

Center for Strategic and International Studies

## Press Briefing

# “Prime Minister Suga’s Visit to Washington”

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INTRODUCTION:

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H. Andrew  
Schwartz:

Thank you very much, Operator.

Colleagues, welcome. We have a great briefing today and we're going to get right to it. I want to introduce my colleagues. We have with us Dr. Mike Green, who is our senior vice president for Asia and our Japan Chair at CSIS; Nick Szechenyi, who is deputy director for the Japan Chair and a senior fellow at CSIS; Matt Goodman, who is our Simon Chair in political economy and also a senior vice president at CSIS; and Jane Nakano, who is a senior fellow in our Energy, Security, and Climate Change Program. They're going to give you their analysis on the visit of Prime Minister Suga.

And with that, I'd like to turn it to my colleague Dr. Mike Green.

Michael J. Green:

Thank you, Andrew. Thank you for joining us.

Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide is the first visitor in person to President Joe Biden at the White House. And this comes a month after the virtual summit of the Quad leaders from Japan, the U.S., Australia, and India, which delivered major pledges on vaccine distribution, maritime security, rare earth metal. It really demonstrates how much the Biden administration is focusing on the Indo-Pacific, in particular the challenge from China, and how central Japan is, and the U.S.-Japan alliance, to the U.S. strategy.

We will be hosting Prime Minister Suga ourselves for a public event at CSIS when he finishes his meetings at the White House, where he will reflect on what he discussed with President Biden and his vision for the alliance. The CSIS event is public. I'll be interviewing him. I'll steal some of your best questions today and try them on the prime minister. That's Friday night at 6:00 p.m. this week. And there will be information on the website probably by the time we're done with this call.

I worked on a number of summits when I was special assistant to President George Bush. And it seems pretty clear to me that the most important objective that both leaders have for this summit actually is their personal connection. When you work in the White House you see how much that matters to develop that personal trust, because both countries and both leaders have staked a lot in this alliance and because the region – with the Taiwan Strait, North Korea, technology competition – is looking turbulent. And the two leaders will need to take the measure of each other and be able to respond to crises knowing that the other leader has their back.

So that personal dimension is probably the most important goal for both of them. My understanding is they will have an extended one-on-one session. That usually happens in the White House when the goal is that deep personal connection and very candid reflections on hard problems. So things you don't see in a joint statement or press conference that you think are important in the alliance are probably happening in that one-on-one session.

Politically, this is very important for Prime Minister Suga. His predecessor, Abe Shinzo, had an unprecedented almost eight-year term in office. Suga was his architect, his engineer, his chief Cabinet secretary, but is having to deal with COVID, the Olympics question, and is not in as strong a position as Abe was. So politically Suga needs a good summit. And I think Joe Biden is inclined to give him one. For Biden, this is also politically important.

The president emphasizes bipartisanship – and I personally think he’s sincere – but you don’t see it on display with the infrastructure bill and domestic policy. Where you see bipartisanship is on foreign policy and especially on Asia and the U.S.-Japan alliance. And I think for the Biden administration a strong summit with Prime Minister Suga shows his bona fides to the public, to the Congress – where there is very strong support for working with allies.

They will spend a good amount of time in private, at least, talking about China. There’s a bit of press out now saying is Japan going too soft on China for the United States? I find that a little amusing. Some of you will recall that a couple months ago the press was worried that Biden was too soft on China for Japan. A bit of a role reversal. I think that you can be pretty confident that on the basic strategy towards China the U.S. and Japan are quite well-aligned. Under Prime Minister Abe we revised defense guidelines. Abe changed the interpretation of Article 9 of the constitution to allow much more substantial joint planning, joint operations.

We don’t see that in the press, but it’s happening. And both countries know it needs to because of the challenges on the Korean Peninsula and in Taiwan. In the most recent polls Japanese views of China are the most negative they’ve ever been – more negative than Americans’ views. So there isn’t a gap on China strategy, but the temperature’s a bit different.

The Biden administration, I think, is concerned at how aggressive China has been and how much ground the U.S. has lost in recent years in Asia and wants to catch up quickly. I think the Japanese view is that they have had a strategy in place and they want to move forward steady as she goes, free and open Indo-Pacific, enhancing deterrence incrementally. So there’s a bit of a difference – a nuanced difference in public tone but not in direction, in my view.

They’ll talk about Korea because of the missile threats to Japan, in particular the medium-range ballistic missiles which the Trump administration ignored in his diplomacy, but which Japan considers, for obvious reasons, the real threat. I’m quite certain President Biden, at least in private if not with some clues in public, will be pushing Prime Minister Suga to improve relations with South Korea, which is strategically important for all three countries. The North Korean actions help. And I think they’ll talk quite a bit about Myanmar and the coup d’état, where, by

all indications, Japan and the U.S. are taking somewhat different public stances, but behind the scenes there's real alarm in both countries at the degree to which China is helping the junta, and the violence is escalating and making the engagement that both the U.S. and Japan want more difficult.

