

Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT

The Asia Chessboard Podcast

**“Line of Advantage:  
Japan’s Grand Strategy in the Era of Shinzo Abe”**

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FEATURING

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Andrew Schwartz: Welcome to the Asia Chessboard, the podcast that examines geopolitical dynamics in Asia and takes an inside look at the making of grand strategy. I'm Andrew Schwartz at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Hannah Fodale: This week, Andrew Schwartz guest hosts the Asia Chessboard to discuss Michael Green's new book, *Line of Advantage: Japan's Grand Strategy in the Era of Shinzo Abe*. Andrew asks Mike about the origins of the book, how former Prime Minister Abe changed Japan's strategic trajectory and current events in the region.

Andrew Schwartz: I'm Andrew Schwartz at CSIS. Today, I'm guest hosting on the Asia Chessboard, Mike Green's podcast. Why am I guest hosting? I'm doing it so I can interview Mike Green because Dr. Mike Green is the author of an amazing new book called *Line of Advantage: Japan's Grand Strategy in the era of Abe Shinzo*. Mike, thank you for bringing me on your podcast to host. I'm fascinated by your new book. Congratulations on it.

Michael Green: Thanks. And I'm hoping that our readership and listenership triples with you at the helm.

Andrew Schwartz: Well, we'll do our best. Mike, why did you decide to write on this topic?

Michael Green: Well, I started as an academic in this business as a Japan expert and got my PhD and wrote my dissertation and published my first book on Japanese defense and foreign policy and wrote another book and then edited books. At CSIS, I've done a lot of things, as you know, and my last book was about US strategy in Asia but I wanted to return to my roots because what Prime Minister Abe did to consolidate Japan's grand strategy between 2012 and 2020 was a world event. It was significant and I wanted to try to chronicle that.

Michael Green: I had to go back and brush off my Japanese language skills because the book doesn't start with Abe, it talks about some of the roots of his thinking in not just Meiji Japan in the 19th century but all the way back to the 8th century. It was painful going back and learning classical Chinese characters so I could read things but fun and fun to go back to my roots. And I wanted to try to capture the significance of what Abe's done. And I had a lot of support from Smith Richardson Foundation, encouragement to do this book.

Andrew Schwartz: Mike, what are the key things that US policymakers need to know about Japan's grand strategy based on the Abe years?

Michael Green: Well, one of the most important things to understand is that under Abe, Japan has developed a grand strategy for competing with China without war, without, as Jake Sullivan and Kurt Campbell put it in an article before they went into government, competition without catastrophe. And the Trump administration in its first national security strategy in 2017, for the first time in an American national security strategy in decades, put forward the framework for our strategy that would be competing with China. But in 2013, Abe in his national security strategy, Japan has been adjusting to the rise of China faster than we have. And initially in the Obama administration, for example, a lot of people in Washington thought Japan was overreacting to China's rise. But now what you're seeing is the US, Australia and other countries are in many areas following Japan's lead. For example, the Quad, the US, Japan, Australia, India Quad, which president Biden has turned into a summit, that was Abe's idea. Abe was pushing that.

Michael Green: But back in the Obama administration, people thought it was too much. They thought it was too provocative to China but now it is the core of Biden's approach to Asia, the free and open Indo-Pacific strategy, which Trump announced, actually Secretary Rex Tillerson announced at CSIS as the Trump administration's approach to Asia, that free and open Indo-Pacific construct was made in Japan. It was briefed to the new Trump administration by the Japanese farm industry and the Trump team grabbed it. And when Biden came into office, his advisors said, "You can't call this free and open Indo-Pacific because that's Trump's idea, but people like Kurt Campbell in the White House said, "No, it's Japan's," and Biden uses the same framework, free and open Indo-Pacific.

