

International Briefs

Wang Yi Holds High-Level Talks in Moscow to Deepen Strategic Cooperation

Culminating his European tour—which took him to France, Germany, Italy and Hungary—Wang Yi, now Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Chinese Communist Party’s Central Committee, held high-level discussions in Moscow Feb. 21-22 with President Vladimir Putin, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, and Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev. They addressed the need for deepening bilateral strategic cooperation in several areas and analyzed what all agreed is a “complex” and “volatile” international situation. Ukraine was at the top of the agenda in all discussions.

In their Feb. 22 meeting, President Putin greeted Wang warmly and extended his best wishes to “our friend” President Xi Jinping. Wang Yi similarly communicated Xi Jinping’s greetings to Putin, who said that he is expecting a personal visit from the Chinese President in the coming weeks, as soon as Xi finishes attending to his domestic political agenda. Xi’s visit, he said, would give “additional impetus to our relations.”

As for China-Russia relations, Putin pointed out that they are progressing steadily and “reaching new milestones.” While progress in bilateral trade was important, he added, he emphasized that the two nations also cooperate in international affairs. Putin underscored the importance of the bilateral relationship in “stabilizing the international situation,” and pointed to both nations’ participation in such multilateral organizations as the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

The situation in Ukraine was a central part of their discussion. According to *Global Times* Feb. 22, Wang Yi expressed his appreciation for Russia’s reaffirmation of its willingness to resolve the issue through dialogue and negotiation. China will, as always, uphold an objective and fair stance and play a constructive role in the political settlement of the crisis, he said.

As indicated by the Kremlin [transcript](#), Wang also observed that while the current international situation is complicated, the China-Russia relationship has withstood the test of time and is mature, tenacious and “as stable as Mount Tai.”

In his meeting with Lavrov, Wang underscored that China will continue to conduct an independent foreign policy based on the principle of “mutual benefit.” Lavrov replied that he was sure that in his new position, Wang Yi would “strengthen the continuity of Russia-Chinese relations, strategic cooperation and comprehensive partnership.”

Ray McGovern Addresses UN Security Council on Nord Stream Sabotage

On Feb. 21, former CIA analyst and peace activist Ray McGovern addressed a [meeting](#) of the UN Security Council (UNSC) called at the request of the Russian Federation to discuss the sabotage of the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines in September 2022. McGovern developed, among other things, a spirited defense of veteran investigative journalist Seymour Hersh and his Feb. 8 bombshell revelations on the U.S. plot to bomb the pipelines, making a convincing argument that Hersh has more credibility than those who accuse

him of fabricating his report.

Citing the example of Colin Powell’s 2003 presentation to the UNSC of fake evidence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, McGovern said “those who are smearing Sy Hersh don’t have a good record of credibility.” He concluded by singing a verse of the song by Vincent Harding, “Keep on Moving Forward, Never Turning Back,” and suggested a new stanza with the words, “We Gotta Keep on Loving Our Enemies.” McGovern mentioned that Harding had helped write Dr. Martin Luther King’s April 1967 speech addressing the atrocities of the Vietnam War—marrying the Civil Rights and Anti-War movements around the fight for humanity as a whole.

McGovern also made a special appeal on behalf of children, like those he saw in the airports while he was traveling to New York, and called on the Council to do what is required to achieve a future free of threats of nuclear war.

McGovern’s remarks followed those of Columbia University Professor of Economics Jeffrey Sachs, who also defended Hersh. The meeting adjourned without action on Russia’s draft resolution directing the UN Secretary General to establish an independent investigation into the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines.

Another Problem for London: the Global South Is Not on Board

The London *Financial Times* has raised an issue of great concern to the trans-Atlantic financial Establishment: most of the nations of the developing sector are not on board with its strategic or economic policies.

In a Feb. 19 article headlined, “Western Pleas over Ukraine Fail to Sway African and Latin American Leaders,” the *FT* reports that at the Feb. 17-19 Munich Security Conference, there was tepid (at best) support for further confrontation with Russia. It notes, for example:

“Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira said that the conflict was a ‘very sad situation’ and stressed his government ‘deplored’ invasion.... Vieira added: ‘It’s been one year now. We have to try to build the possibility of a solution. We cannot keep talking only of war.’”