So I'll end there. We can go into more on the security in the Q&A. And I'll turn it over – I think Nick is going to go next and talk briefly about the defense issues in the – in the summit.

Nicholas  
Szechenyi:

Thank you. This is Nick. I'll just speak briefly on defense.

From my vantage point, the summit is very significant in terms of setting the agenda for U.S.-Japan defense cooperation going forward. Secretaries Blinken and Austin visited Japan last month and issued a joint statement sort of laying out the core issues for alliance cooperation on defense. And I would expect those to be reiterated in some form over the course of the summit.

I just want to highlight three themes that I think will animate bilateral dialogue going forward. One is the importance of training and exercises. Both Suga and Biden want to highlight the importance of the alliance. And to signal to the region the vitality of that alliance, you need to demonstrate that there's interoperability and constant training and exercising between the U.S. and Japanese militaries. So that's a very important theme.

We've also seen reference to cooperation in new domains such as space and cyber. Japan just got a new defense budget of approximately \$51 billion, which includes initiatives in these areas.

And thirdly, this will be an issue going forward, but I think it's critical, and that is how we set roles, missions, and capabilities for the alliance. I think we'll see a process of determining exactly what Japan's defense needs and capabilities are, how you connect that to U.S.-Japan defense cooperation and interoperability, ultimately to send a deterrence signal.

And so you might not get into these – you might not see these issues addressed in detail, but they will be certainly referenced. And I think this leaders' summit will really establish a strong foundation for the defense pillar of the U.S.-Japan alliance, which, in the face of various security challenges in the region, is still a core foundation of the relationship.

Why don't I stop there and turn it over to Matt to talk about economic issues.

Matthew P.  
Goodman:

OK, thank you. Hi, everyone. This is Matt Goodman. I'm going to talk about the sort of broadly defined economic issues.

Before I do that, let me just affirm the point that Mike made about the importance of the optics of this for both President Biden and Prime Minister Suga. I totally agree this is really, for each of them, an important signaling opportunity; for President Biden to show that we're working with, you know, key allies on a range of global and regional challenges, and for Prime Minister Suga to show that he's, you know, the first in the door as a foreign leader and that, you know, he's got U.S. – the U.S. alliance under control. So I think that is really what this is all about before you get to the substance.

And then the second point I'd make as sort of a preamble is that, you know, China is, I think, going to be the underlying sort of mood music behind everything in the private and public aspects of this. So that's sort of a preamble.

You know, talking about the economics of this meeting, let me first say that I have been involved with Japan for almost 40 years and I've seen a lot of U.S.-Japan summits. And I'm confident that this is the first time there has been a summit in that time in which trade was not at the top of the agenda. Trade has been an issue in our relationship for a long time, and it's to me striking that trade is not going to be a central feature or a feature at all of this conversation. So that's interesting. And I'm going to come back to that at the end.

But overall on the econ side of this story, I think it's going to be largely about building back better, for want of a better term, how we kind of collectively – individually and jointly work to, you know, rebuild after the COVID-19 pandemic, and then, you know, go beyond that to strengthen our own economies, and then work together in sort of international economic cooperation. So that's, I think, the uber theme.

But within that, I think there are going to be three broad buckets of conversation and maybe a fourth. But the three that I'm watching are:

Health. And so I think you're going to see some statements about post-COVID work together between the U.S. and Japan, and two things in particular I'm looking at. One is I think the U.S. is hoping that Japan is going to make a bigger contribution to the COVAX facility to get vaccines, you know, distributed around the world. The U.S., as you know, has made a big, you know, \$4 billion commitment, and I think they're trying to encourage allies and partners to – you know, to make similarly large commitments. So that's one thing. And the other thing is the U.S. and Japan working together on pre-pandemic planning for the next of these, which, I am sad to say, is, you know, likely to happen at some point. So the U.S. and Japan working to sort of strengthen our resilience against pandemics going forward. So that's the first bucket.

The second is climate and green growth, and Jane is going to talk a lot more about that. All I'm going to say here is that I think for John Kerry in particular, who's now in Shanghai, actually, interestingly, and then I guess going to Korea, but apparently has been, you know, encouraging Japan to go even further in its own pretty already ambitious climate target. Again, Jane can talk more about that. But interestingly, that's the focus, maybe, you know, from the U.S. side on this topic, but from the Japanese side I think they want to kind of shift the conversation more to the green growth story about how, you know, investing in clean energy can be a growth-enhancing thing, not sort of – this whole issue is not sort of at the expense of growth. And so I think that's the emphasis the Japanese want to put on this, and I think they think that President Biden's going to be a receptive ear to that perspective.