Michael Green: So, competing, but shaping Asia, investing in Asia, investing in Southeast Asia, deterring China but also in a way we've not yet figured out in the US, seeking out a longer term relationship with China. Compete but not to the death. And all of these things Japan is leading on and I think has more influence on our strategy than any other country in the world right now. People don't completely appreciate that. Now it's not to say Japan's strategy is perfect. There's a lot in the book about what we need Japan to do differently but that general line of advantage shaping the environment, that has become US strategy and it was largely because of Abe's example.

Andrew Schwartz: What changed though between the Obama administration and now that enables this framework to exist?

Michael Green: I often tell Japanese audiences that the big shift should lead Xi Jinping to get a gold medal and Abe to get a silver medal. A lot of it was Xi and

especially the island buildup in the South China Sea in 2014, 15, which we had CSIS captured for the world with AMTI, the Asian American Transparency Initiative.

Andrew Schwartz: Absolutely. And you can go to AMTI today and you can actually see the entire progression.

Michael Green: Exactly.

Andrew Schwartz: Which is amazing.

Michael Green: And as you'll recall, in late 2014, I think early 2015, AMTI satellite images of the Chinese military island build up in the South China Sea, they were on the front page of every major paper, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Washington Post, FT and then across Asia. It's not that CSIS caused the change, we captured it for the world, I think.

Andrew Schwartz: We sure did.

Michael Green: But that was huge. And the evidence that Xi Jinping was trying to unravel American alliances basically displaced the US as the strongest power in Asia. In 2012, when Abe came to power for the second time, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs asked the question of the American people, "Should we work with China now that it's more powerful, even if it hurts Japan and our allies? Or should we work with our allies to counter China or balance China?" And in 2012, a plurality of Americans said, "Work with China." And that was where the Obama administration was. That's where John Kerry was Susan Rice. It was not a very favorable reception for Abe's thinking in Washington, outside of basically the Pentagon and a few think tanks like CSIS, Hudson and others.

Michael Green: But in 2019, those polls started to change. And by 2019, two thirds of Americans said, "Work with Japan and allies, even if it pisses off China." And in the survey we did, the CSIS China survey, about a year and a half ago now, well over 80% of a elites and two thirds of the American public say, "Work with Japan, work with allies. That's how we deal with China." And that is the essence of Abe's strategy, is restore a favorable balance of power among like-minded democracies.

Andrew Schwartz: Obviously the Biden administration with people like Kurt Campbell and Jake Sullivan, who are, you know, old Asia hands, experts like yourself and people that you talk to all this time, they get this. What are they doing to really move this forward?

Michael Green: Well, I worked for Kurt in the Pentagon in the mid nineties. Kurt and I think Jake and others, honestly, basically the Hillary Clinton team. They embrace for the most part, the same world view as Rich Armitage, Joe Nye, the allies first thinkers about Asia. The solution is not a G2 or economy with China. We need a sustainable relationship with China but the solution is to get Asia right, to get our alliances right and partnerships right, beginning with Japan. So they get that. And they're basically embracing that with the Quad and the free and open Indo-Pacific strategy. The first in person summit was Japan's prime minister Suga. So they're getting all that part right. One of the important things Abe did was to recognize Japan's right of collective self defense. For the whole postwar period the Japanese government said that Article 9 of the Constitution, the peace clause meant they couldn't work with us in contingencies outside of Japan, Korea, South China Sea, Taiwan and so forth. Abe changed that in 2015.

Michael Green: And so the Pentagon now is working to put that into operational plans and really be prepared to work with Japan. And look, if there's a contingency in Taiwan or Korea, the Japanese don't have a treaty commitment to defend them but they now have the legal framework to help us do it in a much more significant way. And so the Pentagon's really working on that. The area where the Biden administration, like the Trump administration is completely failing and disappointing Japan and frankly, undermining Japan strategy and Australia's and Canada's is on trade of course. The withdrawal from Trans-Pacific Partnership, now CPTPP, the new Indo-Pacific economic framework the administration announced, had promise but it's pretty thin read to replace American retreat from rulemaking in Asia.

