

Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT

Press Briefing

“Previewing Biden’s Trip to Asia, Pt. 2 - Quadrilateral Security Dialogue”

DATE

Wednesday, May 18, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. ET

CSIS EXPERTS

Charles Edel

Australia Chair and Senior Adviser, CSIS

Richard M. Rossow

Senior Adviser and Wadhvani Chair in U.S.-India Policy Studies, CSIS

Nicholas Szechenyi

Deputy Director and Senior Fellow, Japan Chair; Asia Program, CSIS

Yuko Nakano

Fellow, Japan Chair, and Associate Director, U.S.-Japan Strategic Leadership Program, CSIS

MODERATOR

Paige Montfort

Media Relations Coordinator, External Relations, CSIS

Transcript By

Superior Transcriptions LLC

www.superiortranscriptions.com

Paige Montfort: Thank you and welcome, everyone. Good morning, good afternoon, good evening, depending on your location. My name is Paige Montfort. I am the media relations coordinator here at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, CSIS, in Washington, D.C.

Today we have a fantastic briefing lined up for you. Before we begin, I just want to remind everyone if you were not able to tune in for yesterday's briefing this is actually the second briefing in our two-part series previewing Biden's first trip to Asia. The transcript from the first briefing is available on CSIS.org if you're interested in those comments from our colleagues Mike Green, Victor Cha, Matt Goodman, and Scott Kennedy.

Now bringing us to today's agenda, we will be focused on the second in-person leaders meeting of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad. As a reminder, each expert will start with some remarks and then we're going to open it up to your questions. We'll let you know how to queue up for that when it's time to do so, as our operator said. And as always, there will be a transcript sent out to all of you if you've RSVPed direct to your inbox within just a few hours after this call concludes. It'll also be available on CSIS.org as soon as possible.

So without further ado, I want to turn it over to Nicholas Szechenyi, the deputy director of the Japan Chair at CSIS, to get us started and to introduce the rest of our expert colleagues on today's panel. Nick, over to you.

Nicholas Szechenyi: Thanks, Paige. And thank you all for joining us. This is Nick Szechenyi. And I will give you a brief introduction to set the stage and then turn it over to Charlie Edel, our Australia chair and senior advisor; Rick Rossow, senior advisor and Wadhvani chair in U.S.-India policy studies; and Yuko Nakano, a fellow with the Japan chair who will share sort of the perspectives of the other Quad members leading into this second in-person meeting in Tokyo.

So just by way of introduction, I think the Quad has strategic import to the United States. It has an important history in the provision of public goods in the region. It was formed back in 2004 in response to the Indian Ocean tsunami, where the four countries came together very quickly to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. It started in 2007 with some more informal meetings on the margin of the ASEAN Regional Summit. And there were some maritime exercises. And then there was a little pause in the Quad for about 10 years. Some of that was due to leadership changes in the different countries, some concern about China's reaction. But as you all know, the environment in the Indo-Pacific changed dramatically in that period, and the Quad was reconstituted in 2017 with several senior officials' meetings.

And from my vantage point, the glue that brought this together was the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy introduced first by Japan's former prime minister, Shinzo Abe. And that really now is still the framework that brings these four countries together to coordinate on shared interest in the Indo-Pacific.

Shifting to this upcoming trip for President Biden, clearly it's to reaffirm the strength of bilateral alliances in the region with stops in Korea and Japan, of course. But there's also an important networking dimension to the Biden administration's regional strategy. And the Quad is really at the centerpiece of that. The administration's Indo-Pacific strategy, when referencing the Quad, states that it's – the purpose is to deliver on issues that matter to the Indo-Pacific. So clearly this is a priority for Biden and his team.

And there's already been a very expansive list of initiatives released. I'll run through them for you quickly; I mean, everything from vaccine partnerships, cooperation on critical emerging technologies, cybersecurity, space cooperation, climate, infrastructure development, and even education, providing fellowships and scholarships for STEM students in the four countries to enhance our collective competitiveness in the future.

