CASI Webinar Expert Bios

7 Dec 2022 Outcomes of the 20th Party Congress

Dr. Joel Wuthnow is a senior research fellow in the Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs within the Institute for National Strategic Studies at NDU. His research areas include Chinese foreign and security policy, Chinese military affairs, U.S.-China relations, and strategic developments in East Asia. In addition to his duties in INSS, he also serves as an adjunct professor in the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. Prior to joining NDU, Dr. Wuthnow was a China analyst at CNA, a postdoctoral fellow in the China and the World Program at Princeton University, and a pre-doctoral fellow at The Brookings Institution. His degrees are from Princeton University (A.B., *summa cum laude*, in Public and International Affairs), Oxford University (M.Phil. in Modern Chinese Studies), and Columbia University (Ph.D. in Political Science). He is proficient in Mandarin.

Dr. David M. Finkelstein, is vice president and director of CNA's China and Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Division. A long-time student of Chinese and Asian affairs, he is widely published. A retired U.S. Army officer, Dr. Finkelstein held command and staff positions at the platoon, company, battalion, and major Army command levels. He held significant China-related positions at the Pentagon as an advisor to the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He also served on the faculty at the United States Military Academy at West Point, where he taught Chinese history. Dr. Finkelstein holds a Ph.D. in Chinese history from Princeton University, and he is a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, the U.S. Army Command & General Staff College, and the Army War College. He has also studied Mandarin Chinese in Tianjin, China at Nankai University.

Dr. Cheng Li is the director of the John L. Thornton China Center and a senior fellow in the Foreign Policy program at Brookings. He is also a director of the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations. Li focuses on the transformation of political leaders, generational change, the Chinese middle class, and technological development in China. Li grew up in Shanghai during the Cultural Revolution. In 1985, he came to the United States, where he received a master's in Asian studies from the University of California, Berkeley and a doctorate in political science from Princeton University. From 1993 to 1995, he worked in China as a fellow sponsored by the Institute of Current World Affairs in the U.S., observing grassroots changes in his native country. Li is the author or the editor of numerous books. Li is also a distinguished fellow of the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at University of Toronto, a nonresident affiliated fellow at the Paul Tsai China Center at Yale University, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, a member of the Institute of Current World Affairs, and a member of the Committee of 100. Before joining Brookings in 2006, he was the William R. Kenan professor of government at Hamilton College, where he had taught since 1991.

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21 June 2022: Taiwan and its Neighborhood

Drew Thompson is a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore. From 2011 to 2018, he was the Director for China, Taiwan and Mongolia in the Office of the Secretary of Defense where he was responsible for supporting the Secretary and managing military-to-military relations. He was previously the Director of China Studies and Starr Senior Fellow at the Center for the National Interest in Washington, D.C. Prior to joining the Center, he was the National Director of the China-MSD HIV/AIDS Partnership in Beijing. Mr. Thompson served previously as Assistant Director to the Freeman Chair in China Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). He also was the president of a Washington, D.C. company that manufactured snack food in Qingdao, China. He lived in Shanghai from 1993 to 1998 where he was the General Manager of a U.S. freight forwarding and logistics firm, overseeing offices in Beijing, Shanghai, and Nanjing.

Ian Easton is a senior director at the Project 2049 Institute and author of The Chinese Invasion Threat: Taiwan's Defense and American Strategy in Asia. He previously served as a visiting fellow at the Japan Institute for International Affairs (JIIA) in Tokyo and a China analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses in Virginia. He has testified before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission and given talks at the U.S. Naval War College, Japan's National Defense Academy, and Taiwan's National Defense University. Ian holds an M.A. in China Studies from National Chengchi University in Taiwan and a B.A. in International Studies from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. He studied Chinese at Fudan University in Shanghai and National Taiwan Normal University in Taipei.

