

# China Briefs

## BRICS Foreign Ministers Discuss COVID and the Multilateral System

The BRICS Foreign Ministers, chaired this year by India, held a virtual meeting on May 31st (BRICS is Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) presided over by India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar. The meeting focused to a large extent on COVID and the need to get vaccines to the countries most in need. The foreign ministers issued a joint statement that included: supporting a political solution in Syria, calling for a halt to the conflict in Yemen, greeting the peace talks in Gaza, and recognizing the need for African development. The ministers also issued an important statement on "Strengthening and Reforming the Multilateral System," which "reaffirmed their commitment to multilateralism, upholding international law, including the purposes and principles of the UN Charter as its indispensable cornerstone, and upholding the central role of the UN in the international system, in which sovereign states cooperate to maintain peace and security."

The role of India at the meeting indicates that some of the tension between India and China has subsided. In his opening statement, Foreign Minister Jaishankar, without mentioning the unilateral wars and sanctions imposed by the U.S., the UK, and EU, in breach of the international law contained in the UN Charter, expressed the sense of the BRICS with regard to the system of governance: "We strive for a fair, just, inclusive, equitable and representative multipolar international system. It is

one based on international law and the UN Charter, that recognizes the sovereign equality of all States, and respects their territorial integrity while displaying mutual respect for interests and concerns of all.... It is only by conducting our policies in accordance with these principles that we can expect to bring about the change we desire."

The call for systemic reform may not be met with much pleasure by the U.S. and the British, who have been eager to bring India into their anti-China Quad coalition. While India has disagreements with China and a continuing border dispute, they nonetheless are committed to the overall policy of multilateralism.

Both China and Russia were keen on assuring Jaishankar that they would work as quickly as possible to help India overcome the most recent and serious outbreak of COVID. "Unfortunately, the spread of the Corona virus does not allow us to hold a face-to-face meeting," Lavrov said. "I would like to express my solidarity with India and its people. We are ready to continue doing whatever we can to help fight the pandemic. With the joint efforts we will be able to overcome the pandemic." Wang Yi also expressed China's support for India: "As long as it is needed by India, all BRICS countries including China will provide further support and assistance at any time. And we are confident that India will certainly overcome the pandemic."

## Liu He and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen Talk

Chinese President Xi's chief economic adviser, Vice Premier Liu

He, had a telephone meeting with U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on June 2. This follows a call the previous week between Liu and U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai. The talks with Tai were the first contacts the two parties have had since Biden became president. The discussion with Tai was primarily concerned with the implementation of the trade agreement negotiated during the Trump Administration.

Liu's discussion with Yellen expanded the talks to a broader level and at a higher level of government. A Xinhua readout indicated that the two agreed that the U.S.-China relationship was "very important." The Treasury Department readout said that Yellen told Liu that the U.S. wants to work with China on those topics that are in the U.S. interest. Reports indicate that the two discussed the bilateral trade relationship as well as the overall macroeconomic situation.

With the U.S. holding interest rates down and China not following suit, the Chinese RMB is being revalued, which will have a negative effect on China's trade. At the same time, any measures taken by China to keep the RMB rate steady would be immediately characterized as "currency manipulation" by the U.S. But the growing gap between the currencies is making Chinese exports more expensive abroad. At the same time, China is increasingly concerned about the huge amounts of money being released by the Biden Administration as "quantitative easing" to the banks and "aid" to supposedly help "jump-start" the economy, fearing new bubbles and

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the danger of rampant inflation.

There was a general sense of relief that communication had been reestablished between the two countries' economic teams. But if this indicates a "light at the end of the tunnel," that tunnel may be terribly long. Only two days after Liu's conversation with Yellen, Biden signed an Executive Order continuing the Trump Administration's ban on U.S. companies investing in Chinese companies supposedly tied to the defense or surveillance sectors of the Chinese economy, and adding 59 more Chinese companies to the list.

Beijing condemned the move on June 4, accusing Washington of "overextending the concept of national security and abusing its national power. China urges the U.S. to respect market rules and principles and rescind the so-called list that suppresses Chinese companies," said Wang Wenbin, the foreign ministry spokesperson.

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## **Kurt Campbell Says 'Engagement with China Is at an End'**

Speaking at Stanford University on May 26, Kurt Campbell, President Biden's National Security Adviser on Asia, said that the era of engagement with China is at an end. U.S. policy toward China will now operate under "a new set of strategic parameters," Campbell said. "The dominant paradigm is going to be competition." Campbell claimed that the change is due to the change of Chinese policy under President Xi Jinping, characterized by clashes on the Indian border, an economic campaign against Australia and "wolf warrior diplomacy." Campbell said that "China is

determined to play a more assertive role."

All of these developments cited were, of course, a lawful Chinese reaction to a more intense anti-China policy conducted under Trump and Pompeo, and continued under Biden. The real "assertiveness" which Campbell opposes is China's legitimate desire to assert its right as a major country, and to have a say in deciding the future of mankind. And that includes the initiation by China of a very successful development policy, the Belt and Road Initiative, which has revived hope for the future in the poorest of the world's countries, long neglected by the Western policy elites.

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## **Xi Jinping Addresses Congress of Academicians and Engineers**

President Xi Jinping on May 28th addressed the 20th Academician Conference of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the 15th Academician Conference of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, and the 10th National Congress of the Chinese Association for Science and Technology, all of which were gathered in the Great Hall of the People. The lengthy speech was a clarion call to national scientific workers to be prepared to scale the heights in all fields of research in this time of great uncertainty where scientific prowess is at a premium.

After reviewing China's major scientific and technological achievements during the last decade, Xi recalled that China is still defective in many areas and urged that these deficiencies be overcome. The task is to become a leading scientific nation by the time of the centennial of the People's Republic in 2049. He reiterated the role of science at the basis of a

country's economy saying, "If science and technology are established, the nation will be established. If science and technology are strong, the nation will be strong."

President Xi emphasized that it is necessary to allow scientific and technical personnel to devote their main energies to scientific and technological innovation and R&D activities. They should not be required to spend a lot of time on unnecessary activities or formalities, which would take them away from their primary tasks, even referring to a decision in 1961 that said that workers in science must be able to spend five days of the week in their professional endeavors. He called for the establishment of a strong national laboratory system and the development of a ten-year plan for the development of research in basic science.

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## **China's EAST Fusion Reactor Sets Record Toward Fusion Power**

A record combination of high temperature and long duration of confinement of a fusion plasma was achieved by China's primary fusion power [experiment](#), known as the Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak, or EAST, the facility announced on May 28. The EAST reactor achieved a plasma temperature of 120 million degrees Celsius for a period of 101 seconds, and in another test, 160 million Celsius for 20 seconds.

"The huge accomplishment is a key step toward the test running of a fusion reactor," announced Gong Xianzu, a researcher at the Institute of Plasma Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences who was in charge of the experiment conducted in Hefei, the capital of east China's Anhui Province.