

Center for Strategic and International Studies

Press Call

“Secretary Blinken and Secretary Austin’s Trip to Japan and South Korea”

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H. Andrew Schwartz:

Thank you very much. And welcome, colleagues. This morning we have with us, you know, the top, top people at CSIS. We have Dr. Mike Green and Dr. Victor Cha, our Japan Chair and our Korea Chair. Both also senior vice presidents at CSIS. Both also teaching at Georgetown University. Victor is vice dean at the university's School of Foreign Affairs. Thank you guys for being with us here today. We're going to talk today about the two-plus-two trip, Secretary Blinken, Secretary Austin's trip to the region. And with that, I want to go straight to Dr. Mike Green, who's going to talk first about the Quad meeting this morning. Thank you for being here and we'll be taking your questions.

Mike.

Michael J. Green: Great. Thank you, Andrew. Yep, thank you, Andrew. Thank you all for joining us.

We're going to talk about Tony Blinken and Lloyd Austin's trip to Japan and Korea for the so-called two-plus-two, and maybe touch also on the meetings in Alaska with the Chinese foreign minister and state councilor on their way home. But let me start with the Quad meeting that's happening right now, actually. I think it's setting the stage for these other trips and is quite significant. The Quad countries, of course, are the United States, Japan, Australia, and India. And it's a grouping that has been both filled with expectations and criticized. Somewhat unlikely partners in the sense that U.S. and Japan are treaty allies. The U.S. and Australia are treaty allies. India has a long tradition of nonalignment.

But this morning, President Biden is online with Prime Minister Modi of India, Morrison of Australia, and Suga of Japan. And the deliverables from this summit are big. They are pledging to pool resources to provide a billion vaccines for South and Southeast Asia, for the region. Essentially overwhelming China's very aggressive world warrior vaccine diplomacy. It's actually the perfect matching of the four countries. The U.S. has – the biotechnology has the vaccine patents and expertise. India has the production scale to do it quickly on the large scale. And Japan can finance. Australia's helping primarily with logistics, distribution, and some financing. And it's a huge play. It's what Southeast Asians in particular have said they want to see from the big powers.

They've also reached an agreement to cooperate on supply chains for rare earth metals, which are critical for high technology products – lithium batteries and so forth – but also for defense production. And Beijing has slapped embargoes on Japan for rare earth metals. It's currently embargoing Australia on a range of imports to China. So given the world's fairly high dependence on China for these rare earth metals and Beijing's cavalier use of boycotts against countries that displease them, it's a smart play. India, and especially Australia in their Northern Territories, has a lot of these rare earth metals under the ground. High demand for high-tech

companies in Japan and the U.S., and for defense production. So that's the other big, big piece of the deliverable.

And the Quad is not an alliance. It's a grouping of maritime powers that essentially want freedom of navigation and a rules-based order. It has, in its current iteration, largely been made possible thanks to Beijing. The Indians were the slowest to come to this idea that the Quad should be elevated to a summit and have a larger agenda, but when the PLA – the People's Liberation Army – used force against Indian troops in the Himalayas, with the building of bases near Indian outposts in the Indian Ocean, CSIS is tracking a Cambodian base that the Chinese are trying to take over, the Indian government has decided they need to set aside nonalignment and demonstrate they have partners and allies – particularly, of course, the Quad; the U.S., Japan, and Australia.

It's also a smart play for Biden because there was a clear recognition in the administration that they have lost – we, the United States, had lost ground in Asia. Tony Blinken said he agrees with the Trump administration assessment that China is a strategic competitor, disagreed on the approach. And they needed to quickly build up a united front to deal with China on a range of issues.

I think the administration came in hoping that the Europeans would be a big part of that, in part because people like Tony Blinken are Atlanticists by tradition, in part because the Trump administration just savaged the Europeans on everything from trade to defense so there was potentially an opening, but the Europe card has proved a bit frustrating for the administration. If you look at the Munich Security Conference speech of Joe Biden, he talks about China and the need to cooperate with Europe on China, but the next speakers – Macron of France and Merkel of Germany – went out of their way to talk about everything but China. And I think the administration's finding the Europeans are still not completely aligned on the China question and it's going to take time.