Lukas Filler is Dr. Lukas Filler is a senior adviser (non-resident) with the Freeman Chair in China Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C. Previously, he was acting director and deputy director of the China Strategic Focus Group at U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, leading a $19 million/year joint Department of Defense and intelligence community program of record focused on better understanding the logic and implications of People's Republic of China (PRC) decisions and behavior. Filler has conducted and led related work including for the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV N3/N5), Naval Special Warfare Command, Joint Special Operations Command, Office of Naval Intelligence, U.S. Naval War College, and the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA). A graduate of Bowdoin College, Lukas studied comparative morality in foreign policy decisionmaking, strategic preferences, and the use of force—with a focus on China—for a Master of Theological Studies at Harvard Divinity School, as a Harvard University Sheldon fellow in China and Taiwan, as a two-time senior visiting scholar at Renmin University of China, and for a PhD from the King's College London Department of War Studies. Lukas started his professional career as a naval aviator, flying P-3C Orion and other aircraft in Iraq, Afghanistan, Africa, and other locations, earning four Combat Air Medals as well as other decorations.

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23 Mar 2022: PLA Air Force

Cristina Garafola is an associate policy researcher at the RAND Corporation. Her research focuses on the ramifications of China's rise for its global status, particularly with respect to defense issues, China's influence on regional actors, and implications for the United States. Garafola served in the Office of the Secretary of Defense from 2017 to 2019, where she focused on National Defense Strategy and Indo-Pacific strategy implementation. She has also worked at the Department of the Treasury, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the Department of State. She is the co-author of the book "70 Years of the People's Liberation Army Air Force" (2021), published by the China Aerospace Studies Institute. Her work has been published by RAND and the China Maritime Studies Institute, and in Asian Security, the Journal of Strategic Studies, War on the Rocks, and the Jamestown Foundation's China Brief. Garafola holds an M.A. in China studies from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), a graduate certificate from the Hopkins-Nanjing Center for Chinese and American Studies, and a B.A. in international relations and Chinese from Hamilton College. She speaks Chinese.

Derek Solen is a senior analyst at the U.S. Air Force's China Aerospace Studies Institute (CASI). The focus of his research is the PLA Air Force as well as the aviation corps of the PLA army and navy. He established and manages CASI's relationship with the LeMay Center's counterpart in the Japanese Air Self-Defense Force. He has written about the PLA's assessments of JADO and ACE, pilot training in the PLA Air Force, the improvement of the PLA army's air defense forces, the PLA's efforts to build a close air support capability, etc. Before coming to CASI in 2019, he served as a civilian intelligence specialist in the U.S. Army from 2007. After working at U.S. Army Pacific's Analysis and Control Element and PACOM's Joint Intelligence Operations Center, in 2009 he became an analyst at the Army's Asian Studies Detachment in Japan, where he eventually became the chief of the detachment's Northeast Asia Branch. In addition to analysis, he conducted regular, overt collection in China, and he helped maintain and build bilateral relationships with Japanese, South Korean, and Taiwanese counterparts. He earned a bachelor's degree in East Asian area studies from Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University and a master's degree in military history from Norwich University.

Eli Tirk is a research analyst at the China Aerospace Studies Institute (CASI). Prior to joining CASI, Eli was language enabled analyst at SOSi Center for Intelligence, Research, and Analysis (CIRA). His main research areas include the PLA Air Force, the PLA Rocket Force, PLA logistics, and the PRC defense industry. Eli holds a BA from the George Washington University and an MA from the Hopkins-Nanjing Center, a joint degree granting program of Johns Hopkins SAIS and Nanjing University.

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8 Dec 2021: People's Republic of China & Cyber

Dr. SHEN Yi studied in Fudan University from 1995 to 2005, and graduated from the Department of International Politics, School of International Relations and Public Affairs with Ph.D in July, 2005. From then on, Dr. SHEN served as the faculty of the department and his major research focus on cyber security, cyber diplomacy, Internet Governance. From 2008-2009, Dr. SHEN went to Georgetown University and stayed there as post-doctoral research fellow for one year. Now he is the associate professor of the Department of International Politics, School of International Relations; Standing Director of the Lab of National Cybersecurity Strategy and Technology, Fudan University; Deputy Director of the Center for BRICS Studies, Fudan University.