This will be the second in-person Quad leaders meeting. The last one was held at the White House in September 2021. And the four leaders met virtually in March of this year to focus mainly on the war in Ukraine. But they also, interestingly, emphasized the role of the Quad in providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief again.

What to watch for at this meeting? Just a few ideas and then I'll turn it over to my colleagues for additional perspective.

First is on Ukraine. I would not expect a very bold statement on Ukraine. I don't think the Quad leaders are all necessarily on the same page. But they'll certainly discuss that issue.

With respect to China, we'll probably see subtle statements of concern but not mentioning China by name. In the March virtual meeting among the four leaders, they made great effort to describe a free and open Indo-Pacific region as a region where sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states is respected and countries are free from military, political and economic coercion – clearly a reference to China, but you're not going to see overt references to China; subtle statements of concern about Chinese behavior in the region.

In terms of deliverables, I think the administration is likely to formally announce the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, or IPEF. There was a lot of discussion about that in our first briefing yesterday. And I welcome my

colleagues to chime in on that as they wish. Suffice it to say probably a lot of interest in participating in IPEF as a dialogue, to coordinate perspectives. But I'd say regional expectations are not very high in terms of using IPEF to initiate concrete trade agreements in the region.

So in conclusion, a very important visit. The Quad is critical to President Biden's regional strategy, and they'll use this leaders' meeting to demonstrate his commitment to networking with like-minded countries in the region. But I think it's probably more about sustaining momentum and signaling the importance of this coordinating network rather than concrete deliverables per se.

So let me turn it over to my colleague, Charlie Edel, for some additional comment.

Charles Edel:

Thanks very much, Nick.

I'd actually like to start my comments with a quote from Wang Yi, China's foreign minister, who back in 2018 dismissed the Quad as both a deliberate provocation against China and fundamentally unserious. He called it, quote, "headline-grabbing," and noted that he expected that the Quad would "dissipate like seafoam." In other words, it was not very serious, not very substantive, and not likely to last. And yet, the Quad takes on more substantive and permanent shape by the day, and that's in very large part due to Beijing's own actions.

For my comments, I thought I'd address why the Quad is important to Australia, how it fits with Australia's larger approach to foreign policy, and why the timing of this upcoming Tokyo meeting is a challenge from both a political and policy perspective for Canberra.

Now, as Nick noted, there is widespread perception that the original Quad, the one from 2007 or so, withered because Beijing's extremely negative reaction scared others off, and at the time, there was a perception that Canberra didn't want to do anything to unnecessarily upset China, but that was then and this is now. Things have changed enormously across the region and nowhere is that more true than in Australia, which has recently really been at the front of the pack on so many foreign policy and domestic decisions affecting relations with China.

As the security environment has become more fraught, Australia has shown a desire to deepen its engagement with the other democratic powers of the region while simultaneously broadening its engagement in the wider Indo-Pacific region. The Quad, which brings together the major maritime democracies of Asia for greater collaboration with the Indo-Pacific nations,

accomplishes those goals. The Quad also fits the broader pattern of how Australian foreign policy has shifted towards emphasizing smaller groupings of countries – minilateralism as it's commonly referred to – and the Quad is one of several attempts to double down on Australia's connections to other countries in the region and show that Australia can deliver a positive vision to and for the broader region. Canberra has also worked hard to enhance its ties with each of the Quad countries. In April, India and Australia signed a free trade agreement; in January, Australia concluded a reciprocal military access agreement with Japan, and of course, in September of last year the United States and Australia, along with the U.K., joined together to form AUKUS. For Australia, as for Japan, India, and the United States, the point of this meeting in Tokyo is twofold: to demonstrate that in the face of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and other global challenges the Quad can still focus on the Indo-Pacific, and to underscore that the Quad's agenda is both growing, through the ever-greater proliferation of Quad working groups that Nick had mentioned, and delivering.