The third bucket is technology and innovation. And I think the key phrase you're going to hear a lot about is supply-chain resilience, in particular in relation to critical technologies like semiconductors, where there's, as you know, a current shortage around the world, and that's the immediate problem. The longer-term problem is ensuring that we have, you know, safe and reliable and secure, resilient supply chains for this critical foundational technology, particularly in the face of, you know, the China challenge.

I do not think, despite press reports in Japan, that there's going to be some big new announcement on supply-chain resilience. I'm not sensing that. I think that was – when the 2+2 ministers met last month, they launched a working group that is already sort of working on the details of this. So I don't think there's going to be a lot of new detail there, but you know, of course, could be wrong.

And then – and then so on the critical technologies issue – still in this bucket – I think there's going to be a little bit of talk about protecting critical technologies using export controls and strengthening, in particular, Japan's approach to those issues and to – vis-à-vis China in particular, and investment screening and other things to protect critical technologies. Japan's already doing a lot of that, but I think there's an interest in aligning even further on those issues.

And then on the promotion side, working together to develop new technologies like new alternative telecommunications systems like the Open RAN system as an alternative to Huawei's sort of vertical offerings, working together on smart cities, working together on electric vehicles and other clean technologies – which, again, Jane will probably touch on.

So I think that's the three main buckets. The other one that I'm watching and I'm interested to see what comes out is – and the final point I'll make – is about U.S.-Japan cooperation in third countries, particularly in the – in the Indo-Pacific region in the economic sphere. You know, both the U.S. and

Japan are central to what I call the variable geometry of groupings of countries – the Quad, the G-7, others, APEC – and they're the critical sort of linchpin of all these arrangements, and their alliance calls for the two countries to work together on international economic cooperation.

I think you'll see some talk about working together on regional infrastructure development. You know, maybe a revival of this Blue Dot Initiative that was launched during the Trump administration, bringing the U.S., Japan, and Australia together to work on high-quality infrastructure. That may or may not be, you know, explicitly mentioned as the – as the initiative, but I think there'll be possibly something on infrastructure – joint infrastructure development.

And then trade, final point. So the U.S. is reluctant – in fact, even sort of allergic to the idea of talking about the U.S. rejoining the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP. Japan clearly wants the U.S. to rejoin, and most analysts here in Washington who are looking at, you know, Asian economic issues think that the U.S. would be better off in TPP. But it's clear the Biden administration doesn't want to go there, at least yet. So I don't think that will be a topic of conversation, you know, privately perhaps Prime Minister Suga will do a little bit of nudging, but careful not to push that too hard because that probably is counterproductive. You know, possibly talk of something as an alternative to that.

Working on digital trade or data governance is an important issue – which just shameless self-advertising, we're going to be putting out a report in the next few days about how the United States can kind of latch onto efforts to develop rules and principles and norms in the data area, which is so critical to the modern economy. And Japan has a great, you know, interest and we're very aligned on those issues. So you may see some talk about that. And I think I will stop there and hand over to Jane.

Jane Nakano:

Thanks, Matt. This is Jane Nakano with Energy Program.

So climate change has emerged as a key pillar of bilateral partnership in recent months. Prime Minister Suga of Japan announced in October, before the U.S. presidential election, that Japan would work to achieve economy-wide carbon neutrality by 2050. Now under President Biden and Prime Minister Suga, the two countries are – you know, share a midcentury decarbonization commitment.

You know, both the U.S. and Japan aim to basically, you know, electrify non-power sectors while decarbonizing the power sector in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and try to meet this midcentury commitment. And there, innovation will be the key to their success. And it's interesting how the two governments – the two countries have nearly identical lists of clean energy technologies and sources that they're trying to double down

on, both innovation and deployment. These include offshore wind, hydrogen, energy storage, nuclear, and carbon capture and utilization.

And so, you know, President Biden and Prime Minister Suga are expected to, you know, reaffirm the interest in strengthening cooperation – bilateral cooperation in this area, because the two countries do have strong energy – you know, clean energy innovation expertise, but then also resources to take it from innovation to deployment stage. And they'll also likely sort of reaffirm their interest in working together in third countries to help energy transition in, you know, places Southeast Asia.

And also, I think the Biden administration is trying to make up for the lost years of federal government inaction on greenhouse gas emissions reduction and to, you know, restore the U.S. leadership on climate mitigation. And I think looking to partners such as Japan, I think Matt has already alluded to this, but to see, you know, whether U.S. can sort of revitalize the international momentum together with close allies. The U.S. emissions reduction commitment for 2025 under Paris was 26 to 28 percent reduction against the 2005 level.