Jonathan E. Hillman is a senior fellow with the CSIS Economics Program and director of the Reconnecting Asia Project, one of the most extensive open-source databases tracking China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Prior to joining CSIS, Hillman served as a policy adviser at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, where he contributed to the 2015 U.S. National Security Strategy and the President's Trade Agenda. He has also worked as a researcher at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, the Council on Foreign Relations, and in Kyrgyzstan as a Fulbright scholar. He is a graduate of the Harvard Kennedy School.

Naomi Wilson serves as vice president of policy for Asia at the Information Technology Industry Council (ITI), the premier global advocate for technology. Prior to joining ITI, Naomi served at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), where she most recently held the position of acting director for Asia-Pacific. In that capacity, she played a leading role on cybersecurity, law enforcement, and customs cooperation issues related to Asia. Prior to joining DHS, Naomi served as a staffer on the Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs and as a research assistant at the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS). Naomi holds a Bachelor's degree in English and Master's in International Affairs & National Security. In 2011, she completed intensive Chinese language training at Peking University. Naomi speaks advanced Mandarin and French.

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11 Aug 2021: People's Republic of China
Space and Counter-Space capabilities

Kevin Pollpeter is a research scientist in the CNA China Studies Division. He is an internationally recognized expert on China's space program and is widely published on Chinese national security issues, focusing on Chinese military modernization, China's defense industry, and Chinese views on information warfare. His publications include China Dream, Space Dream: China's Progress in Space Technologies and Implications for the United States; Planning for Innovation: Understanding China's Plans for Technological, Energy, Industrial, and Defense Development; and "Chinese Writings on Cyberwarfare and Coercion," in China and Cybersecurity: Espionage, Strategy, and Politics in the Digital Domain. A Chinese linguist, he holds an M.A. in international policy studies from the Monterey Institute of International Studies and is currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program at King's College London.

Kristin Burke is a Deputy National Intelligence Officer for Space at the Office for the Director of National Intelligence's National Intelligence Council, a position she began in late 2020. In her role as DNIO for Space, Ms. Burke is focusing her analytic and outreach efforts in four key areas: space domain awareness for space and counterspace weapons, cislunar developments, foreign perceptions, and international norms.

Prior to starting at the ODNI, Ms. Burke served for eight years at the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) as the China Science and Technology Analyst. While covering China's S&T developments and national innovation system, she was also a lecturer at the State Department's Foreign Service Institute and Co-Chair of INR's Leadership and Development Council.

Between 2007 and 2013, Ms. Burke held various positions as a China researcher and consultant for the USG and private sector. She is proficient in Mandarin. She has a MA in Asian Studies from the George Washington University, Elliott School of International Affairs and a BA in Philosophy from the California State University, Sacramento. She is currently working towards a second Bachelor's in Engineering at the University of Auburn at Montgomery.

Dr. Brian Weeden is the Director of Program Planning for Secure World Foundation and has nearly two decades of professional experience in space operations and policy.

Dr. Weeden directs strategic planning for future-year projects to meet the Foundation's goals and objectives, and conducts research on space debris, global space situational awareness, space traffic management, protection of space assets, and space governance. Dr. Weeden also organizes national and international workshops to increase awareness of and facilitate dialogue on space security, stability, and sustainability topics. He is a member and former Chair of the World Economic Forum's Global Future Council on Space Technologies, a former member of the Advisory Committee on Commercial Remote Sensing (ACCRES) to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Executive Director of the Consortium for Execution of Rendezvous and Servicing Operations (CONFERS).

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Prior to joining SWF, Dr. Weeden served nine years on active duty as an officer in the United States Air Force working in space and intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) operations. As part of U.S. Strategic Command's Joint Space Operations Center (JSpOC), Dr. Weeden directed the orbital analyst training program and developed tactics, techniques and procedures for improving space situational awareness.