But before handing over the mic, I'd like to conclude with a couple of thoughts about the politics of the Quad for Australia, as Australia's hotly contested election is being held this Saturday – Saturday, May 21st, just three days before the Quad leaders meeting in Tokyo. On the one hand, the politics of the Quad in Australia is bipartisan, with both sides supporting the concept, the logic, and the utility of the Quad. But the timing of the actual meeting is challenging because of the Australian election. Normally the days after an election require the newly formed government to be sworn in and to select its cabinet, but the timeline of an election on Saturday and travel to Tokyo on either Sunday or Monday doesn't allow for that. All parties know this and are discussing what can be done on an accelerated timeline.

This depends, of course, on the election results and whether or not there's a clear enough result to allow either the coalition or labor, the opposition, to form a government. Now, if the coalition wins, Scott Morrison will be on a plane and eager to engage his counterparts, whom he knows and has been working with, to discuss not only the Quad agenda but also the "no limits" partnership between China and Russia and the unfolding situation in the Solomon Islands. If Labor wins, from the opposition, Anthony Albanese has said that he'll have himself sworn in as the prime minister and Penny Wong as foreign minister as soon as Sunday or Monday in order to attend the Quad meeting in Tokyo on Tuesday. If that actually happens, I believe that will be the fastest that will have happened in Australia since 1972. Albanese would have an incentive to quickly step out on foreign policy, reaffirm his commitment to the Quad, and introduce himself in person to his counterparts. Finally, if there's no clear electoral outcome over the first 24 hours, Australia might choose to forgo political participation instead, sending a senior diplomat, although I tend to think that's quite unlikely. Instead, you could either have Morrison declaring that he will attend in

caretaker mode, or potentially even sending a joint delegation of both the opposition and the government.

And with that, I would hand over to either Rick or Nick, whoever is honchoing this.

Mr. Szechenyi: Thanks, Charlie. Rick Rossow, please, go ahead.

Richard M. Rossow: Thanks, Nick. I'll talk briefly about India's perception, but then touch on the larger issue of the Quad workstreams and some ideas for the governments to take on. First, looking at India's perception on the Quad, which I think is echoing the prior speakers, you know, India, of course, faces challenges from China across a number of domains – serious cyberthreats, a massive trade imbalance, digital concerns as well. But of course, they also have a very active border conflict.

So India certainly has been among the leaders of the Quad countries in terms of trying to avoid the Quad becoming kind of a military organization so far. So I think for India, they look at being part of the Quad and the workstreams as the appropriate level of confrontation vis-à-vis China. But moving into military cooperation is still seen from Delhi's perspective, I think, as a bridge too far. But of course, that's also a way to sort of cover up that they actually do engage all the Quad members, including the Quad specifically, on naval exercises and other types of activities, buying more military equipment from Quad countries.

So there is a lot of military integration that's happening. They just choose to not term it as part of the Quad. Now, that kind of shifts, I think, a little bit to describe – to talking about, you know, the workstreams that exist right now and the overall strategic interest therein. Because the Quad, and primarily because of India, has avoided becoming more of an overt military platform for cooperation, it's instead focused on a range of issues that I think kind of fit through three different hoops.

Number one, commercial issues that are – that are significant. Second hoop is that they have to be strategically important commercial issues. And third, you know, they're dominated by China. So when you talk about the workstreams we're talking about critical minerals and rare earths. We're talking about pharmaceuticals, COVID cooperation, and pharmaceutical ingredients, strategic technology, climate change, critical emerging technology.

All these areas are areas where, you know, government can certainly lead and define. But ultimately if we're going to try to break China's ability to control global trade flows in these areas and provide diversity of supply, then it's going to have to involve the private sector. And that, for me, you

know, is one of the big agenda items that I think Quad has yet to define. How are they going to set up channels to engage the private sector on these issues?