Now, I think the Biden administration is expected to announce a highly ambitious emissions reduction commitment by April 22nd, a week from today, when President Biden hosts the leaders' climate summit. That is – you know, I think the idea is really to show that the U.S. is really back in the game, back, you know, in the international climate discussing, trying to really build a greater momentum towards COP-26 in the U.K. later this year.

Japan has not updated its 2030 target of 26 percent reduction since it was initially announced back in 2015. But it seems, you know, that Japanese policymakers have begun formulating pathways to achieving its own midcentury neutrality commitments. Later this year, probably summer, the Japanese government is – will likely announce its basic energy plan, where they will outline priorities but then also they will start showing, you know – you know, some of the ways that they, you know, plan to achieve a specific energy mix, et cetera. So there will be much more specificity. But I think for the summit, you know, Prime Minister Suga may be here to share with President Biden some preview of a much more ambitious 2030 emissions reduction target.

Also, the two leaders may also discuss the prospect for ending coal financing globally. You know, President Biden's climate agenda includes ending international financing of a carbon-intensive fossil-fuel-based economy. And one of the key challenges here is, you know, how to really encourage China to stop exporting high-carbon goods, especially to developing countries under, you know, the Belt and Road Initiative, for example. And you know, Japan's private banks and insurance companies have announced plants and co-financing in recent years, and also the Japanese government itself last summer announced, you know, it would

end support for coal with some exceptions. I would expect that the two leaders will be sort of talking a little more about the prospect for sort of a more united front on this end, but of course, you know, with some considerations to different challenges that, you know, each country may face.

So let me stop there and look forward to any questions. Thanks.

H. Andrew Schwartz:

We'd like to open it up for your questions. And if you could identify your name and your news organization, that would be helpful for our transcript. We will be issuing a transcript following this briefing.

Operator:

Thank you. (Gives queuing instructions.)

Our first question comes from the line of Anne Gearan with The Washington Post. Please go ahead.

Q:

Hi. Thanks very much for doing this call.

I was hoping – and I know you both – a couple of you had addressed aspects of this, but I was hoping maybe Mike or Matt could go back at the issue of why the Biden administration has decided to do this very symbolic thing of making Japan the first country to come here. I mean, it – there are a number of other ways the administration might have made a similar point. And you know, sort of what is the thinking, in your view, in making such a marquee deal out of – out of Japan now? And are there any downsides to that – maybe, perhaps, raising expectations too high? Thank you.

Michael J. Green:

Thank you, Anne.

I mean, the obvious short answer is Japan's getting its marquee treatment because the Biden administration has identified the Indo-Pacific as its most important region and China as its greatest geopolitical challenge. Obviously, there are the global challenges from climate change and the pandemic and so forth, but China's the greatest geopolitical challenge. And you had a preview of that thinking when they appointed Kurt Campbell as the senior coordinator for the Indo-Pacific with deputy national security rank, the only regional office that has been elevated within the White House. So that tells you a lot about their strategic focus.

It was a little bit of a pleasant surprise, I think, for Japan and the region because there was during the transition some concern – a bit in Japan; a lot in Taiwan, India, and Vietnam, all on the frontlines with China that showed up in surveys we did in September last year – there was a lot of concern in those countries that the Biden administration might slip back to the kind of uneven, inconsistent stance that they thought the Obama administration had on China. The Obama administration tried at various points to lock in grand bargains with China, to – you know, John Kerry was a part of this. In

the first year, they issued a joint statement with Chinese leader Hu Jintao promising to respect China's core interests and spoke of strategic reassurance.

There were real divisions in the Obama administration about China – about how much to confront and how much to try to build, you know, a new kind of condominium with China. And, you know, the team they're putting in place for Biden is from that harder line that would have been associated with the Defense Department, with Hillary Clinton. And it's because China behaved very, very badly from 2015 on, which I won't go into. But the other factor is Abe really held the line at a time when the Trump administration on defense was pretty robust, but on diplomacy and trade was not.

So all of that has changed the consensus. Is there a downside risk to this? You know, sure. You're right about expectations. There's a certain not desperation but an urgency in the Biden administration because they're coming in new. They're looking at the problem. They want to do big things like they did with the Quad.

I think the Japanese view is, hey, guys, we've been doing this for eight years while you were on vacation. And a little more steady as she goes would be the view in Tokyo. I don't think they're going to show that slight change in any way in public. And in private I think there's going to be detailed discussion on a lot of these hard problems. I think we're probably more aligned with Japan on the China problem than we are with anyone, frankly, except maybe Australia.

So that's sort of the context and why Suga is getting this special visit.