So the other big play would have been to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the big trade agreement, also called the now CPTPP, the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership. There are two big trade agreements that were signed in Asia when Biden came to power. One was RCEP – Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership – which does not include the U.S. And the other was CPTPP, which the U.S. was in but pulled out of under President Trump. China's in RCEP and said – Xi Jinping has said he wants to join TPP. So Japan, Australia, U.S. allies want the U.S. back in that trade game, but it's pretty clear that the Biden administration is not ready to use its political capital on that.

So with no Europe card, with no big trade card, the Quad was the card to play, and they played it big.

Let me turn to Japan briefly. So the first stop for the 2+2 – 2+2 meeting, defense and foreign ministers – will be Japan. The administration is signaling, and I think you'll see an announcement soon, that Prime Minister Suga of Japan will be the first in-person visitor to the White House. It's usually the British prime minister, so this is a big, big deal for Japan. It's another sign that this is an administration that's really focusing on the China problem and really focusing on allies.

There was some anxiety in Tokyo about the Biden administration. Our surveys at CSIS showed that in general Japanese foreign policy experts preferred Biden. They were – they were pretty exhausted after the four years of Trump, but there were aspects of the Trump administration they liked. The Trump administration's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy was modeled on Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy. The Trump administration's elevation of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation – OPIC – to the Development Finance Corporation – DFC – was modeled largely on Japan's own Japan Bank for International Cooperation. So there was a lot of alignment, actually, with the Trump administration despite the uncertainty and difficulties with the man at the top and, therefore, some anxiety because allies in Asia, including the Japanese, have some or had some uncertainty about the Biden administration because in the Obama administration there was less alignment with Japan and, in general, in the United States.

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs in 2012 asked Americans whether it was better to cooperate with China even if it hurt relations with Japan and U.S. allies in Asia, or better to work with Japan and U.S. allies, and a plurality of Americans said better to work with China even if it hurts relations with Japan, and that is where at times the Obama administration went, and I can talk more about that.

That is not where the Biden administration is and the Japanese side can, clearly, see that with this Quad announcement, with, you know, Suga as the first visitor in person. And that's not where the American people are anymore. Public opinion polls have shifted. The Chicago Council poll in 2019 asked the question again, and two-thirds of Americans said we should be working with Japan and allies even if it hurts relations with China, and at CSIS on our big survey of policy views on China, which is on our website, among thought leaders across business, agriculture, and national security, over 80 percent said we should prioritize Japan and allies.

So this is where the American mainstream and the Congress on a bilateral basis are, and at some level, I think, although it's not stated this, the Biden administration may be trying to help Suga out, the prime minister of Japan. His response to Covid and other things has not been widely praised, shall we say. His opinion polling is in the red. He has more unfavorable than favorable polling.

The Obama administration, which many of the Biden folks served in, saw what happened when Japan had political uncertainty and a new prime minister every year, and I'm sure they don't want to go back to that. They want and need a partner in Japan, and Suga is the guy in the seat now and I think they want to give him as much space as possible.

Before turning it to Victor to talk about the task force on Korea and Northeast Asia and the Korea stop, let me just briefly flag for you – you can come back to it in the Q&A – that Blinken and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan will be meeting with their Chinese counterparts in Alaska, together with Senator Dan Sullivan and a bipartisan group.

I think that's a very smart play. Look, the Quad countries – India, Australia, Japan, Korea – do not want the containment of China. They don't want complete decoupling. They want the U.S. to compete but be able to cooperate with China where it's in our interests, and I think you'll see that in Alaska the talk is of Afghanistan, where the administration's looking to work with China to some extent, climate change, possibly even Myanmar, but with the important caveat that this is not a big strategic partnership. It is not a new model of great power relations, as Xi Jinping had proposed to the Obama administration.

This is a practical working relationship on issues within a context of a strategy that, clearly, favors maritime allies and partners, and has to favor Korea as well.

So over to Victor.

Victor Cha:

Thanks. So let me just, first, embellish what Mike said about the Quad and then I'll talk about Korea.

So if we think about, you know, where we were at the end of the Trump administration with regard to Asia, you know, we were bickering with our allies over how much to pay for the cost sharing in terms of defense. We had a very unilateral view when it came to alliance as a nation, almost a disdainful view with regard to them. We were not part of the two major trade deals that had taken place in the region, RCEP and CPTPP, and in this – at the same time, China was using its economic leverage all around the region to bully other countries.