Michael Green: So that's where the Japanese government and the Australians and the Canadians and I think with the new Korean government. Now the Koreans are just hammering the administration in private. You can't succeed in Asia without trade. That piece of Abe's strategy they're not doing. And that's a big part of Abe's strategy is rulemaking and trade agreements and preventing China from writing the rules and we're not helping. That's probably their biggest disappointment in us.

Andrew Schwartz: On the trade issue, clearly if we had joined the Trans-Pacific Partnership, that was designed to counter China's influence and we didn't. The Trump administration moved us farther away from it. What needs to happen now in your view to possibly repair that alliance?

Michael Green: Well, I fear the Indo-Pacific economic framework may not be enough. Honestly, to talk inside the beltway politics, the problem is USTR, the US trade representative's office, where I had my first job in

government, and they are blocking almost all of this effort, including even the most modest efforts at digital trade agreements. And they're insisting on the kind of labor and environmental standards that they couldn't get through the US Congress but they're demanding that our partners do it. So that is a huge obstacle within the beltway. And the White House has decided they're not going to force it, that they got enough on their plate. We'll see what happens after the midterm election. I think if the Republicans take the House, what always happens in the past is when Republicans take the House and I'm not saying they deserve it but when Republicans take the House, you can count on defense spending going up and more trade agreements.

Michael Green: So when Newt Gingrich became speaker in 95, it was after that we finalized NAFTA. We stopped fighting with Japan over trade and we began negotiations with China on WTO in a serious way. We'll see if the politics look the same in a year but for now, it's clogged up. Japan has held a place for us. Japan has moved forward with CPTPP, is trying to hold a place for us, wants to do a digital trade, wants to do more rulemaking, wants to work on 5G and technology. They're being very, very patient. They're convincing others in Asia to wait for us but we only have a little bit of time to get our act together because China's now demanding to join CPTPP and the Japanese and Australians can only hold them off for so long.

Andrew Schwartz: Now you talk about this in your book but I take it from your analysis that the key difference between Japan's approach and the United States' approach to China is trade. Are there other differences that we can talk about that are meaningful?

Michael Green: Yeah. I should premise the answer by first saying we are more aligned with Japan, we the United States, are more aligned with Japan and Australia than ever before on geopolitics and more aligned with Japan and Australia than any other country on geopolitics right now, including even the Brits, our special relationship.

Andrew Schwartz: That's amazing.

Michael Green: Although we're very, with AUKUS and so forth, we are increasingly very tight with London. The differences have to be put in context. One difference is our inability to lead on economic state craft and rulemaking in Asia. Another difference, which is subtle, you have to look for it but you can see it when you read the Indo-Pacific strategy from the White House and then compare it to what Japan's arguing or Australia. Japan and Australia for that matter, but Japan they pushed us hard to compete with China. They pushed the Obama administration to compete on tech, to compete in the South China Sea,

on deterrence. And as I said, a lot of people in the Obama administration thought they were a little bit hysterical about China. Now they're kind of pushing us for the next part, which is okay, let's deter, let's shape, let's push back, let's compete, but we want to get to a place eventually where we have a sustainable relationship with China.

Michael Green: So the Japanese approach to China is premised on continued Japanese investment in China, trade with China, Chinese students coming to Japan. If you read our documents like the Indo-Pacific strategy, it states, "We are not trying to shape China." The administration in Washington is not trying to make it safe for US companies to invest in China or even export to China. They're not trying to shape Chinese decisions. And that's a difference because the Japanese side needs the Chinese economy to grow and doesn't want complete decoupling. And although the Biden administration is not calling for complete decoupling, they're also not in a place right now where they're talking to the US business community or to allies about what an economic relationship with China might look like in the long run.

Michael Green: They're not there. And I understand that because they're making up for lost time. We've been competing with China less vigorously than Japan and our midterms. As you know, China's going to be a big issue and nobody wants to look soft. I don't blame them politically for not talking about US business with China right now but strategically that's a gap between us and Japan or Australia or Canada or Korea for that matter, that we're going to have. Actually Europe, you name it and Taiwan even, that's a gap, a conceptual gap the administration's going to have to close eventually or figure out.