And the requirement for that is because, you know, when you think ultimately about things like rare earths, OK, you know, clearly all of us who are hearing a mobile phone or a laptop, or when you think about stealth technology, things like that, rare earths are embedded in all the things that make the products that we use today and use tomorrow, both for consumer interest as well as for military and security. Sixty percent of rare earths are extracted by China, and China processes about 90 percent of those rare earths. So we all really kind of rely on China.

Now, for governments to come together under the Quad and talk about trying to break that stranglehold, we need to make sure that architectures that they create, new opportunities for sourcing that they create, are taken up immediately by the private sector. It's a tricky set of issues. Finding rare earths isn't that difficult. But mining them, you know, can be – can be somewhat difficult. Separating them after you mine them can be a lot harder. So when you dig into a lot of these issues, having commercial voices at the table to talk about why is it that China's been able to dominate, and how can Quad leaders and government diplomats provide new platforms and architectures to allow private firms to break the stranglehold that China's had in these areas?

And separately, you want to make sure too that there's some level of parity, that if there are commercial opportunities that flow out of these Quad conversations and the working groups, they can't all accrue to one or two nations. You can't see that, you know, five years on that all these new areas where they're trying to diversify supply have fallen to new contracts to American companies, or Japanese companies, or even Australia. There's got to be some level of parity among all four Quad members, otherwise the other members may choose to engage a little bit less robustly.

Similarly, when you think about, like, regional infrastructure, we've been talking for a long time in the administration – across successive U.S. administrations, as we try to come up with a competing package to challenge China's big infrastructure programs through the region, that we're going to rely on the U.S. private sector. But when you think about where U.S. capital comes from for infrastructure development, you know, it's primarily long-term investors like life insurance companies and pension companies. They look for markets that have reliable rule of law and have typical instruments, like municipal debt. And a lot of the countries that China's been targeting for regional infrastructure really don't have the developed markets – capital markets in these areas.

So it's a long-term play. And I think making sure that the Quad begins to induct, you know, some level of expertise in the private sector to make sure that these workstreams can be handed off seamlessly at the end of the day to the private sector, that, to me, is one of the big agenda items that I'll be following from this visit as well as successive Quad summits.

Back over you, Nick. Thanks.

Mr. Szechenyi: Thanks, Rick.

And now I'll turn to Yuko Nakano for some comments on Japan's perspective.

Yuko Nakano: Thank you, Nick. I will go over what we expect from the Quad leaders meeting from Japan's perspective and how it fits within Prime Minister Kishida's foreign policy platform. And as the speakers before me discussed that through the virtual and in-person meetings the leaders have held so far, the Quad has already launched a set of initiatives and working groups in various areas, including COVID and global health, climate change, infrastructure development, emerging technology, and so on.

So the leaders are likely to have a status report and discuss the progress in each area, and it will also be a good opportunity for them to present directions or next steps of some of the joint initiatives, going forward, and we still have six days until the meeting and I suspect that the government is still ironing out the details.

But I don't think that we are expecting a major announcement of new initiatives within the framework of the Quad, though the IPEF will be launched probably at the U.S.- Japan summit before that. And from Japan's perspective, the importance of the upcoming Quad Summit lies in the fact that the leaders of Australia, India, and the United States gather in Japan right next to China and North Korea and Russia and broadcast loud and clear the important message of their commitment to protection of sovereignty and the world order based on democratic values and rules, and when the Quad leaders met online in March they discussed the developments in Ukraine and came out of the meeting with a statement emphasizing the importance of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

And referencing Russia's invasion of Ukraine, again, at this in-person meeting next week with the presence of Prime Minister Modi at the table might create an uncomfortable atmosphere, and Mr. Kishida, as host, may try to avoid putting any of his guests on the spot.

