the civil nuclear agreement between them. I don't expect to see any major announcements on this, but I certainly think behind closed doors the two leaders will be discussing their two positions on the 123 agreement. There is a – they are – in a sense they'd deadlocked. They don't have an agreement on how to revise this thing. And so I think there will certainly be discussion about that.

Full implementation of CORUS, the U.S.-Korea free trade agreement, I think will be another high-agenda item, particularly on the U.S. side. So U.S. businesses have some complaints about full implementation on the Korean side of elements of CORUS. And that of course is important because Korea has – not just for the U.S.-Korea FTA, but it's also important because Korea has expressed an interest in joining TPP, you know, whenever we get TPP. They're very interested in becoming one of the first major industrial economies to sign on to TPP post-agreement. Base realignment issues, the U.S. and South Korea just finished their negotiations on cost-sharing for – the Special Measures Agreement cost-sharing for U.S. forces in Korea. So I'm sure the president will say some good words about that agreement being done.

And then of course China. There seems to be a narrative I've heard here in town among some folks that Park Geun-hye, the South Korean president, is growing closer and closer to China. I think she certainly is very interested in a deeper strategic relationship with China. And if you look at all the different dialogues they've set up, they're clearly interested in doing that. But this, I don't think, is at the expense at all of the U.S.-South Korean relationship. This isn't a throwback to the days of Roh Moo-hyun when – a progressive South Korean president where there was active talk about balancing the Korean – Korea balancing between the United States and China.

Nevertheless, I think President Park will want to – will be explaining to President Obama about what her ideas are in terms of strategic engagement with China, and I think at the same time President Obama will be talking to President Park about what the United States means when they adopt China's language of a new type of – new model of great power relations. I know that there has been a slight variation on that, but I think many in the region are concerned when the United States adopts the same language that the Chinese use in terms of new model of great power relations.

The United States may have a different meaning for that, but for many in the region, when they hear the Chinese use it they see that as meaning great power condominium at the expense of alliance relationships and partnerships for the United States in the region. That's clearly what the United States does not mean by it, but I'm sure that allies, President Park included, will be asking President Obama about what the significance of this terminology is, in his mind.

So with that I'm happy to turn it over to the next stop.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Murray.

MURRAY HIEBERT: Right. Thanks, Andrew. So I'm going to talk about Malaysia and the Philippines.

On Malaysia, the trip is significant just because it's happening. No U.S. president has visited since 1966 when Lyndon Johnson stopped there, so it's been quite a while. They're going to the president and Prime Minister Najib. The relations have really improved between the two countries under these two guys, and so both on the security, economic and political people-to-people sides, and so there is – they're going to celebrate some of these – this improvement of relations.

What I'm told by the administration is the president is not going to give a speech in Southeast Asia either, although he is going to have two opportunities in Malaysia where it won't be a full-throated 30-minute thing but it will be just, you know, five-minute comments – very short comments twice in which he's going to talk about the region, the importance of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN, and the East Asia summit, both of which Malaysia hosts next year. You're going to – and he's also going to talk a little bit about the rebalance in Malaysia, I understand.

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Obviously, the South China Sea, of which Malaysia and the Philippines are both disputance (ph) with China, is going to come up. Malaysia has always tried to stay out of the fray, unlike the Philippines and Vietnam, which have been dragged in more, but late last year China had an exercise off James Shoal, which is 80 kilometers, 50 miles off the coast of Sarawak in eastern Malaysia, so – and then this year sent three vessels right off the coast of – right off James Shoal also, so the Malaysians have slowly gotten themselves more involved in the South China Sea issue also.

Mil-to-mil relations have improved pretty dramatically, also under Najib. You may recall that in 2010, after Najib saw Obama here in Washington, he agreed to send troops, military troops, doctors to Afghanistan, which was pretty dramatic for a Muslim country.

He's going to talk about democracy, civil society and Malaysia as a model of how a multiethnic country functions. This is particularly important because about a month ago, Anwar Ibrahim, the leader of the opposition, was sentenced for the second time on sodomy charges. There's an effort to really take him out before a very key election was to happen at the state level. And the – another opposition leader, Karpal Singh, was charged with sedition. So there is obviously human rights issues that the president is going to want to talk about, but he's got to do it a little bit subtly because there is a bunch of other – they're trying to do a complex relationship with Malaysia, not only focus on human rights.

They're going to talk about trade and investment issues. Malaysia is a member of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Najib has been under a lot of domestic pressure on the TPP since the elections last June. And so I think the president will probably try to find ways to encourage and support him in his efforts to get the TPP going, assuming that the U.S. and Japan can get to an agreement on their disputes.

I guess the – you know, I guess the last thing we should talk about – I'll mention is Malaysia 370, the Malaysian Airlines 370, the missing plane. Initially, Malaysia did a rather lousy job of coordinating its messaging and coordinating its intel and military search for the plane. That's really changed rather dramatically after about four or five days despite some of the rhetoric still coming out of China. But I think one of the things that has been sharpened in the mind of Malaysians is that they need to cooperate more on intel sharing, on mil-to-mil cooperation with their neighbors. The U.S. has been very involved in the search. And so I don't know that we can expect the president to offer anything new unless the plane is found or there is

some more – more evidence is found of what exactly happened to the plane, but right now they'll probably talk about, you know, how the search has boosted cooperation between the two countries.

So then he goes to the Philippines. This is the last Asian ally in Asia that – last U.S. ally in Asia that they – Obama hasn't visited. One of the things he'll probably do is talk about how the former – the longtime economy of Asia is now the second-fastest growing after China for the last few years. He's going to probably – Obama will probably laud Aquino for his efforts on corruption and other issues.