Respected and recognized as an international expert, Dr. Weeden's research and analysis have been featured in The New York Times, The Washington Post, National Public Radio, USA Today, The BBC, Fox News, China Radio International, The Economist, The World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos, academic journals, presentations to the United Nations, and testimony before the U.S. Congress

Chris Stone is Senior Fellow for Space Studies for the Mitchell Institute's Spacepower Advantage Research Center (MI-SPARC). Prior to joining Mitchell, Stone served as a strategic consultant supporting the Office of Secretary of Defense, and he was a Presidential appointee in the Office of Secretary of Defense's Space Policy office. Stone has served on the staffs of two United States Senators, as well as over a decade serving as a senior space policy analyst for two Secretaries of the Air Force; Chief of Staff of the Space Division at Air Force International Affairs, and Chief of Strategy for the National Guard Bureau's Space Operations Directorate, Pentagon. He has served as a space operations officer in the Air Force (Regular, Reserve and now National Guard) for over 17 years at tactical, operational, and strategic levels to include two Combatant Commands, Joint Staff, and Air Staff strategy and campaign planner positions.

Todd Harrison is the director of Defense Budget Analysis and director of the Aerospace Security Project at CSIS. As a senior fellow in the International Security Program, he leads the Center's efforts to provide in-depth, nonpartisan research and analysis of defense funding, space security, and air power issues. He has authored publications on trends in the defense budget, military space systems, threats to space systems, civil space exploration, defense acquisitions, military compensation and readiness, and military force structure, among other topics. He teaches classes on military space systems and the defense budget at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

Mr. Harrison joined CSIS from the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, where he was a senior fellow for defense budget studies. He previously worked at Booz Allen Hamilton, where he consulted for the U.S. Air Force on satellite communications systems and supported a variety of other clients evaluating the performance of acquisition programs. Prior to Booz Allen, he worked for AeroAstro Inc. developing advanced space technologies and as a management consultant at Diamond Cluster International. Mr. Harrison served as a captain in the U.S. Air Force Reserves. He is a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with both a B.S. and an M.S. in aeronautics and astronautics.

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11 May 2021: Artificial Intelligence and Quantum technology
related to the People's Republic of China

Elsa B. Kania is an Adjunct Senior Fellow with the Technology and National Security Program at the Center for a New American Security. Her research focuses on Chinese military strategy, military innovation, and emerging technologies. Her book, Fighting to Innovate, should be forthcoming with the Naval Institute Press in 2022.

At CNAS, Ms. Kania has contributed to the Artificial Intelligence and Global Security Initiative and the "Securing Our 5G Future" program, while acting as a member of the Digital Freedom Forum and the research team for the Task Force on Artificial Intelligence and National Security.

Ms. Kania also works in support of the U.S. Air Force's China Aerospace Studies Institute through its Associates Program, is a Non-Resident Fellow in Indo-Pacific Defense with the Institute for the Study of War, and is a Non-Resident Fellow with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute's International Cyber Policy Centre. She serves as an Adjunct Policy Advisor for the non-profit Institute for Security and Technology; contributes to the Party Watch Initiative at the Center for Advanced China Research; and co-founded the China Cyber and Intelligence Studies Institute, a non-profit research collaboration.

Currently, Ms. Kania is a PhD candidate in Harvard University's Department of Government. Her dissertation will examine military learning and innovation in comparative perspective. Ms. Kania was a Boren Scholar in Beijing, China, and she maintains professional proficiency in Mandarin Chinese.