You know, that's the backdrop and what we're seeing over this week and next week is a completely different face, in many ways. It's not only a language that allies understand now, compared to the United States almost speaking a foreign language to its allies over the last four years. It's also a language that is new, particularly in the sense of coalitional diplomacy. I mean, as Mike said, the Quad, then followed by the 2+2 and Japan and Korea next week, is a pretty significant one-two punch for the Biden

administration with regard to the change in the way that they're looking at allies around the world, but particularly with the focus on Asia.

And as Mike said, what's significant about the Quad is this – the Quad has been in existence for quite some time. Actually, its original formation took place in 2004 and 5, when Mike and I were at the White House, with regard to the Indian Ocean tsunami. But it's been something that has been there as a concept. You know, there have been some meetings. There's been some paper. But the big difference, of course, is that there are promised deliverables coming out of this meeting on vaccine supply chains, rare earths, and regional cooperation. And so in that sense, you know, I think it's a good – it's a very strong one-two punch to start, with regard to Asia. And hopefully it will continue.

On Korea, the Korea stop, you know, there are a couple of things that I would note, and we can talk about more in the Q&A. The first is that, you know, the Quad is four countries. And there's one country that's not a part of the Quad right now. And that, of course, is South Korea. So I think, you know, one aspect of the discussion will be about how to bring Korea more into some of this likeminded coalition of democracies, whether it's with regard to the Quad, or naval exercises, or supply chain resilience. I think Korea has learned pretty clearly that they can't deal with China on their own. So I certainly think that will be one aspect of the discussion.

The other, of course, is going to be North Korea, where, you know, the Moon government is looking for more flexibility from the United States, wanting to sort of carry on the diplomacy that we saw during the Trump administration – as effective or ineffective as that may have been. But it's not really clear to me, you know, what the answer's going to be there, because I believe the administration is still in the midst of their policy review. And I don't know if they have any answers, but they may be sort of in a listening mode when it comes to North Korea.

It's not inconceivable to me that North Korea may do some provocations. You know, not when Blinken and Austin are there, but possibly shortly thereafter. It's not out of the realm of possibility. They are still within the window of provocations when it comes to doing things after a new U.S. president is inaugurated. And of course, the U.S. and South Korea have started military exercises, which also tends to prompt North Korea to want to respond to those. So it's not implausible that they could have very harsh statements or could actually do some sort of activity after the two secretaries leave the region.

And then, of course, on Japan – you know, Japan-Korea relations are about at the worst they've ever been. This whole approach towards coalitional diplomacy in the region requires very good relations between Japan and South Korea, and very good trilateral coordination among the three governments. And so, you know, this will certainly be, I think, maybe not as

much a public part of the discussion, but I think it'll certainly be something that the United States will impress upon both allies privately, that we need the relationship to improve. Not just with regard to contingencies over North Korea, but as I said, it's an important piece of the puzzle in terms of broader coalitional approach to the region, where the United States is back, as President Biden said, to lead, but it's looking for its allies to do – to do much more of the rowing than they've been doing in the past. And so that – you know, I think that's another important element.

And then the – I guess the last thing I would say is I agree with Mike that, you know, Blinken and Austin are going to the region at a time when, you know, there are two beleaguered allied leaders in terms of their own domestic politics. Moon is in the final year of his single five-year presidential term. He's also being beat up for having not so much botched the Covid response – which Korea did very well on – but having botched the Covid vaccine rollout. And so his numbers are quite low as well. And so he's facing a lot of pressure for these to be good meetings too.

So but like I said overall, you know, this is – we've all been wanting to see what the administration was going to do on Asia. You know, they've talked about the need to take new steps, to take a step away from what we saw during Trump. You know, a lot of the people in this administration were part of the so-called pivot to Asia or rebalance that happened during the Obama administration, and we're now really seeing them unveiling, like, two very important pieces, you know, obviously, clearly coordinated two very important pieces from both the White House and State and Defense in terms of the Quad and the 2+2.

So back to you, Andrew.

Mr. Schwartz: Thank you, Victor.

And, colleagues, I should also mention that Victor has a major report coming out, that it's going to be coming out early – coming out next week. It's from the CSIS Commission on Northeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula, "Recommendations for the U.S.-Korea Alliance." The authors were Victor, John Hamre, and Joe Nye of Harvard, who's also a CSIS trustee. And the Commission commissioners were Rich Armitage, Vincent Brooks, Wendy Cutler, Mike Green, Mark Lippert, Randy Schriever, Kathleen Stephens, and Sue Terry. So we'll be getting you guys that report in advance of this trip or actually, you know, in short order.