This visit will probably have more of a security focus, as Mike already alluded to, than Malaysia. There is the effort at the – at negotiating an enhanced defense agreement, which would allow more troops, plane, ships to – U.S. planes, troops, ships to move through the Philippines. This has been stuck. They're in negotiations right now, again, with an effort to try and complete this agreement before the president visits.

The – it's really – there is a couple of issues, but the key one that they're bogged down over is the access that the Filipinos would have to areas of the bases that the U.S. – Filipino bases that the U.S. is going to upgrade as part of this. This is in a context you probably know in the – in the – in the early '90s, '91, the Philippines pushed the U.S. out of two bases at Subic and Clark.

The other – and there, the U.S. has really stepped up military aid with the Philippines. There are two different packages of 40 (million dollars) and \$50 million that are happening this year. There's been some coast guard cutters. There's a third one going to be given to the Philippines. This – I think it's arriving this year or early next year.

They're going to talk a little bit about the shared sacrifice in World War II. Obama is going to pay homage to the Philippine veterans of the war, which there are many.

Haiyan, the typhoon that hit the Philippines, will probably not be a big deal. Time has passed, but they'll probably talk about the importance of continuing economic cooperation.

The Philippines, like Korea, is talking about trying to maybe get into the Trans-Pacific Partnership in the second tranche once it's completed. Philippines has some big problems before it could join, including – there is constitutional bans on investment in a – foreign investment in a bunch of different areas.

And then obviously, the South China Sea will be a very big deal in the Philippines. Philippines has sort of been at the front line more than anybody else as China has become more assertive in the South China Sea. In 2011 the – a Chinese naval vessel tried to ram a Philippine exploration vessel in Reed Bank which is just off the coast of the Philippines. 2012 the Chinese took over Scarborough Shoal, which is a very fertile fishing area. After they had agreed that both sides withdraw, the Chinese stayed, Philippines withdrew. And then in 2013, there was the Second Thomas Shoal, where the Chinese vessels blocked the Filipinos from resupplying some of their troop, five or so, half a dozen troops that are on an old rusting naval vessel.

And then China has also put a lot of pressure on the Philippines over its taking the – taking a case to the – to the international tribunal, the – which will challenge China on the nine dash line and also try to get the international tribunal to weigh in on what is exactly a feature that can be considered territory. A lot of the territories that – including Second Thomas Shoal, which is basically 60 feet underwater, even at high tide, it really doesn't – a low tide doesn't really – you know, they're going to try and get the international tribunal to weigh in on this issue and hopefully put some pressure on China. So that's a quick overview of what's going to happen in the Philippines and Malaysia. Thanks.

CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON: Thank you, Andrew.

There are a lot of you here, so I think in the interest of time I'm going to be very brief since China's actually not a stop on the trip, and we'll try to get to your questions as quickly as we can.

They're not a stop on the trip, but of course, they're the leitmotiv that's going to be running through the – through the trip. And I think the thing that both Beijing and those of us who watch at all closely will be watching is, is it going to be a very obvious leitmotiv? In other words, will the president be, you know, saying the c-word, China, on a regular basis through the trip? Or will it be more of an implicit leitmotiv running through the trip?

And I think that's very important because we're getting very clear signals at this stage I think from recent statements by very senior Chinese leaders that there is deep concern about whether or not the president will repeat some of the style of remarks that has been coming out of various administration officials which have been much more forthright in criticizing China's behavior, especially in the South China Sea and elsewhere. So there a sense that, while Evan Medeiros from the NSC or Assistant Secretary Russel have said some of these things and now even Secretary Hagel I think in his news conference was rather pointed with his counterpart from China, there is still a question about whether the president will speak in this manner, and I think that makes a big difference. So obviously, China is watching this very closely.

And I think to forestall some of that, they have been seeking to draw their line as brightly as they can in the last few days on this issue. So for example, we had the Chinese ambassador here to the United States, Cui Tiankai, give a speech yesterday at the U.S. Institute of Peace where he clearly mentioned a heavy emphasis on China's core interests, including territorial sovereignty and integrity. So the message is not to be lost.

So to some degree, between the two sides right now, we have, I think, the U.S. trying to send very, very clear signals to China, as Victor slightly alluded to: Don't miscalculate and assume that something like the Crimea gives you some sort of opportunity. You know, we will defend our allies. And likewise, the Chinese are coming and saying: We're not going to give on territorial sovereignty and integrity. So this is an important component.

Likewise, I think, as both Mike and Victor have alluded to, the new type of – the Chinese call it major-country relations in English, but the Chinese hasn't changed, it's new style of great-

power relations. And, you know, the ability of the – how the administration chooses to define that on this trip, both in the private meetings, but also publicly – in any statements the president might say as he's asked questions, I think, by local media about this – will be watched very carefully by the Chinese because with Vice President Biden having effectively endorsed the concept during his visit in December of last year, I think, then followed by these harsher statements coming from various administration officials, there's some confusion on the Chinese side as to exactly where this all sits.

My sense also is that if the administration is wise on this trip, they'll have to think very carefully about how they're going to manage the narrative that you all undoubtedly will be putting out in coverage of this trip – how to design it in such a way that it doesn't – it won't be perceived as the anti-China containment tour, basically. And I think that's very important, to get the messaging right on that, not only for the U.S.-China relationship but also for the signals we're sending in the region.