Namibian Prime Minister Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila also disapproved of further confrontation, stating that Namibia was focused on “resolving the problem, not on shifting blame,” adding, “The bottom line is that money used to buy weapons would be better used to promote development in Ukraine, in Africa, in Asia, in the EU itself where many people are facing hardships.”

The *FT* summarized London’s conundrum:

“Western officials said bilateral meetings on the conference sidelines revealed a much greater preoccupation with issues such as inflation, debt, higher energy prices and food security than with the war in Ukraine. There was also a lingering resentment, they said, over the West’s disappointing record on sharing coronavirus vaccines and compensation for the damage caused by climate change.”

Korea Flashpoint Careens Towards Nuclear War by Miscalculation

The Korea flashpoint is in danger of escalating out of control and into a nuclear war by miscalculation. The missile that North Korea launched Feb. 18 was, according to Pyongyang, a Hwasong-15. North Korea’s official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)

said the launch was organized “suddenly” without prior notice, at the direct order of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, the Associated Press reported. AP noted that the flight details reported by North Korea show that the weapon is theoretically capable of reaching the U.S. mainland if fired in a standard trajectory, rather than the lofted trajectory that North Korea typically uses for these types of test flights.

The Hwasong-15 launch demonstrated the North’s “powerful physical nuclear deterrent” and its efforts to “turn its capacity of fatal nuclear counterattack on the hostile forces” into an extremely strong one that cannot be countered, KCNA said.

Seoul and Washington responded to the ICBM launch with an air exercise involving U.S. B-1B bombers, along with other aircraft. The bombers also exercised with Japanese fighter jets separately. U.S. National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said the U.S. will take all necessary measures to ensure the security of the American homeland, South Korea and Japan. South Korea’s presidential National Security Council said it will seek to strengthen its “overwhelming response capacity” against potential North Korean aggression based on the military alliance with the United States.

North Korea responded to the U.S.-South Korea exercises by firing two short-range missiles into the East Sea from a 600 mm rocket launch system early on the morning of Feb. 20. The North described the “super-large” rocket launcher as a means of “tactical nuclear attack,” stressing that its latest firing drills reinforced the Korean People’s Army’s readiness to respond to the allies’ air force power.

South Africa Takes Eskom Back from the Privatizers and Deindustrializers

After making destabilizing and possibly libelous public statements

about corruption at Eskom, South Africa’s state-owned electricity company—as well as speculations of Russian “meddling” in the conversion of coal-fired power plants to natural gas—Eskom CEO André de Ruyter was unceremoniously removed from his post Feb. 21 with immediate effect. Chief Financial Officer Calib Cassim, at Eskom for two decades, was named as interim CEO.

Eskom is the beating heart of the country, providing its baseload electricity. Its near collapse, the result of a combination of incompetence and oligarchic malevolence, may soon be turned around, thanks to the African National Congress’s (ANC) re-election in December of Cyril Ramaphosa as President, and the ANC’s resolution to put Eskom under the control of Energy Minister and patriot Gwede Mantashe.

A new regime of repair and maintenance of existing coal-fired power plants is the key to ending most load-shedding and restoring economic and political stability, as confirmed recently in comments to *EIR* by South African nuclear energy expert, Dr. Kelvin Kemm.

Under Mantashe’s goal-oriented regime, Eskom has moved to re-purpose three of its oldest plants by converting them to natural gas power. Another goal is increasing performance, or what is technically known as the Energy Availability Factor (EAF), in six plants that currently have very low ratings of 20 to 25%. This alone could solve half of the energy shortfall, according to Mantashe. The easing of environmental restrictions, specifically the temporary exemption from restrictions on sulfur dioxide emissions at the otherwise modern Kusile coal-fired plant is another key objective. Eskom has asked the court for a temporary exemption for three of the units of the Kusile plant, which could immediately add over 2,000 MW to the system.