So, with that, we'd like to take your questions. Operator, do you want to queue up the line?

Operator: I'll be glad to. Thank you.

(Gives queuing instructions.)

And our first question comes from the line of Kara (sic; Lara) Jakes. Your line is open. Please go ahead.

Q: Hi. I'm here.

Operator: I'm sorry, Lara Jakes. I'm sorry. Thank you.

Q: No worries. I'm sorry. I'm on a Metro, so sorry if this is a little noisy.

There's been some suggestion that the historical rivalry between – (background noise) – I'm so sorry about this Metro line – there's been some suggestion that the rivalry between South Korea and Japan will play a little bit into the talks over this week during the 2+2, that Secretaries Blinken and Austin may need to tell their allies to try to put some of these differences aside and come together for this united front with China. Can you all speak to that? Do you believe that that is something that's really on the agenda or something that's always just going to be kind of background noise as the United States deals with its allies? Thank you so much. I'll go back on mute.

Dr. Green: Victor, you want to start?

Dr. Cha: Sure, I'll start, Lara. So, I mean, you're absolutely right that this has been really the source of a lot of the recent difficulties between Japan and Korea that then spilled over into things that threatening to end the intelligence-sharing agreement among the two countries and other sorts of things. You know, I – obviously, Austin and Blinken are very well aware of these problems. They've been – you know, as you said, Lara, they've been a part of the relationship since – you know, since we can remember. They've always – they have always been there. But I don't think it's going to be the place of the United States to try to go in and mediate between these two countries when it comes to the history issues.

I really think the focus is going to be on – is going to be on two things. One is the bigger strategic question, which is North Korea and China, right? And then, two, on the ground, developing a process that has really broken down in terms of trilateral cooperation among the three key allies in Asia. When Blinken was the deputy secretary, he used to do these quarterly trilateral meetings at the deputy secretary/deputy foreign minister level for – on a regular basis to just get a process going where both – all three governments would have to produce deliverables or at least report on commitments made in each of these meetings.

So my guess is that they will really focus on trying to reestablish some of those processes and get people busy working on things because all of that broke down over the last four years. There really wasn't a process. And for that reason, everybody just became fixated on these – on these history

issues – not to belittle them. I mean, they’re important issues. But at the same time, having a process – working process among these governments’ policy coordination – whether it’s on North Korea, on China, on Quad stuff – will be, I think, the – will be the U.S. focus in terms of how to deal with this.

Dr. Green:

So I – the answer to your question is, it’s both. It’s going to be constantly part of the background noise. The source of animosity over history in Korea is baked into education and media, you know, personal family experiences that are still passed onto grandchildren for what happened during the Japanese occupation in the war. While on the Japanese side, in some polls 80 percent of Japanese say they don’t like Korea anymore. So the politics of this on both sides are really, really complicated and hard. But Victor and I have done surveys every few years of thought leaders in Asia.

And when we ask questions about how important is democracy, how important is an open regional order, how important is the U.S. alliance, how much are you worried about China, the two countries in Asia that align most closely are not Australia and Japan but Japan and Korea. So in terms of the future of the region, very much aligned. So that’s sort of the sweet spot where I think Blinken and Austin are going to try to move the relationship forward. A positive and affirmative agenda around development, around security vis-à-vis North Korea, diplomacy. And I think polls show in South Korea that they are ready to do more with Japan. Moon Jae-in has said he wants a future with the relationship.

The rub is that the Korean Supreme Court ruled that Korea’s treaties with Japan in 1965 normalizing relations, and then their agreement with Japan over the so-called comfort women issue, that essentially those violated the constitution, and the government should have gotten more from Japan. And the Japanese view is, you can’t sign a treaty and then say it doesn’t count and give us more. And so both sides have dug in their heels about that issue. And that one, I think, the U.S. can’t really solve. That’s going to just take – that’s going to be very, very hard, and we’re just going to end up making both sides angry at us.

So I think the answer is they will, behind the scenes, I am sure, push both governments to make progress on that. But beyond that, I don’t think they can broker. And I think the play is going to be building an affirmative agenda, dealing with North Korea, and so forth. And I think opinions in both countries are shifting enough that they’ll make some progress on that. But the underlying historical issues is a long-term challenge.

Operator:

Thank you. Our next question comes from the line of Erin Ji. Your line is now open. Please go ahead.

Q:

Hello. Can you hear me?

Operator:

Yes.