However, given that Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the world's response to it are viewed in a mirror image in the Indo-Pacific region, namely, a possible Taiwan contingency or coercive activities in the East and South China Seas, I

think Mr. Kishida will take this opportunity to reiterate the message of stressing that unilateral change to the status quo by force is unacceptable not only in Europe but also in Asia. Hosting the first official visit by President Biden followed by the Quad leaders summit will be an important opportunity for Mr. Kishida to showcase his diplomatic skills, who assumed office several months ago, and successful high-profile summit meetings wouldn't hurt him or his party in the upper house election in July either. But the Quad summit is one of the many pieces of Japan's overarching strategic framework.

From the end of April through the first week of May, Japan has a stretch of national holidays, which is dubbed Golden Week, and Mr. Kishida and his cabinet members have been quite busy. The prime minister visited six countries in Southeast Asia and Europe, including Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Italy, the Vatican, and Britain. While in London Mr. Kishida and Prime Minister Johnson agreed in principle to our Reciprocal Access Agreement, which seeks to expand joint military exercises and to increase cooperation among the forces for disaster relief and such. And as Dr. Edel mentioned, Japan has a similar agreement with Australia formally signed in January this year. And, additionally, Japan continues to actively engage in the Indo-Pacific region, including the South Pacific.

During this Golden Week, Foreign Minister Hayashi visited Fiji and Palau, and in the latter he attended a ceremony at the Palau International Airport, which had been renovated with Japan's ODA, and this U.S. \$40 million project was Japan's first public-private partnership project in the South Pacific, and Palau is also where Japan, Australia, and the United States are working jointly for an undersea cable project. And it fits right into the promotion of prosperity and connectivity through the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy.

And all these tie into Prime Minister Kishida's foreign policy framework, which is to expand network of alliances both formally and informally; to promote democratic values and economic security; and, finally, strengthen Japan's own defense capabilities. And these are not new concepts in Japan's policy. As Nick said earlier, many of the underlying themes of the current foreign policy were conceptualized during the first and second Abe government. And as you know, under Mr. Abe Japan played a role in holding the likeminded countries together while the United States leadership was somewhat absent for a while.

And now the United States is back, but Japan continues this forward-leaning foreign policy, if you will, not shying away from playing more a visible role in promoting peace and stability in Asia and beyond. And I think what is different from, say, 10 years ago and today is that the world has changed in a way that many countries have come to clearly recognize how autocracy could destabilize the entire order while at the same time how much we are

all interconnected through trade, through global challenges we face collectively such as pandemic and climate change. And what also changed over the last decade or so is how big a role Japan and the Japanese public seems to be ready to play in response to the changing world I just mentioned.

So, for these reasons, this quad summit encapsulates Japan's foreign policy strategy and reaffirms the importance of the Quad framework beyond this single meeting. I will end here.

Mr. Szechenyi: Thanks, Yuko.

And let's open it up for questions.

Ms. Montfort: Great. Thank you so much, Nick. Turn it back over to you, Operator, if you can let everyone know how to queue up to ask their questions.

Operator: Thank you.

(Gives queuing instructions.)

We'll first go to the line of Patsy Widakuswara with the Voice of America. Go ahead, please.

(Pause.)

Patsy, your line is open. Go ahead, please.

Q: (Off mic) – hear me? Hello? Can you hear me?

Operator: We can hear you now. Go ahead.

Ms. Montfort: Yes, we can hear you now.

Q: OK, great. Can you hear me now?

Mr. : Yes.

Q: OK. So, sorry about that. Thanks again for doing this.

You guys – is any one of you tracking any weapons sales announcements during the trip? And could you please more broadly speak on how China's increased military spending has increased – has led to countries in the region to purchase, you know, more American weapon technologies? Singapore's done this, Japan, Australia, Taiwan. That's my first question.

The second one is, I recall there was a commitment that was made in the March virtual meeting of the Quad to supply a billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines, mainly to Southeast Asia, by the end of this year. If you can give us an update on that, thank you so much.