Likewise, I think there's a tremendous opportunity for the administration on this trip to paint its own narrative with regard to its presence in the region – what it's trying to do in the region – and to highlight, probably without direct mention of China, that unlike what seems to be happening in China's approach to the region, where there is this uncomfortable duality between trying to improve relations with the regional neighbors while at the same time aggressively and assertively defending their sovereignty, the U.S. message is: We're here as a force of peace and stability, trade, you know, et cetera, working with our – closely with our allies. And I think that's a nice opportunity for messaging that could happen on this trip.

Obviously, the Chinese are disappointed that the president is not making a stop in China on this trip, but I think they understand the decision that's been made. But it does, I think, then mean that they'll be watching every word coming out of him very, very closely.

So I think I'll stop there and turn it over to Matt.

MATTHEW GOODMAN: My own toy here. Is that working? Yeah. So I'll just be very brief because economics has already been touched on and just make the standard three points.

First is that I think, with one possible caveat, which I'll come back to, this trip will not be heavily focused on economics, and certainly not in terms of deliverables, with that one caveat, which I'll come back to. But economics, and specifically TPP, is at the heart of the rebalancing strategy, and it is so for kind of three broad reasons. First, because it's where the growth in jobs are. As Willie Sutton said: It's where the money is. And that's why we go to Asia. Second, because it's what Asians want. They want us to be there in other aspects as well but not only in a security or political sense; they also want us there economically, to balance that overall posture. And thirdly, importantly, because it's where, and Mike touched on this, because TPP is at the center of the rule-making process. In fact, certainly in the international economic sphere, TPP is the center-point of rule-making in the world and not just in the region. And so it is absolutely central to the theme of establishing leadership in the global rules-making process.

OK, so second point is that this – every stop on this trip has a TPP nexus. Malaysia's a member, as Murray said, and Korea and the Philippines are probably the next two countries in line for joining TPP if it gets done in a second tranche of members. But Japan and the U.S. are really the central – center of gravity in the TPP, simply from economic point-of-view. They represent about 75, 80 percent of the – of the group of 12 countries in economic GDP terms.

And within the U.S.-Japan discussions, as Mike, again, has alluded, there are some very – there is very little difference of view on the rules. The U.S. and Japan actually agree on most of the rule-making aspects of TPP. The issues or the disputes or debates are about market access, particularly in agriculture and automobiles, and so those are the central issues that Mike Froman and the USTR and his counterpart, Akira Amari, are working on, as are their negotiators, as we speak.

And if the U.S. and Japan can reach agreement, including possibly before this trip, which is my third point, in a second, then it will probably have a very important, dynamic effect in the rest of the negotiations, and I think that most people would think that the rest of the TPP issues, while they are challenging and difficult, will probably fall away pretty quickly if the U.S. and Japan can agree.

So the third point is that this is one of these rare moments, one of these kind of golden opportunities in – certainly in U.S.-Japan relations to try to – U.S.-Japan economic relations – to try to get something big and important done. And I would say I agree with Mike that I think that the best betting is that it will probably not get done. That is, that the U.S. and Japan will probably not come to agreement in the next 10 days before the president visits and certainly not while he's there.

But, certainly, if this – the pressure of this trip does sometimes produce a concentration of minds, and it is possible that there could be a political deal, it's going to depend on President Obama and Prime Minister Abe personally deciding to spend some fairly significant political capital on both sides to get it done. But the betting would probably be against it. And certainly the – both administrations are trying to lower expectations. But this is one of those – one of those rare moments, and I think both sides understand that, but the issues are very difficult.

So I'll stop there.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Microphones around the room, so if there's a microphone near you – there's a microphone near you, please speak into the microphone, identify yourselves and your news organizations. Ryan and Annie in the back have microphones and can bring them to you. It'll help very much with the transcript, which will be available later today at csis.org. Can I – and we'll also send it out on Twitter; for those of you not following us on Twitter, it's @CSIS. Let's take a few questions. Yes, right in the back over here.

Q: Thank you. Thank you for doing this. Is it on?

MR. : With all the new technology – (laughter).

Q: OK, thank you for doing this. This is a question for Dr. Green. I'm June Kaminishkawara (ph) with Kelldo (ph) News.

What are the criterias (sic) for you to say this trip is successful or for you to say that he's really serious about the pivot or rebalance strategy? Because I don't think we can expect much from TPP negotiations, or – there's still tensions between Japan and South Korea, or – in the region over the history issues. And still, I think, some allies in the region are apparently skeptical about the U.S. commitment to defend their allies – I mean, the countries – because of the situation on Ukraine. Thank you.

MR. GREEN: The president could get an – could have gotten or may yet get an A for this trip if he can finish TPP with Japan. He's going to have to pull a nighter – (laughter) – because the semester's almost over. But a TPP agreement with Japan would have unlocked everything – (inaudible) – including, by the way, China because within China the debate has shifted since Japan decided to join the TPP negotiations.

A year and a half ago, Chinese senior officials were arguing this was a containment strategy. Now, increasingly, you hear economic officials in China argue this is like the WTO in the '90s; it's the way that China can help accelerate reform from without and eventually join, since TPP is officially considered a building block towards a free trade area of the Asia Pacific. So it would unlock so many things politically, economically, and strategically.

I personally think the president hasn't invested the political capital in it enough to date to get it done, and Prime Minister Abe has backed off a bit as well. But it's still possible. That would be an A. I'm an easy grader.