Q: OK. Thank you. Thank you for doing this. My question is more focused on North Korea. What messages to North Korea do you expect to see during the travel by Secretary Blinken and Secretary Austin to South Korea and Japan next week? And also – and also, how much do you think the United States and South Korea would be on the same page on issues like North Korea and economic cooperation and also maybe the end of war declaration? Thank you.

Dr. Cha: So let me go – it's Victor – I'll go first on this. So I think my – you know, my sense is the main public message to come out of this is that this trip will be – that there is no daylight between the United States and South Korea when it comes to policy towards North Korea. That, you know, the U.S. will be – will certainly listen to what the South Korean – what the Moon government wants to do on North Korea.

And then also a focus on extended deterrence, that the United States is strongly committed to the defense of South Korea, because this was – this also became an issue in the past administration when President Trump said short-range ballistic missile tests don't really matter to him, only the long-range ones. Which suggested that the United States would decouple its own homeland security from the security of its allies in the region – Korea and Japan. So I think those will sort of be the main messages. Again, I don't expect that the administration is going to make any big announcements on North Korea with regard to this trip because, you know, again, I think their policy review is still – is still underway.

When it comes to inter-Korean engagement, you know, it's an open secret that the Moon government really wants to do more with North Korea, particularly on infrastructure engagement. I think part of that is motivated by ideology, in the sense that many in the Moon government really believe that inter-Korean reconciliation is important – is a normative good in and of itself. But it's also, I think, motivated by concerns that China's grip on North Korea is getting strong and stronger after the Trump administration, because the North Korean leader had three summits with the U.S. president and got absolutely nothing. And so you know, I think part of it is the Moon government wants to weaken China's grip on North Korea.

But admittedly, the challenge there will be how to square the circle between a Moon government that only has less than a year left in office and a desire to improve relations with North Korea with a United States that's probably going to be more cautious and want to have their policies coordinate – have whatever engagement policy the North is pursuing coordinated with what the United States wants to do. It sounds difficult, but it's not impossible. The last time we had a progressive government in South Korea that wanted to engage with North Korea was actually when Mike and I were in government. And that was during the Roh Moo-hyun administration. And we were able to do it. We were able to coordinate what they wanted to do

on inter-Korean engagement with the pace – at that time – the pace of the six-party talks. So it's difficult, but certainly not impossible to do.

Dr. Green:

I think – strongly suspect that, because Victor and I knew many of these officials before they went into the Biden administration – I suspect that the Biden administration has no appetite, no enthusiasm for rushing with an end of war declaration – you know, declaring the Korean War formally over. Whereas the Blue House, President Moon and his people, are quite eager to get an end of war declaration to revive their public support, please their progressive left base, and build something of a legacy on the peninsula before he leaves office. But I just don't think the Biden administration is going to embrace the end of war declaration.

The upside for the U.S. – there's only one upside is it would make the Blue House happy. It would be good for U.S.-Korea relations. But the downsides are considerable. The end of war declaration, if it becomes a legally binding declaration, would actually affect U.S. sanctions – Trading with the Enemy Act and other sanctions. It would actually lead to a reduction of sanctions. It would give not only North Korea but China and Russia a talking point to argue that the U.S. and ROK should no longer be doing military exercises, because the war is officially over. It's no longer just an armistice. It would increase domestic pressure on the Combined Forces Command and U.S. presence. It's all negative.

And then domestically, although President Trump wanted to do this – you know, President Trump just loved the idea of being the man who ended – quote/unquote “ended” the Korean War. Although President Trump wanted to do this, if the Biden administration does the same thing you can be sure that Republicans on the Hill will clobber him for being soft on North Korea. And the Biden administration is clearly prioritizing diplomacy with Iran on JCPOA, with Russia on New START. And I just don't see them expending their political capital on an agreement with North Korea that's symbolic, that does potentially more harm than good right now.

But they do have to be responsive to Seoul. They want to keep that alliance strong. I think they'll say: Let's strengthen U.S.-Japan-Korea trilateral, let's work more on regional issues, and then let's work on diplomacy. But it's not going to be aiming at getting an end of war declaration. I could be wrong. Maybe Victor disagrees. But I just don't see the Biden administration embracing that. They just will politely try to focus Seoul on more modest diplomacy. Now, North Korea gets a vote. There may be a provocation. The diplomacy may become more intense. But I still don't think that an end of war declaration is likely before Moon Jae-in leaves office.