Peter Warren Singer is [Strategist at New America](#), a [Professor of Practice at Arizona State University](#), and Principal at [Useful Fiction LLC](#). Described in the Wall Street Journal as "the premier futurist in the national- security environment," he has been named by the Smithsonian as one of the nation's 100 leading innovators, by Defense News as one of the 100 most influential people in defense issues, by Foreign Policy to their Top 100 Global Thinkers List, and as an official "Mad Scientist" for the U.S. Army's Training and Doctrine Command. No author, living or dead, has more books on the professional US military readings lists. His non-fiction books include Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry, Children at War, Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century; Cybersecurity and Cyberwar: What Everyone Needs to Know and most recently LikeWar, which explores how social media has changed war and politics. It was named an Amazon and Foreign Affairs book of the year and reviewed by Booklist as "LikeWar should be required reading for everyone living in a democracy and all who aspire to." He is also the co-author of a new type of novel, using the format of a technothriller to communicate nonfiction research. Ghost Fleet: A Novel of the Next World War was both a top summer read and led to briefings everywhere from the White House to the Pentagon. His latest is Burn-In: A Novel of the Real Robotic Revolution.

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Major Michael Kanaan is the author of T-Minus AI & was the first chairperson of artificial intelligence for the U.S. Air Force, Headquarters Pentagon. In that role, he authored and guided the research, development, and implementation strategies for AI technology and machine learning activities across its global operations. He is currently the Director of Operations for Air Force / MIT Artificial Intelligence. In recognition of his fast-rising career and broad influence, he has received numerous awards and prestigious honors -- including the US Government's Arthur S. Flemming Award (an honor shared by past recipients Neil Armstrong, Robert Gates, and Elizabeth Dole).

Samuel Bendett is a Research Analyst with the Center for Naval Analyses' International Affairs Group, where he is a member of the Russia Studies Program. His work involves Russian defense and security technology and developments, Russian geopolitical influence in the former Soviet states, as well as Russian unmanned systems development, Russian naval capabilities and Russian decision-making calculus during military crises.
Prior to joining CNA, Bendett worked at the National Defense University on emerging and disruptive technologies for government response in crisis situation, where he conducted research on behalf of the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy (OSD-P) and Acquisition, Technology and Logistics (OSD-AT&L). His previous experience includes working for US Congress, private sector and non-profit organizations on foreign policy, international conflict resolution, defense and security issues.

Bendett's analyses, views and commentary on Russian military robotics, unmanned systems and artificial intelligence capabilities appear regularly in the C4ISRnet, The National Interest, DefenseOne, Breaking Defense, War Is Boring, and The Strategy Bridge. He was also a foreign policy and international affairs contributor to the RealClearWorld.com blog, writing on Russian military technology. Bendett received his M.A. in Law and Diplomacy from the Fletcher School, Tufts University and B.A. in Politics and English from Brandeis University. He has native fluency in Russian.

Associate Professor Michael J. Biercuk is a quantum physicist and technologist at the University of Sydney, and a Chief Investigator in the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Engineered Quantum Systems (EQuS). His own group – the Quantum Control Laboratory – is discovering how to power a new generation of advanced technologies using the strangest rules of quantum physics.
Michael's research has been recognised with accolades including the Eureka Prize for Outstanding Young Researcher (2015), selection as one of the Sydney Morning Herald's 100 Most influential people and award of the Australian Government's [National Measurement Institute] NMI Prize for Excellence in Measurement Science. He was part of an international team whose work developing a new quantum-powered technology was described as the #8 "World-changing" experiment by BBC Focus. His team's achievements have been featured in The Economist, The New York Times, Forbes, Wired, and a host of other major media outlets.

His experiences include a variety of strategic leadership roles focused on innovation. From 2005-2008 Michael was a technical advisor steering research investment at DARPA – a US agency that brought you mobile phones, the internet, stealth, and night-vision goggles among other things. Since 2010, in parallel with establishing his research program at Sydney he has served on the

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team leading the technical development of major new research infrastructure – the Sydney Nanoscience Hub – one of the most advanced physical-science research facilities globally.

A prolific writer and speaker, Michael builds on his research experience to drive public policy debates around innovation and technology, having written for ABC Science, The Conversation, and The Australian Financial Review. He is also the founder of the charitable STRIVE program for contemporary veterans education, and is passionate about the intersection of science, technology, and fashion.

Michael was educated in the United States, earning his undergraduate degree in Physics from the University of Pennsylvania, and his Master's and Doctorate degrees from Harvard University.