I think short of that, the administration has an opportunity to get its narrative right about Asia. In 2009, in the visit to China, the president and Hu Jintao agreed that we would respect U.S. and Chinese core interests, which sounded like a bipolar condominium U.S.-China-centered policy. Then in 2010, Hu Jintao and the president issued a statement – or 2011, in January, which took that out, and now the new model of great power relations has come back. So it's a very delicate balancing act for any administration – Clinton, Bush, or Obama – to show you want to cooperate with China but you're solidly behind your allies. And you have to do both. And I think the administration has gotten any trouble because they've switched from one to the other, and it's kind of gone back and forth. So the president has an opportunity to sort of set a narrative that makes it clear we're doing both at the same time.

I do not think – and I know the Japanese media is setting the bar high – I do not think the president has to repeat or go beyond what Secretary Hagel or Danny Russel or Evan Medeiros said. They made the U.S. commitment to the security relationship with Japan clear. I don't think you should expect the president to go beyond that.

But I do think that it would be useful for the president to make some clear statements about what – not – you know, much of the pivot is discussed in terms of process and how many meetings, how many ships. I think the president's really got to say, what is the American bottom line in Asia, and that's that we want a rule-based order where our allies are already on side, where democratic values and rule of law count for us, but where it's going to be a win-win, and

we want China and every nation to be part of it. But that kind of comprehensive vision is the second thing I'd look for. If he can do that, I think he'll get a gentleman's B – is it a gentleman's B? – he'll do pretty well.

MR. SCHWARTZ: OK, we've got Mark.

Q: Thanks. It's Mark Landler from The New York Times.

Mike, you kind of just got it, what I was ask you about which is puzzling to me, which is this sort of seeming conflict between the U.S.-China condominium and a major power relationship on the one hand and then this kind of counterbalancing strategy the U.S. seems to have been pursuing for the past few years. So I guess what I would – I'd ask is, when you talk about this flipping back and forth, do you think that reflects a genuine debate within the administration about what kind of relationship we want with China, or do you think it reflects a lack of high-level consistent administration involvement with Asia, which leads to things like Biden going out and having one kind of an encounter with Xi Jinping and then Evan Medeiros giving an interview that has a very different tone? So is it a – is it like a theological debate, or just a lack of attention?

MR. GREEN: It's a cleverly designed strategy to confuse our adversaries. (Laughter.) No, I think in general, since the mid-90s the Clinton administration and then Bush – who I worked for – and Obama have basically followed the same course, as I mentioned, which is to try to expand trust and cooperation with China, but at the same time double-down on your allies and partners, to make it clear what the rules of the road should be in Asia. And, you know, Clinton did this. Bush did this.

I think the reason that the administration has sort of switched from one to the other is too often, in my view – my colleagues may disagree – they've treated summits or bilateral issues with China or with Japan as one-offs, as bilateral issues. And they haven't paid enough attention to how they shape the entire region and the entire region's impression of the U.S. And that's why you have these changes.

In general, I think they're very much within the strategy that has bipartisan support that has continued from Clinton through Bush. That's a part of the problem. And it is personality-dependent. I mean, I'm not giving away a great secret – and the journalists from Asia and the region will know – people thought Hillary Clinton was very focused on Asia. But the president, my sense is – you know, having worked for Bush for almost five years, the president probably really understands this. It – you know, being president is like a Ph.D. a day in terms of the amount of interaction you have with leaders and the intelligence briefings, and so I'm somewhat optimistic that President Obama will be able to set the right tone, which everyone will take very seriously because it's not a Cabinet secretary or an assistant secretary; it's the president. So I hope – I don't know what the plan is for a speech, but I hope he uses the opportunity to set his vision for the region to clear this up.

Chris may want to –

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, I think, Mike, you've pretty much hit it on it on the head, but I think the key question is what you said yourself, which is the issue of consistency. And for Beijing, that's the most important issue. In the – in the years of our relationships, since the

normalization of relations, the core thing the Chinese want out of the relationship is consistency. And in fact, if you are consistent, they'll be willing to have you push them occasionally on things that are sensitive or where there are areas of dispute. It's where you're not consistent and they're not sure what you're going to do next that causes them great amount of consternation, and then oftentimes causes them, frankly, to be pushier in the relationship because they feel that they've got to push back in order to establish that sort of consistency. So if we won't do it, they'll try to do it for us. I think that's a – the important issue there.

Likewise, I think, more broadly in the region, there is this issue that Mike alluded to, which is getting that narrative set so that people can stop wondering what the narrative is. And so, for example, with the vice president's visit, if you're going to embrace the phraseology of a new style of major country relations with the Chinese, I think you would have to think not only about what does that do with my bilateral relationship with China, but how will it affect the whole region's view of what we're doing, because we have to remember that each of these statements are not simply in a bilateral context. The regional partners and allies and friends are drawing their own conclusions about what these things mean. So that then, I think, requires the administration to think very thoughtfully about how do we pre-brief, how do we back brief on what we've been doing – you know, these kind of things. And I presume they're doing that. But it is something where our allies and friends need constant reassurance on these points, and so I think, you know, before you're going to do something in the bilateral context, you have to think about what the broader implications are for the region.

MR. CHA: Great, I think what my colleagues said are – is entirely correct. I mean, to the extent is this a theological debate – it's been a theological debate in every administration. Do you work China from the outside in or from the inside out? And I think – you know, I think for this administration, they basically have to figure out whether they see continued U.S. – the legitimacy of continued U.S. leadership in Asia resting on the alliance relationships as the core or the China relationship as the core, and I think that – when they're preparing for a bilateral summit with China, they think it's that, right? When they're preparing for the allies trip, then they think it's the allies trip. And that's why you get all these mixed messages and the region not really sure. So –

MR. SCHWARTZ: (Off mic.)