Operator:

Thank you.

Our next question comes from the line of Howard LaFranchi. Your line is now open. Please go ahead.

Q: Great. Thanks.

Yeah, so I wanted to ask about, you know, how the Biden administration's interest, you know, in bringing values to U.S. foreign policy – how you expect to see that play out? I know you talked a little bit about that. But both in the – in this – you know, having this Quad summit and then in the meetings this week, you know, in particular, how do you see the president and then the two secretaries sort of signaling how values are going to be underpinning U.S. foreign policy now? Thank you.

Dr. Green: So I'll start, if it's OK. I'll start on that one.

When candidate Joe Biden published his foreign policy manifesto in Foreign Affairs, I teased some of his folks. I said, I've seen that before: That was President George W. Bush's second inaugural address. For those who remember the history – and Victor and I were there – President Bush in his second inaugural address said we need to make support for democracy and our democratic values a core part of our foreign policy strategy. And for a variety of reasons – including the financial crisis, Iraq, and other things – the Obama administration definitely muted that whole theme. But now it's back, and I think for very good reasons.

For Joe Biden himself, he said he ran for president because of what happened in Charlottesville. He's, like many Democrats and not a few Republicans, very worried about the state of democracy in our own country and sees a connection between that – and I agree with this – and foreign interference, particularly by Russia, and the state of democratic governance around the world. And I think the administration has begun with the premise, which is correct, that supporting democratic governance is not a kind of idealistic thing to do, it's a very practical thing to do.

For example, in Asia, if you're worried about China's Belt and Road Initiative, you can offer alternatives, as we are doing with Japan and Australia through the Free and Open Indo-Pacific, alternative financing. But if officials in developing countries can be bribed by China, if governments in those countries are not held accountable when Chinese Belt and Road projects steamroll through villages or shut down indigenous communities, then you're still going to lose. And so we have a definite interest in supporting civil society, accountability, a free press for strategic reasons as well. And I think the Biden team for the most part is quite sincere about this and it will be a core part of their – of their foreign policy strategy.

But they have some challenges. The Quad includes, of course, India. India is a democracy. It's actually an impressive democracy given the enormous size of that country. But it is also struggling with protests by farmers, questions

about the suppression of civil society rights and free speech. Even Korea, which Victor can speak to, which is a really impressive and important example of democratization in the '80s and '90s, is, many people would argue, turning backwards – this time not a right-wing government, but a progressive government restricting civil liberties. And then what do you do about Myanmar, where there's been a bloody – now a quite bloody coup, and countries like Japan and India want to keep good relations with them so China doesn't swallow them? So these are really tricky problems.

And I think you will see that in the Quad statement, in the 2+2 statement, there is an effort by Japan and India to at least be on the same page rhetorically about this and not fight about it as we have in the past, and that's a start. And then the next question for the administration is, how do they work with allies and partners on supporting democracy but not make it such a central priority that it breaks apart those alliances and partnership and gives China more running room? It's more important because of China. It's also harder because of China.

Victor's done a lot of work on this, including on the Korea piece, so I'd invite him, as well, to make a comment.

Dr. Cha:

So, I mean, I agree. I mean, I particularly want to pick up on the last point, which is I don't think it's going to be difficult nor a surprise for President Biden and his – and his team to be much more forthcoming on – and frank about human rights violations around the world and promotion of democratic values. They were – you know, Jake Sullivan and others were already doing it on their Twitter feed in the transition period, whether it was on Xinjiang or on Hong Kong. So I expect – I fully expect that we'll see that and it'll be quite a change from the previous four years, where the United States was totally absent – the U.S. president was totally absent on human rights. The challenge, as Mike said, will be as a part of the Quad or broader coalitional diplomacy, likeminded countries supporting the rules-based order, getting other countries to do these sorts of – particularly countries in Asia to do these sorts of things, you know, whether it's saying something about Myanmar or Xinjiang or Hong Kong.

And then on the Korean Peninsula, you know, obviously, the big hole there is on North Korea. The Trump administration did not appoint a human rights envoy for North Korea, which is required by the legislation in the North Korean Human Rights Act. You know, I fully expect that the Obama administration will appoint a special envoy for North Korea. And it would be nice if even on this trip Secretary Blinken made some sort of statement or some sort of nod to the fact that the United States is going to be active on this issue again, even though it hasn't been for the last four years.

Operator:

Thank you.