Matthew P.  
Goodman:

Can I just – this is Matt. Can I just add one thing? I totally agree with everything Mike just said, but just to make the point that, first of all, you know, Japanese prime ministers always want to be the first one, you know, to meet the new U.S. president. That's been a pattern for many years.

In the past – and Mike, you know, knows this as well – you know, frankly, beyond the Japan handlers in the White House, there's often sort of a resistance to do too early a meeting because there's a lot going on, other things in the hundred days. So it's sort of a bit of a, you know, you have to manage this set of expectations from Japan.

This time is very different, I think. I sense that, you know, this White House is much more solicitous at getting Japan in the door early, because it is, as Mike said, related to its broader signaling about the free and open Indo-Pacific, about managing the challenges of this more assertive, problematic China. And particularly in my realm of economic competition, you know, Japan is a critical player. So I think that's a little bit different this time.

In terms of risk, I would say, you know, I do think – I don't expect a lot of public disagreement. I think there's going to be an interest on both sides in showing alignment on all the issues we talked about.

You know, I do think, as I sort of hinted at, the climate issue, there might be a little, you know, expectation from the U.S. that Japan go even further, or on – you know, on some of the regional issues like Myanmar or, you know, Uyghurs in China, a little bit more pushing of Japan. And if that were to – you know, to be part of the public view that there was a difference on those sorts of issues, then that could be a downside risk. But I don't actually expect that.

I think that's not going to be – even in the private meetings, I don't think it's going to be a major area of difference. And as I say – as I said in my opening, compared to the old days when, you know, we had serious trade frictions, and those would be at best thinly veiled, I don't think you're going to see not only differences on trade, but differences on really any of this. But I do think if you're pushing me to talk about potential risks, that would be the only – (inaudible).

Operator: Thank you. Our next question comes from Atsushi Takemoto with Kyodo News. Please go ahead.

Q: Hello?

Michael J. Green: Go ahead, Takemoto-san.

Q: Hi. Thank you for doing this.

I have one question regarding the human rights issue. Human rights issue, especially on Hong Kong and Xinjiang, are among the bigger priority for President Biden, but not – apparently not for Prime Minister Suga. And I wonder the U.S. – if the U.S. is going to try to engage Suga in addressing the human rights issue in China in this summit, and also if the two would try to have an aligned position in the future.

Michael J. Green: Let me start on that. Historically in these summits, you know, since the first summit between Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru and, I think, Eisenhower, the Japanese side always urged the Americans not to overemphasize democracy and human rights, to understand there are different Asian values. Japan's government often pursued closer relations with countries the U.S. was isolating in the Cold War, including China, and since the Cold War with countries like Myanmar and the Philippines. That's a constant. That's still the case.

But I've been following this very, very closely my entire career. And I think there's a – I think we're in a new era in one important respect. The Japanese government and the Japanese people clearly recognize how

important democratic norms, good governance, and human rights are in the context of China's ambitions to define the region as, you know, more aligned with their authoritarian vision. And people working in Myanmar in the government now – both governments – tell me there's not a lot of disagreement on first principles. The Japanese side also thinks we have to press for a return to democracy in Myanmar.

And the context you can see in our survey in the fall at CSIS. We surveyed elites in 16 countries. The country where foreign policy elites – Europe, Asia, and North America. The country where foreign policy elites were most likely to say we should pressure China on Hong Kong was Japan. Not U.K., not Britain, not the U.S. or France. It was Japan. And as you know, Takemoto-san, there's now a human rights caucus that has real momentum in the Japanese Diet. So we're definitely in a new era.

But the tone is going to be different. The Japanese side is not just going to change overnight. And my sense is that they're trying to make that an advantage. And the Japanese side is able to go into the junta in Myanmar and communicate things. We're not. So my sense is there's a – there's an effort to try to take advantage of that different approach rather than fight about it. That said though, you're right. Publicly it's going to look like Japan's being softer. And there'll be some pressure on Suga-san as a result, I would suspect.

Q: Thank you.

Operator: Thank you.

(Gives queuing instructions.)

And we have a question from the line of Kitty Wang with NTD. Please go ahead.

Q: Yes. Thank you for doing this.

My question is regarding Taiwan. Do you think the stability of Taiwan Strait will be included in this joint statement after the summit? Thank you.

Michael J. Green: I'll start on that. Last time that that was included in the U.S.-Japan summit was 1969 when Nixon met with Prime Minister Sato. And Sato only agreed to do it because Nixon in exchange agreed to return Okinawa, which was under U.S. occupation still. And that's the last time, 1969. Suga himself has talked about it recently, how important the Taiwan Strait security is to Japan. In the 2+2, the secretary of state and defense – Japanese ministers of foreign affairs and defense highlighted the importance of the Taiwan Strait to our security.