Q: Jeff Dougherty (ph) from the Financial Times. A question for Mike. I just wonder if you could tell us what you think the considered view now is of – in Washington of Prime Minister Abe. One the one hand he's doing lots of the things the U.S. has always wanted Japan to do in terms of changing the rules (surrounding ?) the Japanese military, but on the other hand you've had the Yasakuni Shrine visit, some people publicly suggesting that he's dragging the U.S. into the fight. So what do you think is now the considered view on him?

MR. GREEN: When you say “in Washington,” do you really mean in Washington, or do you mean the administration? The administration?

Q: (Off mic.)

MR. GREEN: Well, I'm – of course, I'm divining from conversations. I think the view of Abe improved considerably after his visit here last February, a year ago; deteriorated

somewhat after Yasakuni Shrine visit because Vice President Biden seems – apparently thought he had a commitment that Prime Minister Abe would go. I personally find that very difficult to believe. I cannot imagine that – sorry, that Vice President Biden came away from his visit, reportedly, thinking he had a commitment from Prime Minister Abe that Abe would not go to the Yasakuni Shrine. I personally find that very hard to believe. Knowing Abe and knowing Japanese politics, I can't imagine that the Japanese prime minister would make a commitment like that, given the sensitivity of this issue. So that deteriorated somewhat.

I think my sense is that the – that the view is on the upswing, generally. And Prime Minister Abe has said now in the Diet that he will keep – will stick to the official apologies for the war and for the comfort women, the so-called Murayama and Kono Statements from the mid-1990s. He himself, his Cabinet has said and done very little to stir up these issues. Several Japanese appointed to the board of NHK or advisory boards by the Diet have not been so disciplined in their message, and so there's still plenty of fodder for the FT or The New York Times, and especially the Korean and Chinese press, from these people who were associated with the prime minister. But he himself is generally, in his own statements and in his Cabinet statements, has been very careful. And the trilateral with Park Geun-hye helped considerably.

The other aspect of this course is that the – I think that the Chinese strategy is – you know, they – Beijing succeeded against the Philippines fairly well and basically took the Scarborough Shoals, and the Philippines are feisty and they're fighting back in the International Court of Justice, which is important.

Japan is a much harder target, and I think the Chinese strategy is to pressure Japan by casting doubt in the Americans' minds about the reliability of Japan. And so you will frequently hear Chinese officials say that Japan will drive us into a – you know, the tail wags the dog; Japan will pull us into a fight. I don't think that the administration buys that. That's my sense. I think that strategically may have worked six months or a year ago. I don't think the administration buys it. And in fact, there's a lot more joint planning and stuff to deal with the kind of so-called gray zone contingencies from nonkinetic, nonwarfare pressures from ships patrolling and planes flying in the East China Sea.

Q: Thanks. Margaret Talev with Bloomberg News. So I was really interested in a little bit more on the securities side, both this idea of Ukraine and what that signals to Asia, and how Obama should thread the needle. I'm sort of curious: Is China more like Russia or not like Russia in this scenario? And is Obama signaling also to the Uyghurs and to the Tibetans? If so, what's he signaling to them? Is he more concerned about some rogue North Korean move or more concerned about some China move?

And then, if I can do my multiple-question question, on the military side I'm interested in if you can put a little more meat on the bone about the Philippines. Are we looking at something akin to what we did with Australia in terms of the exercises and how that affects China? And how does Obama pump up the U.S.-Philippines relationship without inadvertently offending Japan and sort of blowing up the whole trip?

MR. : (Off mic.)

Q: Yeah, all of the above. Yeah.

MR. JOHNSON: So this is the – we had an event here at CSIS yesterday and got this same question, and so this is apparently the theory du jour, that the Chinese see the Crimea situation as a go signal for them to go take over the Diaoyu. I think this is totally wrong. It misunderstands Chinese strategic thinking and Chinese strategic culture.

I think that the – what we should all be watching from the Crimea episode with regard to China is what it means for China's relationship with Russia and how they view the Russian relationship as a sort of card in the triangular relationship between ourselves, China and Russia. And what I mean by that is I think there's a very strong debate in senior levels in the Chinese government over the amount to which they should be sort of leaning toward the Russians and their relationship and having – there's a growing sense, I think, that Xi Jinping's two predecessors, Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin, focused way too much on the U.S. relationship and not enough on these other, you know, sort of major-countryish relationships. And so President Xi made his first visit to Russia. There's been a lot of this sort of thing.

So to the degree that those who are so inclined inside the Chinese system can say Putin is strong because he got away with this, you know, largely unscathed, it strengthens the hand of those inside the system who say we should be leaning a little bit more in the direction of the Russians in this relationship. And of course the goal is to always have sort of what they call an active Russia option, or card, inside or under the umbrella of the management of Sino-U.S. relations because it helps level out the power disparity between, you know, the U.S. and China, right? At the same time, I would argue you cannot have a new style of major country relations, if that's the game, right, because then you're basically playing the old game that they've been playing for so long.

I don't think – just real quick, I don't think there's any signal by Obama to the Uyghurs or Tibetans or anything like that. But anyway, others?

MR. CHA: On North Korea, I think it's entirely about North Korea. I mean – I mean, there – if you think about it, there have been more missile and nuclear tests by the North Koreans under the Obama administration than there were in two terms of Bush. And Bush was considered the one who was, you know, the regime-change guy and everything and Obama is considered the engager, and we have seen much more under Obama than we've seen under Bush. So I would certainly be worried about it.