Our next question comes from the line of Abraham Mahshie. Your line is now open. Please go ahead.

Q: Yeah. Thank you for taking my question.

My question is about India and the visit by Secretary Austin specifically. What do you think might be defense deliverables? The other Quad members and visits that Secretary Austin's going to be making is going to be two partners that host U.S. troops, who buy interoperable defense equipment, that share intelligence. So what kind of DOD deliverables do you think that Secretary Austin will be seeking? And what would most benefit the United States in great-power competition to achieve with India? Thank you.

Dr. Green: So I – when I was in the White House as a senior official on Asia under the Bush administration, India was part of my remit. And we really, in the 2004 and '05 timeframe, turned around a very distant relationship between the U.S. and India, and the Obama and Trump administrations have kept running with it. It has bipartisan support now, the idea that India is a really important partner for us, because of the rise of China but also just because of the huge potential India has, one of the – you know, very young demographic, huge development and infrastructure problems, but a major part of global politics in the future.

And the defense relationship has actually been pretty transformed. You know, we now exercise military exercises with the Indian forces more than the rest of the world combined, basically.

But there are also limitations to what we're able to do. The Indians still rely quite heavily on Russia and to some extent France for their kit. And you know, the U.S. has been – has been somewhat frustrated in the effort to be a provider of fighter jets, for example. The Russians and the French still have kind of a first-move advantage from the Cold War era. So that aspect has been slow, but I think you're going to see it rapidly accelerate.

The Quad summit, and before that at the end of the Trump administration the first Quad foreign ministers meeting where they weren't just on the phone or on the margins of another meeting – where they actually met together – that was largely because of the Indian side because of what the PLA was doing in the Himalayan Mountains. And in that encounter, by the way, the Indian troops suffered. They didn't have good cold-weather gear. The Chinese had better equipment. And traditionally, it's the Indian navy that has found it most beneficial to work with the U.S. Navy. But I think the army, which in India has been much more focused on Pakistan and on internal security – I think the army now, which is so important in Indian politics, is more and more inclined to work with the U.S.

And you know, Secretary Austin is an army guy. And he's going to, I think, really try to build that aspect of the relationship out more. I think you'll see army becoming a more and more important part of it.

The Indians will, you know, taper their cooperation with us from time to time. They still have a – you know, as Foreign Minister Jaishankar puts it, strategic autonomy is still important to them. But counterbalancing China and having good equipment, especially shortfall the Chinese showed in the Himalayas, is also important. So I think it's – those are areas where you'll see Austin really trying to pick things up.

Operator: And our next question comes from the line of Jessica Ni. Your line is now open. Please go ahead.

Q: OK. Thank you.

I have a question. It's about Taiwan. We see from the maritime issue, from supply chain issues, the economic coercion to democracy, all the threats that Taiwan is facing from China. But as always, we don't really see Taiwan on these official platforms, like – or dialogues. How do you think that – is there any way that Taiwan can play a more active role to participate in these dialogues, maybe like the democracy summit or maybe supply chain alliance? Thank you.

Dr. Green: So I do not think you'll see a very public role for Taiwan in this diplomacy this week, but I am quite sure that senior U.S. officials will speak with their counterparts in Taipei before and after, and closely coordinate in a, quote/unquote, "unofficial" way on this overall strategy. And in the CSIS survey we did on views towards China we asked how much risk the American side should be willing to take to defend allies. And support for Taiwan was very high. You'll find it on our website. Across different sectors, thought leaders not only in national security but also business, academia, Congress.

So Taiwan has a lot of support in the U.S. And for Japan, the vulnerability of Taiwan to growing Chinese pressure – increasing bomber flights, fighter flights – is a problem. Because that's Japan's southern flank in the first island chain. And for Australia it's increasingly a problem because the first island chain goes down to Australia's backyard. So there's growing focus on the security of Taiwan, supporting Taiwan. What happened in Hong Kong just intensified that. And, you know, Tsai Ing-wen's very good, very impressive response on Covid-19 but also Chinese interference in social media and so forth is really quite impressive. So people respect the government in Taipei.

But all of this will be under the surface for the most part. I think – I have no doubt that the U.S. and Japan two-plus-two will discuss security of the Taiwan Strait, even if they don't say so publicly, because it matters to U.S.

and Japan. You already see the free and open Indo-Pacific infrastructure financing cooperation, including Taiwan and parts of the Pacific Islands, where Taiwan has diplomatic relations. And on the democracy summit, I think where you will see a role for Taiwan is probably NGOs involved in civil society work.