Andrew Schwartz: Well, it's certainly a bipartisan value right now, getting tough on China. No doubt about that. Across the aisle we see members trying to outdo each other to be tough on China. Let me ask you this, Mike though, Japan itself is facing a lot of challenges right now, demographics, other challenges. How long can the United States count on Japan to really be our linchpin in Asia?

Michael Green: It's a fair question and we have an interest, national interest in figuring out that question. In terms of intent, intelligence assessments are all about capabilities and intent. And in terms of intent, I think Abe has fixed Japan's trajectory in a way that subsequent prime ministers are generally going to follow for years. Most of the postwar Japanese approach to the world was shaped by the first postwar prime minister Yoshida Shigeru, and called the Yoshida doctrine, which was focus on the economy, don't take big risks, don't militarize. Abe has changed that. From now on for 10, 20, 30 years, people will be referring to

Abe's doctrine and Abe's approach. There will be variations. There will be changes. There could be big changes if we have war in Asia or if the US retreats from Asia, but I don't anticipate those. In terms of intent and trajectory, I think Japan will be very reliable and will be a thought leader and will be respected in Asia.

Michael Green: Outside of Korea and China, Japan is by far the most trusted country in Asia, which is remarkable considering history. In terms of intent, very reliable, we'll remain our closest ally with Australia and the region and in the world. In terms of capabilities, Abe's increasing defense spending, the ruling party's promise to go to 2% like NATO. That's going to be hard. They're planning with us. They're developing capabilities. Their new national security strategy, their first one since 2013 later this year, will emphasize strike capabilities. Will probably include changes to Japan's command and control so that they can work with us the way NATO does more. That's all good. Their biggest challenge is demographics. That is a big one. The Japanese population is aging. Abe knew that and knew that this was a question of national power. He vowed Japan would remain a tier one power, compete with China and he knows demographics are a problem.

Michael Green: And as a Japan scholar, I was always told that immigration in Japan is a cultural taboo. Women's rights is culturally too hard for Japan but China sharpens the mind a little bit. So it's been interesting. Abe increased women's participation in the workforce by, if my figures are right in my head, by over two million people, two million women.

Andrew Schwartz: That's astonishing.

Michael Green: To get productivity. Immigration in Japan has surged to deal with the demographic problem. Robotics, automation, AI, I don't know if you've ever seen these pet seals that Japanese companies developed for old age homes. They don't have enough staff to develop these fuzzy seals that look in your eye and emote. In technology and immigration and in gender, which are all keys for the problem. The other one, which is remarkable is about 8% of the Japanese defense force were women and they're doubling that. Women are commanding destroyers. These cultural taboos are breaking as Japan competes but women face still huge obstacles culturally. The infrastructure for childcare is poor in Japan. Immigration's up but not a path to citizenship. They're working it but we have a stake in the outcome. The other thing is they're increasing defense spending but we should be pushing them. US government, Congress should be pushing them to do more. All our allies to do more.

Andrew Schwartz: Are they welcoming American immigrants to Japan anytime soon? Well, I don't know, there's a bunch of Americans who are a little worried about our country might want to move over there.

Michael Green: I think New Zealand and Canada still top the list, but Japan's good living right now.

Andrew Schwartz: I bet.

Michael Green: Tokyo has more Michelin three star restaurants than Paris. It's good living except for the earthquakes, tsunamis and North Koreans. One of the criticisms of the current Kishida government is that they've been very slow to open up after COVID. And when Kishida announced that Japan would be the toughest in the G7 on this, his popularity went up. Japan is undergoing remarkable cultural and societal transformations because of the enormous structural and gravitational pressures of China. But some social norms are dying hard and you can even see it in COVID where the Japanese public is kind of content to not rush to open up again. The business community is apoplectic because they're losing tourists and collaboration with international partners but the general public's not pushing to open that fast. Some of these cultural things that people associate with the shimaguni, the island nation, the closed state of Japan, they're still there, despite a lot of them breaking, especially in Abe's tenure.