And then of course you have this leader in North Korea who, you know, he plays international relations like it's a videogame. So of course I'd be worried about – and it's – and we're approaching crabbing season here in – not here – maybe in Maryland but – (laughter) – but in the West Sea, and so there's lots of opportunities for altercations between the two sides.

MR. HIEBERT: So I'll just talk a little bit about the Philippines. I mean, it is really very similar to what the U.S. was trying to do – is trying to do with Australia, so it's going to be rotating troops, ship visits, planes. There's going to be – they're going to put a lot of humanitarian assistance – disaster relief supplies there so they can move them more quickly. We

seem to be having a lot more incidents like Haiyan, that huge typhoon that hit the Philippines late last year.

I presume the Chinese will protest. I – Chris probably has a better feel for this – like they did over the Australia – the Darwin stuff. This is going to be small numbers of troops. They're going to be rotating through. It's probably – it's going to increase U.S. capabilities, but it's not like it's – you know, increasing the U.S. capability to – a great deal vis-à-vis China, which it doesn't already have with the Seventh Fleet and those kind of facilities.

MR. GREEN: Quick on the Philippines. We can't have a permanent base in the Philippines. It's in the Constitution and in our own experience with Subic Bay and Clark Airfield is – it makes us wary of that. So this is – as Murray said, this is about access, it's about rotating Marines, air and naval. It's about helping the Philippines establish more maritime domain awareness. They don't know who's going in and out of their archipelago.

So it's about that and showing the flag to back them up, and it's about dispersal, frankly, that U.S. bases are too concentrated in a few places in Asia, which is not good when you're trying to help build relationships, but it's also not good when there are more ballistic missiles aimed at you. And so it's about having a lot more access across the whole region, but not bases, which are expensive and politically risky for the U.S. and for the Philippines.

Q: Lee (sp) from KBS. Dr. Cha mentioned the possibility of North Korean provocation. So would you elaborate a little bit more on the relation between President Obama's visit to the area and the resolution of the North Korea nuclear issue? Do you think President Obama will show some kind of new initiative heading to dialogue or, (contrarily ?), to the enhanced sanction pressure? What would be the main message during his visit to the area?

MR. CHA: Well, my guess is that the conversation will go something like this. Both in Japan and in Korea, they'll talk about whether – what is the likelihood of the prospects for returning to six-party talks, given trends in North Korean behavior. I think that's going to be a pretty short conversation. (Laughter.) And then I think a lot of the focus will be on how to prepare for and respond to the next provocation. You know, I think if you – you know, you watch the behavior since – like I said, since February 21st they've done about 90 missile tests and they fired 500 artillery shells. The rhetoric just seems to be getting worse. And, you know, as we hit April, May, June, this is sort of long-range ballistic missile testing season. In addition to being crabbing season – (laughter) – it's missile test season.

Q: It helps with the crabbing.

MR. CHA: That's right, it helps with the crabbing, as Chris (sp) said. (Laughter.) So I think the conversation will really focus on, you know, what's the game plan if we see more of these sorts of provocations and how do we respond, how do we fill in the holes in the sanctions regime to put more pressure. And I think particularly in the conversation between President Park and President Obama, both of them will be discussing their own conversations with China, since the focus always is on what China can do, and both the South Koreans and the Americans have their own dialogues with China. I think it will – there will be a lot of discussion about how each of their conversations are going – going with China.

Q: Ajree (sp) with China (Sichuan ?) News Agency. May I have your comments on the status of Washington's rebalance to Asia-Pacific, and also, do you think that events like the Ukrainian crisis will slow down or stop the pivot? Thank you.

MR. GREEN: I think the administration is coming to realize that events on the other side of the globe have a big impact on the security dynamics within Asia. It's hard to overstate how much the decision on Syria affected thinking, especially in treaty allies like Japan and Korea, about the American security commitment. In fact, it's very different. You know, these are treaty allies where we have U.S. bases, where American opinion polls show a significant majority of Americans say if Japan or Korea are attacked, we should defend them. Syria was a completely different case.

But what really rattled the region was that the president drew a red line and then threw it to Congress, and that precedent was troubling to allies. And then, you know, the options are limited on Crimea, frankly, but it becomes part of a narrative and the dots start getting connected. So these non-Asian events are affecting the credibility of American security commitments in ways that perhaps the administration didn't expect, and that they have to compensate for, and Hagel and others have done that. I think what Secretary Hagel and other senior officials have said is, it's partly because of what's happening in the Middle East or Crimea.

In terms of whether it will distract them away, you know, the rebalance of the U.S. military has not increased assets in Asia. It's within a shrinking pie – relatively more assets will go to Asia than Europe. And I think now that's going to be a harder balancing act. And, you know, NATO is now very important again, and it shows that you can't isolate one part of the world and then transfer your military capabilities. So I think that will raise questions in the region people will want to address in the president's party when he goes out there.

But in terms of the sustainability of the pivot, you know, the – Asia is so important – as Matt said, it's where the money is – that on the trade side and on the security side and on diplomatic side, there's no turning back. You know, it doesn't matter in a way who's secretary of state or president, in a way. It's just too important and too obvious to the Congress. The largest congressional delegation in 25 years is going to Asia next week during their spring recess. People get it. So I think over the next sweep of history, the rebalance is – has nothing to do, in some ways, with the White House. It's the American people, American business, the Congress all get it, and it will continue. And there's some fine-tuning and some explaining that the president will have to do, as we've suggested. But I think the American focus on Asia is not reversible, in my view.