I don't know if it will be in the summit statement or the press conference this time. I am quite certain they will talk about security in the Taiwan Straits and the entire first island chain at length. China, the PLA, is putting enormous pressure on Taiwan, and Japan, and the Philippines right now. And I'm sure it will be a core and major topic of discussion.

The Japanese side may feel like after Suga's statement, after the 2+2 with a big emphasis on Taiwan Straits, maybe they'll be a little quieter about it in relative terms in the summit. But behind the scenes, it's a – I think there's more attention to the security challenges in the Taiwan Strait than there's ever been, diplomats and military officials both. And a lot more trust in Tsai Ing-wen and Taipei from both Washington and Tokyo than ever before.

So I would bet it probably won't be in the summit statement, but I wouldn't read too much into that. If it were, that would be a bit of a surprise, because it hasn't been in for so long. So that would stand out. So that's sort of how I see that. But we'll see. We'll find out. Maybe I'll ask Prime Minister Suga about it tomorrow. I'm just doing that so you'll tune in, Kitty.

Q: (Laughs.) Thank you.

Operator: Thank you. Our next question comes from the line of Doug Palmer with Politico. Please go ahead.

Q: Hi.

This question is for Matt. And, you know, I heard what you said, that you don't expect trade to be a big theme of this summit. And that the Biden administration isn't very interested in joining the TPP at this time. But I guess sort of a variation on that question is, you know, the U.S. and Japan during the Trump administration negotiated that mini deal on agriculture and digital trade. And there was a pledge at the time to negotiate a more comprehensive trade agreement between the two. Do you think there's any likelihood that that will be discussed at this summit? Is that something that would be more palatable to the Biden administration than joining the TPP? Just curious what your thoughts are on that.

Matthew P. Goodman: So, again, I don't think that even that will be a very prominent part of this conversation in this summit. But – and I don't think that the Biden administration is enthusiastic about doing a sort of phase two deal, building on, as you said, the – whatever it was – September 2019 bilateral pair of deals. But I do think that there will be, you know, processes for dialogue on trade issues. Of course, you know, even the best of trading partners have trade issues. And there are still some remaining issues that are – there's an interest, I think, in building out work in that digital area.

There's probably still, you know, remaining issues to follow through on in the agriculture and other spaces. So there will be processes for bilateral

discussion, you know, below the level of the leaders. One problem in that regard on our side is that we don't really have anybody in place at the undersecretary of deputy USTR level, or any of the key people who will be driving those sorts of conversations. But I don't expect an early sort of announcement of any particular move to do sort of a deeper bilateral trade deal. And to the extent there is conversation about trade, I think it's going to be more focused on third-country issues – not TPP, but maybe working together, as I mentioned, on some sort of, you know, digital or data efforts in the Asia-Pacific region.

Sorry, Doug, I know it's your bread and butter. (Laughter.) But, you know, not as interesting this time. But there'll be other summits.

Q: Yeah. No, I appreciate it. Thanks very much.

Mr. Goodman: All right.

Operator: Thank you.

(Gives queuing instructions.)

And not showing any questions in the queue. Please continue. Oh, just a moment, we have some coming in now. Thank you.

Our first question comes from Taketsugu Sato with Asahi Shimbun newspaper. Please go ahead.

Q: Thank you. Thank you for a wonderful briefing.

Can I ask a follow-up question on Taiwan issue? If the joint statement refer to Taiwan Strait, do you believe – do you think that it would lead to a future joint exercise and draw up a joint operation plan in the future? Thank you.

Michael J. Green: Sato-san, I would say whether there's a statement or not there will be joint exercises and operational plans. I think that's clearly where the alliance is heading. And we already do joint exercises. We don't – we and the Japanese side, or when we do it with Japan and Australia, we don't – we don't predicate that or premise that on the Taiwan Strait scenario. It's basically building joint interoperability – joint interoperable experience and connections and readiness. So the capability is already there.

I think from the Chinese perspective, from the PLA perspective, for some time now they have – they've had to assume in their planning that they cannot separate the U.S. and Japan, that our navies in particular, but the defense forces overall, are so regularly exercising and connected electronically and in doctrine and equipment and so forth that I think their planning assumption must be if they use a major force they're going to have to face both the U.S. and Japan. Even though Japan, as you know, has no

explicit defense commitment to Taiwan, Taiwan's not that far away. Which is why you see the Chinese side exploring what's called gray zone activities – you know, coast guard – navy destroyers painted white and called coast guard cutters, to be clear, but coast guard cutters and sort of, you know, pressure on Japan, pressure on other countries like the Philippines and Indonesia short of something that might look like a war footing.