Andrew Schwartz: Mike, I wonder how does South Korea figure into this picture? We've talked about China, Japan, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, how does Korea fit into all this?

Michael Green: The title of my book is Line of Advantage: Japan's Grand Strategy in the Era of Abe Shinzo. And I chose the word line of advantage because in the Meiji period, that's how they described Japan's grand strategy, that Japan would not just worry about its own defense, it had to shape the strategic environment externally. And that's what Abe's doing. He's trying to shape the external environment with the Quad, with stronger relations with of course the US, but Australia and India and so forth.

Michael Green: But in the Meiji period, the most important external coordinate for Japan as they tried to shape the environment and have a line of advantage beyond Japan to shape the environment, the most important coordinates for them, most important real estate was the Korean Peninsula, which people used to call the dagger aimed at the heart of Japan. It's through the Korean Peninsula, that Buddhism, soba noodles, culture flowed but also Mongol warriors, the communist threat, the Russian threat. And so that was the primary focus of

Japanese strategic thinking in the 19th century and early 20th century. Today, it's the weak point in Japanese grand strategy. Japan is focusing on the maritime partners, the Quad countries and not really trying to shape the Korean Peninsula. And it's because of the really dysfunctional political relationship between Seoul and Tokyo.

Michael Green: The Moon Jae-in government in particular in Korea, but for that previous governance too in Korea, could not move beyond the historical issue the way the rest of Asia except China has. And in China's case, a lot of it can be dismissed as propaganda, not all, but in the Korean case, it's political but it's the people too. The public has a continuing pain and anger and resentment over their treatment by Imperial Japan, that other parts of the Japanese, greater East Asian core prosperity sphere, including Australia, which was attacked by the Japanese or Indonesia or the Philippines, they've just moved on. In some polls in Southeast Asia, Japan has a 95% favorability rating but Korea, it's been tough. It's a long, hard conversation. Japan often has made it worse.

Michael Green: But the Moon government essentially rebuked all the previous agreements with Japan and demanded new concessions and compensation on hard issues like the comfort women, slave labor and the rest. And it moved through the Korean courts and the Japanese lost or the Japanese companies lost and so the Koreans are now poised to seize and distribute Japanese company assets in Korea. Instead of creatively thinking of ways to overcome that problem, the Japanese government just said, "We're done with you. We're so over you." And there was a chill. This is a geopolitical problem for Japan and for the US and for Korea because North Korea sees opportunity in these divisions and China sees an opportunity clearly to pull the Korean Peninsula into its orbit, which is a long term and historic goal of Chinese strategy.

Michael Green: It's a big problem for us in the US. The new government in Korea, president elect Yoon is sending out very positive signals to Japan about getting past all this. And Kishida in Tokyo has responded at least in welcoming the opportunity. And I think this is a key thing for US diplomacy right now. Ambassador Goldberg and Seoul, Ambassador Rahm Emanuel in Tokyo, are going to have to be nuanced and subtle but persistent in an encouraging forward movement, especially on issues where we agree like North Korea, democracy, infrastructure, financing and trade, things like that but it's going to be delicate. But really the piece of Abe's strategy and Japan's grand strategy that is weakest right now, the Korean Peninsula and Yoon's election offers an opportunity for Tokyo to fix that.

Andrew Schwartz: Is it fixable in the next couple years? Or is this a much less longer term issue in your view?

Michael Green: It's fixable. The problem is the Japanese public and political classes have decided that when you fix it with Korea, a new progressive government could come in and demand a complete renegotiation. Abe and Park Geun-hye reached an agreement, a settlement on the comfort women issue and Moon came in and repudiated it. That has led the Japanese public and media and politicians to have a very high bar for Korea. That's a challenge because Yoon is going to be forthcoming, flexible, strategic. His team knows Japan well but he still has to deal with all the baggage and uncertainty that the previous Moon government created. He can't just go in and say, "Look, I'm a different leader. I think about Japan and the US differently. I'm not pro North Korean. I'm not soft on China."