Mr. Rossow: Nick, this is Rick. I can take the COVID vaccine question.

You know, the – Japan and the United States were – you know, were basically funding Indian manufacture of COVID vaccines, and that was kind of the Quad initiative. The vaccine that India's been producing, you know, I think is still waiting for international approval so they can begin exporting. So they've been manufacturing and stockpiling, but I believe there's a WHO approval that's still pending before they're going to be able to get those out. So, you know, that, among the Quad workstreams, has seen some movement, but, obviously, still a big step that kind of lies ahead. So, again, hopefully heading up to the leaders summit we'll see another drive on trying to get the approvals across the finish line so they can begin executing, you know, this big promise that they had out there.

You know, briefly on the weapons issue, there's a couple of, you know, defense sales that are still kind of pending out there for India, where at least the United States is in the mix for: carrier-launched fighter planes, you know, potentially armed drones. But, you know, India typically doesn't like to announce these things necessarily at big summits – (inaudible) – especially for Quad, where they've tried to avoid that overt military heading there. So I don't think, at least from the India angle, that you're going to see announcements at the Quad meeting on anything big on the weapon-sale side. But I'll leave it for others if there's anything else that's in the queue there.

Mr. Szechenyi: Yeah, this is Nick. I'll comment briefly on Japan. And then, Charlie, if you want to weigh in, please feel free.

Certainly, the rapid advances in China's military capabilities have prompted a robust policy debate in Japan about acquiring advanced defense capabilities. I agree with Rick. I don't think this dimension of Japanese strategy will feature prominently in the context of the Quad. But it is an important backdrop for the meeting.

Japan is currently debating a new national-security strategy and a defense and procurement strategy. All three of these strategic documents will come out later this year. And it's about Japan purchasing new equipment and developing its own capabilities, but also coordinating closely with the U.S. and others to promote more interoperability. And so this is a very prominent feature. And it's only going to become more pronounced, given the threats posed by Chinese coercion in the region.

Charlie, do you want to add anything on that?

Dr. Edel:

Sure. I would just jump in to echo the statements and say that I would deem it highly unlikely that there would be announcements of weapons purchases at the Quad, which has to this point deliberately deemphasized the military estimate. But I think the question is spot on in the sense of there is a changing strategic balance of power as China has poured money into military modernization over the last decade plus. And the other Quad countries are racing to invest, to catch up, to see if they can give more balance to what the overall strategic picture looks like.

And from an Australian perspective, we can look at both purchases that they've made, yes, of U.S. arms over the years, but also a regional one. There was a purchase of South Korean light artillery announced several months ago. There's in train the announcement potentially for an even larger purchase of artillery.

There is investment that Australia has made domestically into its own cyber capabilities. And, of course, there are the very large-ticket items that they've announced, both standing up an entire strike complex – they've invested a billion dollars already – and anticipate that this industry will grow to the size of 1(00 billion dollars) to 200 billion dollars, Australian, within the next 10 years, in addition to the AUKUS deal, both the submarine component and the advanced capabilities.

So this, I don't think, again, just to underscore this, will be a large part of the external Quad program in any which way that we're going to see in Tokyo. But this is some of the background music that we hear for what these large maritime democracies are doing.

Operator:

Our next question will come from the line of Soyoung Ahn with Voice of America. Go ahead, please.

Q:

Good morning.

South Korea's new President Yoon officially expressed desire to join the Quad. So what's your view on Quad being expanded by adding South Korea as another member? And what do you think that the other member states' view on this is?

Ms. Szechenyi:

This is Nick. I can start and then turn it over to others.

From my perspective, I think the importance of the Quad is less about it becoming a membership club and more about identifying areas of cooperation among the four members, but also with other interested

countries in the region. So I think that the Yoon government's interest in identifying areas of cooperation with the Quad is very significant.