But in the Taiwan Strait, there is a much more belligerent Chinese stance with not coast guard but actual warplanes, bombers. And so that temperature's going to heat up, and I think because the U.S. and Japan have such a critical security interest in this – in the Taiwan Strait, as the two defense and the foreign ministers from each side said recently, I think that what you're describing is going to happen whether or not there's a statement in the summit.

Q: Thank you.

Operator: Thank you. Our next question comes from Takehiro Masutomo. Please go ahead.

Q: Hiro from – (inaudible). Thank you for sharing your analysis.

I have a question related to the Tokyo Olympic Games. As you may know, the Covid numbers are surging in Japan, especially in Osaka. And earlier today in Japan time, Prime Minister Suga's ally, Mr. Nikai, mentioned cancellation option for the first time. Do you think President Biden may not endorse the plans for the Olympic Games up front during the meeting with Prime Minister Suga? Thank you.

Michael J. Green: My guess is that Joe Biden will do nothing to undermine Prime Minister Suga on the Olympic Games. You know, what he says or if he endorses the plan, we'll see, but I don't think he will do anything to undermine Prime Minister Suga, it's politically so important. I don't know how Matt or others see it, but I wouldn't – I wouldn't – I don't think – I was surprised by Nikai's statement. I think he may be regretting that politically. I don't think Joe Biden's going to do that, not given what Matt and I said about the importance of the personal relationship and the politics in both countries.

Matthew P. Goodman: I agree. This is Matt. I totally agree. I think whether, you know, Biden will – you know, as some reporter or press outlet indicated, there might be an invitation for President Biden to come to the Olympics. Whether, you know, the White House is going to be enthusiastic about that is another question. I'm not sure about that. But I don't think, as Mike said, there's going to be any effort to undermine Prime Minister Suga on this issue or any other issue.

Q: All right. Yeah. Thank you.

Operator: Thank you. Our next question comes from Nike Ching with Voice of America. Please go ahead.

(Pause.)

Mr. (sic; Ms.) Ching, your line is open.

Matthew P. Goodman: We can't hear her. At least I can't.

Q: Hello? Can you hear me? Hello?

H. Andrew Schwartz: We can hear you now, Nike. Go ahead.

Q: OK. Great. Thank you so much for the whole briefing. I really appreciate your great points.

Pardon me if this has been addressed, as I am a little bit late attending the presser. The first question is for Mike. Do you expect the U.S. policy review on North Korea to be released shortly after tomorrow's summit? And what are your thoughts on that? Do you envision a new U.S.-Japan-Korea trilateral mechanism to replace the Six-Party Talks?

Thank you. And I have a separate question, if I may. I will explain it later.

Michael J. Green: OK. I think that the U.S.-Japan-Korea trilateral relationship is going to be a major emphasis for the – for the Biden administration, and I think Suga and President Moon Jae-in know that and are going to cooperate quite a bit. That doesn't mean Japan and Korea will solve the underlying disputes they have, which are pretty rough politically and pretty raw emotionally for both sides.

But I think on the cooperation to deal with North Korea, this is such a clear emphasis for the Biden administration. Biden and Moon Jae-in, I think, will support that trilateral piece. I think you might even – you know, Moon Jae-in will come next, or soon. And I think you might even see Moon signal more of a lean towards the free and open Indo-Pacific and broader regional cooperation, which the Korean side avoided during Trump because they didn't want to get cross-eyes with China. But we'll see on that one.

I don't think it will – you know, will it replace the six-party talks? Yes in the sense that that will be the main focus of diplomacy for the Biden administration, shoring up alliances with Japan and Korea, using that as leverage to get China to do more to try to curb North Korea's proliferation, and then from there approach North Korea. I don't know, in the end, whether they'll do it bilaterally through the six-party talks or both.

I don't think it – I personally don't think they're ready to do the – to announce a North Korea policy review. I remember we did one in the Bush administration in 2001, and everyone said why isn't it finished? And in a way it was because officials weren't in place yet. And as Matt said earlier, it's not just USTR. State and Defense as well, a lot of the key people have not been confirmed. So – and they don't, I think, have any lead yet on who the envoy would be, if they have an envoy.

So I think it's going to take it a little longer. But I expect that Biden will talk to Suga about it. The national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, talked to his Japanese and Korean counterparts. So I'm sure it will be on the agenda. Announcements, I'm not holding my breath, but maybe we'll all be surprised.

Q: Great. Thank you so much. And if I may, I would like to ask a separate question to the panelists.

A week from now there will be a climate summit. Russian President Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping are among those leaders invited. How do you envision their appearance during the virtual summit? What message is the U.S. sending by having those leaders attending a climate summit? As we know, there are big differences in other critical issues.

Thank you.

Jane Nakano: Shall I take that?

H. Andrew Schwartz: Yeah, Jane, please.

Jane Nakano: Sure. Hi, this is Jane Nakano. Yeah, thanks for the great question.