Michael Green: That helps, but that's not enough unfortunately, because the Japanese public and media has now decided, make a deal and then a new progressive could come in and just say, "Sorry, start over." I think it's not going to be a big bang for the big beginning. I think they're going to have to work on look, North Korea's moving towards testing ICBMs and maybe nuclear weapons again. That will sharpen US, Korea, Japan trilateral security cooperation.

Andrew Schwartz: Nothing like some missile launches from a rogue nuclear nation to galvanize.

Michael Green: Exactly. And they'll do it, I think. Victor Cha thinks they're heading right towards us in April or so, the North Koreans. The new South Korean government wants to participate more with Japan and the US, in the Quad and free and open Indo-Pacific in shaping the regional environment. There'd be lots of things to work on together. The core problems bilaterally, these historical issues, I think are going to take real care and patience and nuance, not easy to fix right away. And if the two governments try too fast, I worry there could be a backlash from the publics. But in our surveys at CSIS, which you can see on our website of elites in Asia, we do these every four or five years, the two countries that are most closely aligned on democratic values, importance to the US in Asia are Japan and Korea.

Andrew Schwartz: Got to be some common ground there that they can build on. Mike, before we go, I'd be remiss if I don't ask you about what does the Ukraine crisis mean for Japan and other US allies in Asia right now? We're all consumed with it and it's clearly not just a regional conflict in Europe. It's a global issue.

Michael Green: One real indication of how much Japan's and the Japanese public's view of geopolitics have changed is the response to Ukraine. You've probably seen media reports and pictures, because I've seen in the Washington Post, of Ukrainian flags flying in Tokyo. In some polls, over 80% of the Japanese public say the attack on Ukraine is a threat to Japan, on the other side of the world. For a people that embraced passivism, didn't want to think about war, Ukraine has been not the first, but one of the most pronounced reminders that it's a dangerous world and that Abe's premise was right. Japan has to step up. And Japan has been very proactive in sanctioning Russia in the G7 context, but moving faster even than some European countries and sending nonlethal but unprecedented shipments of body armor and helmets and things. And I think Ukraine will increase the support for Japan's defense budget going up.

Michael Green: It was at 1%, it passed that under the last government. I don't think it'll go to 2% like NATO, but it's going to go to, I think 1.4, 1.5% in the coming years because of China, but also Ukraine just showing how dangerous the world is. The Japanese have some complications. They have major investments in Sakhalin, the island the Russians hold for oil and gas. The Japanese companies say, "If we pull out, the Chinese will go right in and the Russians won't lose any money so why would we do that?" But even on that, there's serious debate about pulling out. Correlated to all that is that the Japanese support for or Taiwan is strong. But now support for helping to defend Taiwan is strong. 74% in polls say Japan should help the US in defending Taiwan. And I think Ukraine is going to get the Japanese focused.

Michael Green: As you know, I went to Taiwan on a delegation led by Admiral Mike Mullen dispatched by the White House in early March to reassure Tsai Ing-wen and the Taiwanese government of US support for Taiwan and focus on Taiwan despite the Ukraine invasion. It was as big news in Japan as in Taiwan. People see the Taiwan problem in Japan and Taiwan. The Taiwan problem is not imminent but maybe the next big case where a democracy, maybe not a sovereign government, according to US and Japanese diplomacy, but a democracy might be attacked by an authoritarian state. It sharpened the mind. Ukraine is a global event, Japan's right at the front, so is Australia. Korea's been very slow and cautious under Moon Jae-in but the new Yoon government is going to be right up there with Japan and Australia.

Andrew Schwartz: Mike, we talked about your visit, the delegation to Taiwan on my podcast, The Truth of the Matter. But I wanted to ask you as a follow up, in the aftermath of that visit, what did it actually mean for Japan and other Asian nations who are so concerned about this?