You know, there are areas, such as official development assistance, where South Korea is very active in the Indo-Pacific but somewhat isolated. And I think the Yoon government's instinct to become more connected under this Indo-Pacific construct and find more areas to cooperate with the members and others in the region, is very important. And that gets to what Charlie mentioned about the balance of power in the region and providing public goods and cooperating in this way. It's critical to maintaining stability and, ultimately, prosperity in the region. So I think it's encouraging, but I wouldn't expect formal membership, at least not in the near term, but certainly potential to identify case-by-case issue areas for cooperation.

Operator: (Gives queuing instructions.)

Speakers, we have no one queued up at this time.

Ms. Montfort: Nick, if I want to turn it back over to you, if I may, to see if you have any questions you'd like to pose to your colleagues, and we'll see if anyone else from the audience has any questions.

Mr. Szechenyi: Yeah, thank you. I mean, one thing I mentioned briefly at the outset, and Yuko touched on it as well, is ASEAN and its important role in regional dynamics. Certainly not interested in taking sides between the U.S. and China in strategic competition, but certainly interested in initiatives that support stability and economic development. So maybe we could – we could touch on the different perspectives on ASEAN, and how the Quad might network with those countries.

Charlie, do you want to start?

Dr. Edel: Absolutely. So I would say two things on this. The first is that ASEAN is of considerable – even of prime importance to the Quad formation, its logic, and its engagement with the region. Trying to make sure and ensure that the nations of Southeast Asia, no less the Pacific island nations too, have options on the table where they can source, where they can go to for those public options, public goods that we've been talking about. So I would say extraordinarily important for the conception of what the Quad is, and what it can provide, and who it is provided to.

The other thing that I would say is that while there was initially, I would say, higher levels of concern expressed from various ASEAN member states about whether or not the Quad was seen as a replacement mechanism for how the United States, or how Japan, or how others engaged in the region, replacing ASEAN and ASEAN centrality, there has been, I think, so much

legwork by not only the Quad member states collectively but also individually.

There has been the provision of public goods, starting with the COVID vaccine, that if you look at some of the polling numbers from the ASEAN states themselves, the Quad is now seen very favorably. A majority of respondents consistently say that they see the Quad as amplifying ASEAN efforts and contributing to the prosperity and wellbeing of ASEAN itself. So there's been a fair amount of work on this too.

A final note I would just add is that because we have an Australian election coming up, which I mentioned in my comments, one of the things that we've heard through the election campaign is that there will be renewed attention and focus on Southeast Asia after the election on Saturday. This is a perennial debate within Australian foreign policy. Where should its primary line of effort be? And if it should be with the Pacific states or with Southeast Asia? But both sides seem to be saying it's more of the above to both. So we should expect a fair amount of policy initiatives by Australia, I would say, in the aftermath of the Quad, which will happen right after their election.

Operator: We have a question in queue from the line of Patsy Widakuswara with Voice of America. Go ahead, please.

Q: Hi. Can you hear me? I'm back again. Will you guys take another question?

Ms. Montfort: Yes, absolutely. We can hear you.

Mr. : Yeah, go ahead.

Q: Oh, great. So I want to pose this to your South Korea expert. It's a little bit off the Quad subject but I was wondering if you're tracking whether during the president's trip to Seoul will he be discussing the issue of Iran's \$7 billion of frozen funds that's held in South Korean banks? Anything that you're tracking?

Mr. Szechenyi: Yeah, hi. This is Nick. Not following that issue specifically, but certainly as a general matter I think President Yoon and President Biden will of course reaffirm the importance of the U.S.-ROK alliance in terms of regional security, but I think Yoon will also be eager to demonstrate Korea's leadership on global issues, and so the issues like the one you raised might come up in that context.