So I think this is an administration building on what the Trump administration did, frankly, that's going to try to elevate the importance of Taiwan in all our discussions in the region. But it's not going to lead to a formal or official change in diplomatic protocol that we stick to. That would be my expectation.

Operator: Thank you. And our next question comes from the line of Loren Hershey. Your line is now open. Please go ahead.

Q: Yeah. Gentlemen, it's great to hear your briefing this morning. Thank you very much.

Two-part question. The Global Posture Review being done by the secretary of defense, when do you see the deliverable on that? Second question, a comment on Vietnam, the growing relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam. Thank you.

Dr. Green: I'll start, if it's OK.

The Global Posture Review, I don't actually know when they expect to provide deliverables. I think one very important emphasis, it's been clear from Secretary Austin, Kath Hicks, and others' early statements on the GPR, is interoperability, jointness with allies and partners, is a critical part of that. So our posture is going to take into account how we operate in the first island chain with Japan or Australia, or with allies that have less capability, like the Philippines. In the Indian Ocean, how can we work with India?

So the Austin trip and the two-plus-two, I would think, will be really important inputs for the Global Posture Review, because it's not just about, you know, the U.S. laydown. There will be more distribution, if they can do it, less concentration of forward presence, more defense for Guam and other key nodes that are vulnerable to Chinese missiles. But a really important piece of this now is going to be how does the posture help us operate better with Australia, with India, with Japan, or with partners who are not high-end in terms of their military capabilities – like the Philippines. So I think this trip actually is going to be something of an important input for beginning to build that.

Also because when you're talking about posture, we're not building – well, we're talking about access to facilities in places like northern Australia, you know, who knows, potentially Cam Ranh Bay to your Vietnam point. And so

you can't really plan a Global Posture Review unless you're really talking to allies. And that's not going to be easy, so I think that will – that will stretch it out.

Vietnam is going to be critical. It has been for – since the Bush administration to U.S. strategy towards China. And Vietnam will be a key – a key player in a lot of things the U.S. tries to do. Vietnam is a key part of CPTPP. If the U.S. does a digital trade agreement it will include for certain countries like Japan and Korea, but it will also very likely include Vietnam, which is not a high-tech country like Japan or Korea but which has banned Huawei like the U.S. and Japan. So for strategic reasons, Vietnam will want to be in that.

Historically, we've been able to ask Vietnam to make concessions in areas that matter to us to play in that pool. So, for example, when I was in the White House, we – I traveled to Hanoi. We were able to convince Vietnam to allow greater religious freedom, which was important to President Bush, in advance of a summit, the first summit with Vietnam in 2005. TPP, Vietnam agreed to labor rights and certain controls of state-owned enterprises because they wanted to be in that team USA, if you will. And so it's a – it's a fascinating and promising relationship.

Vietnam will always be careful not to be so confrontational with China that it finds itself perhaps one day alone without the U.S. because they have doubts. So it'll be two steps forward, one step back. But I think it has real promise. You know, big plays in the future might include greater access to Cam Ranh Bay, a digital trade agreement with Vietnam, and things like that, I think.

Q: Thank you.

Operator: Thank you.

Dr. Green: I have to excuse myself. I have – I have to teach a course at Georgetown on U.S. strategy in a Pacific war, and if I – if I'm late the vice dean, Dr. Cha, will get mad at me. (Laughter.) So if Andrew will forgive me, I'm going to sign off.

Mr. Schwartz: Thank you, Mike.

Dr. Cha: Yeah, I have to – I have to go monitor Mike's class to make sure he starts on time, so. (Laughs.)

Mr. Schwartz: Does he – does he get a hall pass, you know, or anything, Victor? (Laughter.)

Dr. Cha: No, we're going to document if he's one minute late.

Mr. Schwartz: Yeah, absolutely. All right. Well, thank you.

Dr. Green: Thank you.

Mr. Schwartz: And this is all – this is, of course, all payback because, you know, I think Mike might have given you a hall pass when you guys were in the White House together, so. (Laughter.)

Thank you all for joining us today. We're here at CSIS if you want to talk to Mike and Victor further. You know where to reach us. We'll have a transcript of this out today. And look forward to talking with all of you in the days and weeks to come. Thanks very much for joining us today for this briefing.

Dr. Green: Thanks, Andrew.

(END)