Michael Green: Well, the Ukraine invasion is being seen in Canberra, Tokyo and now Seoul and Taipei, of course, as a global crisis that affects their security and that American and NATO success in imposing costs and blunting Putin's invasion are in their interest in East Asia. That it's not in their interest to have the US ignore Ukraine, just to focus on Asia. They know and are stepping up. Australia, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, our closest allies and partners, realize that if they are there for NATO and Europe and the US and Ukraine, then Europe and NATO are going to be there for them if there's a crisis in the South China Sea or the Taiwan straits or with Japan in the East China Sea and that it's going to be harder with China because the economy is more powerful and important and intertwined. It's easier to sanction Russia but the risk that Europe took in sanctioning Russia, shows that there's an appetite for risk, especially using sanctions against these authoritarian states when they attack a democracy. There's an tolerance for, a readiness for risk that's really powerful for our Asian allies to show to China.

Michael Green: That's helpful actually for deterrence and stability and the cohesion of our alliances is good. The practical problem is depending on how this goes with Ukraine, the US is going to have to divert attention, resources for Asia back to Europe and President Biden's supposed to take a trip in a couple weeks to Asia. It's probably not going to happen now. The national security strategy and national defense strategy were supposed to come out in January, supposed to emphasize Indo-Pacific and the China challenge. Well, they're delayed because of Ukraine and they're probably going to come out and say, "We got to do both." That's going to make Japan and Asian allies nervous. The fixes are, we got to spend more on defense, if you're going to do both. And I think that a Republican Congress is likely and that an increase in defense spending is likely.

Michael Green: I actually think the Biden administration will embrace it and they'll be bipartisan for the most part. And trade because if you're trying to counter Chinese malign influence and ambitions to displace the US and change regional order in Asia, you got to have a trade strategy. I'm cautiously hopeful that a new Congress and a new realism will get the Biden administration next year really thinking more seriously about how we work with our allies like Japan on technology competition, on digital trade agreements. I don't predict the US will rejoin CPTPP, but there's a lot of stuff we could be doing more seriously. If USTR got out of the way and if the political leadership in the White House decided this was worth doing, I think they decided basically it's not worth doing because they need the progressive left, but you know what? The progressive left's agenda in my view is dead, politically. They're going to clear the decks. They're going to rethink priorities. And I think there's some real opportunity for some bipartisanship on this.

Andrew Schwartz: It's interesting, so far the Biden administration maybe hasn't gotten enough credit for it, but they've kept the left agenda out of most of their policy.

Michael Green: Except for trade, except for trade.

Andrew Schwartz: Except for on trade.

Michael Green: But yeah, you're right. We heard this in Taipei and I've heard it in Tokyo and Canberra, virtually of course because I can't travel there right now. The Afghanistan withdrawal really shook them. It was not well coordinated with allies. It was poorly executed and it suggested a lack of resolve or staying power that made them nervous. Even though they're treaty allies, different from Afghanistan, they're in Asia. The Indo-Pacific's a priority different from Afghanistan, but it really shook them. We heard that a lot on our trip. But the exact opposite is true of Ukraine. The Biden administration is being described by some leaders in Europe and Asia as perfect in their diplomacy on Ukraine.

Michael Green: Now you can quibble about, in fact I would, about how they handled the fighter jets for Ukraine and some of the direct support for Ukraine. But in terms of mobilizing a global coalition, masterful actually. The exact opposite of the Afghanistan case. That has really reassured US allies in Asia and Japan, especially. We showed that look, can you imagine this coalition being formed if the US didn't do it? Could any other country have done this? No way. It has really reinforced the capability and indispensable nature of American leadership for allies in Europe and Asia.

Andrew Schwartz: What more do you think we could be doing?

Michael Green: In Ukraine?

Andrew Schwartz: Yeah.