Q: (Inaudible) – Guangming Daily China. A follow-up – two follow-ups, one on North Korea. It's about North Korea is preparing for something, new type, you know, their nuclear test. Just wondering if you can share with us your evaluation of will that be true. Or if that happens, what will be America and your alliance's response?

And the second follow-up is about the Congress delegation to visiting – to visit Asia. Where are they going? Thank you.

MR. CHA: All right. So North Korea has threatened to do a new – I guess a new form of nuclear test. Of course, we don't know what exactly this means yet. At least, you know, sort of – the open-source commercial imagery shows that they have done a lot of work at the nuclear test site. Activity – it looks like pretty innocuous activity, but my general view is any time's there activity at a nuclear test site in North Korea, that's not good news.

And I think people are concerned. You know, what does a new form mean? It could be a uranium-based nuclear detonation, or it could be a whole series of detonations to try to prove or demonstrate or test whether they have a range of capabilities. So either way, it's not a good sign.

And it – how the administration responds, you know, I think they'll be – again, we've seen this movie how many times already? There will be a lot of pressure on China, not only to go – go along with tighter U.N. Security Council resolutions. You know, I hate to say this, but it could be good for U.S.-Japan-ROK trilateral coordination because it will make the threat quite imminent and quite real and might be a spur to better security cooperation in spite of the difficult histories among the three allies.

And you know, it also might – it might result in some effort at – on – by some party, whether it's South Korea or China – some effort at negotiation – or even Japan for that matter – at negotiation because, again, the history of this shows that when these – this sort of crisis emerges, somebody always wants to get their hands on the North Koreans to try to calm – North Koreans to try to calm things down.

And that could be China or it could be South Korea in this case, or even the administration. But when the North Koreans talk about a new form of nuclear test that's something that we have to be concerned about because they wouldn't be signaling something like that unless they were planning something.

MR. GREEN: There's a –

MR. SCHWARTZ: Microphone.

MR. GREEN: There's a delegation or rough – of about 20 members going to Japan, Senate and House, and then a delegation of I think 10 or 12 or so going to Japan, Korea, China. The latter one is led by Eric Cantor and Paul Ryan and very senior members of Congress. And a number of us have had a chance to brief them and talk about Asia. And my impression is that they're going – the message they're going to bring is that the Congress supports the rebalance and engagement of Asia, and that they're going to be uncharacteristically bipartisan – (laughter) – and that the trip's a good thing – it's a very good thing.

Real quick on North Korea, we – the administration calls its North Korea policy strategic patience. And I have kids, little kids, so it's a little bit like the time-out chair. And they get put in the time-out chair. But the problem is when North Korea gets put in the time-out chair it has a chemistry set. And it sits in the time-out chair reprocessing plutonium and spinning centrifuges and then comes back and does a test and we put them in the time-out chair again. This has been the pattern and I suspect that's probably what we'll do again.

What we have not done is to implement sanctions outside of the U.N. Security Council process because the U.N. Security Council process requires Chinese and Russian agreement, and therefore everything gets watered down. And so what would be really different is if we had a coalition, like we did with Iran of the Europeans, the – Japan, Korea, Australia and others to start really squeezing in new ways to slow down these programs.

We've not done as much to North Korea as we have with Iran, but I doubt that will be the response. I think I'll be the usual Security Council route. And the emphasis will be on keeping solidarity, even if that waters down the pressure, which I personally think is no longer working very well.

Q: Thank you.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Great. Over here and we'll go one, two. Yeah, sir.

Q: Thank you very much for this opportunity. My name is Tatsuya Mizumoto from Jiji Press. I have a question about – to president – about the U.S. commitment to allies in the region. When the president is going to Japan, is the president going to show his support to Japanese collective self-defense? And then is the president to confirm U.S. position, which is U.S. is not going to accept unilateral change of status quo by China in East China Sea, South China Sea? Could you give us your insight?

MR. GREEN: My guess is that – well, my hope is that the public will say something publicly in Japan supporting the reforms Prime Minister Abe's doing to the defense establishment, allowing more international armaments cooperation, relaxing the ban on collective self-defense so that Japanese forces can operate more – in a more joint and combined way with Americans and Australians. I hope the president says something welcoming that.

The U.S. and Japan in a joint statement last year in the two plus two said that, but that was Cabinet-level. I don't think the president will use the words collective self-defense. I think – my guess would be it would be a more general endorsement – I hope, he should. In terms of the East China Sea, I would – my guess is take a look at what Hagel said and then dial it down a little – or make it a little vaguer, and that's probably what the president will say.

There's no – for all the reasons Chris said, the president can't be tougher on the East China Sea than his Cabinet. In fact, I would guess that the statements by Secretary Hagel and others were done with the intent of making it not necessary for the president to do such a hard declaration of opposition. But he should, and I hope he will, find some way to make it clear that in a broad sense he agrees with that.

If he completely ignores what Abe-san is trying to do for defense reform, if he completely ignores the East China Sea issue and says nothing, that would be a failure. But I think he'll find a way to say something that shows broadly he's – Hagel and others are speaking on his behalf.

MR. SCHWARTZ: (Off mic.)

Q: Thank you. (Inaudible) – with China – (inaudible) – News Agency of Hong Kong. My – I have two questions. One is for Mr. Mike. Another one is for Chris. For Mr. Green, do you expect that President Obama will assure Japan on the one hand, but on the other hand will encourage Mr. Abe to reframe his rhetoric and behavior and push him to improve the relationship with China?