Ms. Montfort: And if I might follow on there, Nick – this is Paige, Patsy. We will be publishing a critical questions probably later today on the upcoming summit between Biden and Yoon. That's published by our Korea Chair and our new deputy director, Dr. Ellen Kim, so be on the lookout for that. I can share that

with you as well; it will be on csis.org. And any more specific follow-ups related to South Korea, we also have a great Korea team who participated in the briefing yesterday and with whom I can connect you today or later this week, if any of you are interested in talking with them.

Operator: And once again we have no further –

Ms. Montfort: Thank you. Thank you. If anyone else has any other questions, please join the queue now. We can always wrap this a bit early, but I do want to turn it back over to Nick first to see if anyone else had comments on ASEAN or any other concluding remarks, things you're looking forward to, upcoming publications we can look out for, things like that. So please, Nick, go ahead.

Mr. Szechenyi: Thanks, Paige. I think we've covered a lot of ground.

Rick and Yuko, if you want to add anything, please do. But otherwise, I think we're in good shape.

Mr. Rossow: I can briefly touch on the ASEAN question, kind of Delhi's perspective. You know, they've been reluctant to play kind of a forward-leaning role I think, you know, being a player in the many ASEAN disputes, you know, between ASEAN states and China, but they do have a deep, abiding interest in seeing what happens there because India recognizes that a lot of the same maritime challenges that ASEAN states are facing today and probably some challenges that ASEAN is not facing, they're going to be replayed in the coming decades in the Indian Ocean.

China is actively becoming a much larger player, maritime player, in the Indian Ocean, so when you talk about, you know, confrontations at sea and sometimes even territorial and resource grabs, you know, making sure that, you know, that you see some level of reasonable accommodation, you know, between ASEAN states and China is certainly in India's interest. But again, you know, been very reluctant; they do some exercises in the South China Sea, they do occasional patrols and pass-throughs, they've been offering, you know, some missile sales to ASEAN members, but overall relatively light touch but strong interest in hopefully seeing a lot of issues wrapped up and resolved in a good manner before they become on India's own doorstep, so, as I say, that's kind of Delhi's perspective on that.

Ms. Nakano: Hi, this is Yuko, if I may.

Mr. Szechenyi: Yeah, go ahead.

Ms. Nakano: OK. So it is not strictly ASEAN engagement, but I would like to point out that the recent pact between the Solomon Island(s) and China reconfirmed the concerns among the countries in the region of the overreaching clout of

China, and that's why continuing to work with the Pacific island nations through critical infrastructure projects or other programs is crucial. And I think that the Palau undersea cable project under the Trilateral Partnership for Infrastructure Investment I mentioned earlier is one good example where the governments of the three countries – Japan, the U.S., and Australia – working with the private sector through export finance and grant programs. And I think one of the challenges for them going forward is to – how to expand such partnership, possibly through the Quad framework.

Mr. Szechenyi: Thank you, Yuko.

Ms. Montfort: Thank you, Yuko. And back over to you, Nick, to conclude.

Mr. Szechenyi: Well, thanks, everybody. Clearly, the Quad is – plays an important role in the Biden administration's Indo-Pacific strategy, but our allies and partners in the region also have a great stake in how this networking mechanism evolves. And so I think the Biden administration's attempt to connect this meeting to the other meetings on the president's schedule just speaks to the importance of networking, and that there are multiple challenges in the region, and that no country can manage them alone. But as likeminded maritime democracies, there's a lot that these four countries and other parties in the region can do together.

So thank you and we look forward to similar conversations down the road.

Ms. Montfort: Thank you, Nick; thank you, Charlie; thank you, Rick; thank you, Yuko; for your time, for your comments today. Thank you all who have called in to join us.

And if you do have follow-up questions before/during/after this meeting, my name is Paige Montfort, again, and I'm happy to help connect you with these experts and any of our other great experts at CSIS. Again, we will have this transcript ready for you ASAP today, within just a few hours. If you've RSVPed it'll go straight to your inbox, and it will also be available on CSIS.org at the same time.

Thanks again for joining us and we hope to have you back again soon for our next briefing. Have a good day.