Michael Green: I'm not a Ukraine expert but personally I think the White House is being too cautious about providing F-16s to Poland and helping Poland get fighters to Ukraine. There are a few things in there that the Congress will support and that increase slightly the risk of confrontation with Russia, but not to the point where they should be dismissed. We're at a turning point in Ukraine. And if Putin manages to brutally occupy the country in the long run, Russia fails, but devastating for our security and for our Indo-Pacific strategy. Because then we'll have a Russian military frontier with NATO all along the Eastern flank and how can we not deploy more long-term military

forces to defend it? Which will hurt us in the Indo-Pacific and increase risk in the Indo-Pacific. I would actually, for that reason and as an Asia guy say, we can take more risk. We need to because if we don't really help stop these columns from surrounding Kyiv and other cities and Putin prevails, even if it's a strategic loss for Putin, it's going to increase risk in the Indo-Pacific.

Andrew Schwartz: Mike finally, where do you think China is now on Ukraine? There's a lot of speculation about what they will do and won't do. Where do you think China is?

Michael Green: As you know, in CSIS we have some of the best in the business on China with Jude Blanchette and Bonny Lin and Scott Kennedy. And we debate this a lot, but I think if I could speak for my colleagues, the general assumption is that Xi Jinping will do what he has to do to try to ensure that Putin doesn't fail. He won't risk major financial sanctions against Chinese banks. He won't do that. He will support Putin geopolitically and diplomatically and he will provide assistance to Putin. How much depends on how successful Jake Sullivan was with Yang Jiechi this week in Rome, how successful Biden is in his phone call with Xi Jinping. The US is being clear that there will be costs to China if they do things like provide ammunition, weapons, technology to help Russia conquer Ukraine. I think our general sense right now is there will be some delta or variation in how much of that China's willing to do but it will do some and Xi will do what he needs to do to make sure Putin doesn't fail.

Michael Green: Look, Chinese business leaders, diplomats, scholars are really unhappy about this. They think it's a bad gamble for China but that's not where Xi Jinping is. He's all in with Putin, not all in, but mostly in with Putin. You'll see the Chinese foreign ministry talk about diplomacy, some Europeans who don't know China will call for China to mediate. I watched China's quote unquote mediation in the six party talks and I know what they're going to do. They're going to take Putin's demands to weaken NATO and they're going to say that we should accommodate those demands because it helps China too, but it's not going to be a neutral.

Michael Green: They have some up with Ukraine but it's not geopolitically significant and they're not going to be a neutral broker. They're going to do what they have to do to help Putin achieve his goals. And if it can be done diplomatically, Beijing will be happy, if the US and NATO agree to neutering NATO in certain respects and Putin can maintain de facto hegemony over Ukraine and the fighting stops, that works for China, but they're not going to be neutral brokers. They're going to carry

Putin's water and see what they can get for him to see if it gets these objectives and ends the war that way.

Andrew Schwartz: Mike, this is a fascinating conversation and it's certainly a fascinating new book. The book is *Line of Advantage: Japan's Grand Strategy in the Era of Abe Shinzo*. Mike, thank you very much for letting me host this and talk to you about these issues in your book. It's extremely timely and I think listeners are really going to rush out and get it. I know I am.

Michael Green: Thanks so much, Andrew.

Andrew Schwartz: I'm buying five because I have my copy but this is a good gift to be giving to people who really care about policy.

Michael Green: You're very kind and thanks and can I have my podcast back now please?

Andrew Schwartz: You got it.

Michael Green: Appreciate you doing it.

Andrew Schwartz: You got it, Mike. Thanks.

Michael Green: Thanks for listening. For more on strategy and the Asia program's work, visit the CSIS website at [csis.org](http://csis.org) and click on the Asia program page.

Bonny Lin: Hi Asia Chessboard listeners. I'm Bonny Lin, director of the CSIS China power project and host of the China Power podcast. I'm inviting you to listen to our conversations with leading experts on the challenges and opportunities presented by China's growing power. We discuss topics such as Chinese military capabilities, China's relations with other countries and critical issues in US China relations. You can listen and subscribe to the China Power podcast wherever you get your podcasts or on [chinapower.csis.org](http://chinapower.csis.org).