For Chris, you mentioned that Beijing is going to watch closely what the president will be talking about. And – but as Mr. Murray said, Beijing may protest U.S.-Philippine new agreement. So how could president assure Beijing that he is not trying to contain China, even though he does not – did not say any, you know, hard words about China?

MR. GREEN: I think Vice President Biden's efforts to handle the history issue on his visit to Japan and Korea did not go well and that the administration is going to try a much subtler approach. So I would not expect that President Obama will say anything about history issues publicly. This will disappoint the Korean press and the Chinese press in the same way that President Obama not saying something about the East China Sea in detail will disappoint the Japanese press. But I don't see him – it would be a mistake to think he needs to, in any way, appear to be lecturing the prime minister during a state visit to Japan. I can't imagine it.

Now, in the summit meeting I can imagine a number of ways that the president could air this issue. President Bush, when we had a situation in 2005 when Prime Minister Koizumi had pretty bad relations with Hu Jintao, for example, President Bush asked him, privately: What's your thinking about China? It seems like there's a lot of friction. And he invited an explanation about how the prime minister thinks about these issues in the context of relations with neighbors, which is not a moral judgment, it's not lecturing, it's not criticizing, but it makes it clear that, for the United States, we don't have an interest in bad China-Japan relations, and that in that fact we have an interest – a strong interest – in good Japan-Korea relations. So I can imagine him finding a way to let the prime minister explain his thinking, to make it clear the U.S. cares about this, without lecturing – in private.

For the rest of Asia, it's not as much of an issue. No other leader in Asia criticized the visit to Yasukuni. Public opinion polls about Japan in South and Southeast Asia are well over 90 percent positive. So it's largely a Northeast Asia issue.

But I would not look for any kind of public mentioning of this by the president, and the private one, I think, would be quite subtle – I would hope.

MR. GREEN (?): (Inaudible) – I'll do it in two seconds. I think – let me just make a firmer statement than Murray's. The Chinese will protest, heavily, any announcement of new defense relations with the Filipinos. I mean, the message is clear from the – from Defense Minister Chang, but also across the Chinese system.

In terms of how you can portray it as something not aimed at containment – this is what I alluded to earlier, in my earlier remarks. You know, that – there's going to be a media narrative and you have to figure out how you want to try to shape it or define it, and I think part of the way

you do that is, especially, say, in this cooperation with the Philippines, emphasize better maritime domain awareness. You know, there's a lot of ways to describe what's happening there without, you know, sort of making reference, either explicitly or implicitly, to the Chinese bogeyman, for lack of a better term.

Q: Joe Morton with the Omaha World-Herald. You mentioned Secretary Hagel a little bit. He just returned from the region. I was just wondering if you could expound a little on what his visit and his meetings with the Japanese and Chinese – what you were watching there and how that kind of informs the Obama trip here.

MR. GREEN: Secretary Hagel has earned his frequent flier miles. He's done – I've lost track – I think it's five trips now to the region? Four trips to the region. His counterparts in Asia like him. He in many ways, from India to Japan, has become the person associated with the pivot or the rebalance. And part of it is that he's put in a lot of miles. Part of it is, as a senator, he spent time on Asia, not to mention as a sergeant in the U.S. Army.

And part of it is he has an agenda that's moving forward. The Philippines – there was a quiet but very important summit with – defense meeting with all the ASEAN defense ministers in Hawaii, trilateral U.S.-Japan-Korea defense talks are getting back on track to cooperate on North Korea and other things, and then the defense guidelines with Japan. So he kind of has – USTR and the Pentagon sort of have the most active agendas. And I think Mike Froman is heavily, heavily engaged, but the TPP part is a little bit stuck. So I think it was a good thing for the president that Secretary Hagel had a good trip.

And frankly – Chris may disagree, but the Chinese defense minister lecturing Secretary Hagel actually helped. It actually helped if you're going to go then and visit Japan and the Philippines.

MR. HIEBERT (?): There's a debate, I think, right now about whether that exchange that we saw between Defense Minister Chang and Secretary Hagel was healthy, not healthy, you know. And so I think there's a fair case to be made on either side. I would try to thread the needle by saying that if you're – this is what a new style of major-country relations is supposed to be about, right, which is dialogue that brings these security tensions back under policy control, right, rather than having – at a Cabinet or higher level, rather than having the individual militaries play these games. You know, that's how you establish a new style of major-country relations, is to air these things openly like this and, through dialogue, bring that back under civilian, hopefully, policy control.

Q: Thank you. My name is Kakame Kwishu (sp) with Kyodo News of Japan. I have a quick question about the president's trip to Japan, about the level of mutual understanding between the U.S. and Japanese government. I heard the first lady is not accompanying the president, even though the Japanese government is inviting the president as a top-level state guest for the first time in nearly 20 years. So how we should interpret this – (inaudible)? Does this mean the Japanese government have already missed any signs from U.S. government about the magnitude of the president's trip or something? So. Thank you.

MR. GREEN: I wouldn't read too much into it. You know, I think people on both sides of the aisle admire the Obamas for their relative work-life balance. And she took the kids to China for spring break. She had to because she didn't go to Sunnyland (sic) and the Chinese were unhappy about that. So I wouldn't read too much into it. It's a state visit. And at the end of the day I don't think it will be an issue she didn't go, unless, I mean, if – it won't be an issue if the president does a good job framing the importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance, framing his vision of the future of Asia and how important Japan is. And if he does that, I don't think this is an issue.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Thank you, Victor. Our experts will be here during the trip.

(END)