I think, you know, by inviting these leaders who may not, you know, have completely aligned views on, you know, what each country could be and should be doing for this collective good, you know, addressing the climate, global climate-change issue, I think – you know, I think it signals that, you know, it needs every major economy to be part of this.

And I think also it sort of underlines how the Biden administration articulated the – you know, I think, through Secretary Blinken, articulated its approach to China. You know, we could be competitive in certain areas, but, you know, where we can cooperate, we should. And I think climate change is one area where, you know, cooperation can get us much farther, much closer to the, you know, chance of being able to avert the worst effects of climate change.

But, of course, you know, it's not going to be easy. I think, you know, China, you know, is one of the major greenhouse-gas emitters currently. And, you

know, a lot of – it's not just Washington, but also Brussels and many other Western countries are hoping to see much more clear articulation of how China plans on reducing its emissions level.

You know, China does have, you know, 2060 carbon-neutrality commitment. But until 2030, when China, you know, plans to hit the peak emissions, you know, there's no clarity as to what that level of peak may be. So, you know, I think – you know, indications are – and I think that itself is a very important signal.

And, yeah, so let me – and, by the way, also, you know, there are other countries that may not have complete alignment in terms of, you know, coming up with very ambitious targets. But, you know, I should note that now at least China is deploying a lot of green-energy technologies. Also countries like India also are trying to, you know, push its energy transition, not just for really climate, but it's really for, you know, just local pollution issue, as well as address some of the import-dependence issues that, you know, already concern from, you know, heavy import dependence on oil/gas to fuel their economies.

Thanks.

Michael J. Green: If I can make a very short somewhat academic point, in 2008, when President Obama was still a candidate, a number of his advisors published a piece which caught my attention at the time making the case that if we cooperate with China on issues like climate change we can overcome geopolitical rivalry. And I think there's been some nervousness in Congress, among some allies in Asia that that might still be the operating assumption. But in 2021, I see no evidence of it. John Kerry seems to be on message. You know, nobody is saying we're going to – we're going to, you know, stop supporting Taiwan or defending Japan because we need China on climate change. They are separate lanes. And my impression is Jake Sullivan and the White House are keeping that discipline pretty well so far.

Q: Great points. And if I may have a just quick follow up, in your vision do you see – and I'm not saying it's going to happen – do you see a possible pull-aside bilateral virtual meeting between President Biden and Russia President Putin, or between President Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping during the climate summit? Thank you.

Jane Nakano: On climate, I am not so certain. I mean, first, it's virtual. But you know, Secretary Kerry is already meeting his counterpart, you know, in Shanghai, as I think Mike noted earlier during the presser, and I think that's where, you know, much more concrete issues are discussed. So if there is something that elevates to the presidents – you know, President Biden's level and President Xi Jinping's level, or President Biden and Putin's level, maybe there will be some occasion to reaffirm. But I think a lot of discussions, I think they will – you know, I haven't seen a strong indication

that there will be a lot coming out of the current outreach that Secretary Kerry's making. It's not to say that there won't be progress, but I think it's probably a little too soon to know that there will be, you know, something that will merit sort of a pull-aside, if you will. Thanks.

Michael J. Green: Matt and I could tell you, from having worked in the White House, that these pull-asides are not spontaneous. (Laughs.) There's huge debate and discussion. My guess is probably that there will be pull-asides. The administration wants to work on important New START arms control with Russia and maybe send some warnings with respect to Ukraine and cyber. And we have a big agenda with China. So I think there probably will be a pull-aside.

I think it will be likely scripted in a way where there's no bon ami and sort of friendly, you know, smiling. And if I were Biden, I wouldn't drink tea if Putin offers it in a pull-aside. But I think for reasons of national interest they'll probably do something, would be my guess.

Q: Thank you.

Operator: Thank you. There are no questions remaining in the queue. Please continue.

H. Andrew Schwartz: Colleagues, thank you for being here today. We will have a transcript of this briefing out within a couple hours. We'll email it directly to your inboxes. It'll also be posted on CSIS.org and sent out via Twitter. So thanks for joining us today, and please contact us if you have any questions about the visit and anything we can help with at all. Thanks so much.

Michael J. Green: And please do join us on this Friday evening before your cocktail at 6:00. Information will be on our CSIS website on Prime Minister Suga's remarks and my short discussion with him. I hope you can join us then. Thank you, Andrew.

H. Andrew Schwartz: Yeah. Thanks, Mike.

Michael P. Goodman: Thanks, everyone. Bye-bye.

H. Andrew Schwartz: Thanks, Matt. Thanks, Jane. Thanks, Nick.

Jane Nakano: Thank you.

(END).