

China Briefs

Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang Engages His Western Counterparts

Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang met on May 8, for the first time since his ministerial appointment, with U.S. Ambassador to China, Nicholas Burns. But this doesn't seem to be the beginning of a new "rapprochement" between the two countries. Qin Gang upbraided the U.S. for continuing a policy of containing China while also claiming to want to begin talks with China. At his regular [press conference](#) May 8, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Wang Wenbin had this to say:

"The U.S. cannot talk about the need for communication on the one hand and yet keep suppressing and containing China on the other. The U.S. cannot say one thing but do the opposite and needs to respect China's red lines.... We hope that Ambassador Burns will be able to see, listen, interact, and think more here in China, and serve as a bridge between China and the U.S."

Last week, Qin traveled to Europe for further ministerial encounters, beginning on May 9 in Berlin. Prior to the meeting, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock had warned China not to deliver goods to Russia which were of military relevance, or China would face EU sanctions. At the post-meeting press conference, Baerbock provocatively stated that "during my stay in Beijing, the winner of the Franco-German Human Rights Award [Yu Wensheng] was arrested on his way to the EU embassy." Baerbock also said that she was not convinced by China's position on Russia: "Neutrality means taking the side of the aggressor, and

that is why our guiding principle is to make it clear that we are on the side of the victim."

For his part, Minister Qin referred to China's sovereignty and forbade "that the foreign side interferes in our internal affairs." He also said China was concerned about Germany's and the EU's so-called "de-risking" strategy *vis-a-vis* China, which apparently contrasts with China's strategy of promoting dialogue and searching for ways to avoid and solve conflicts.

A more felicitous meeting took place May 10, in Paris. Qin met with French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna, who said, according to a Chinese Foreign Ministry [posting](#) May 11:

"China plays an important role in ensuring peace and stability around the world. France is ready to boost cooperation with China on the Ukrainian issue and other important international and regional issues, to find more areas of common interest."

Qin reiterated Chinese President Xi Jinping's statement of principles for settling the conflict. The four principles are the respect for sovereignty, compliance with the UN Charter, taking into account each side's concerns, and using peaceful ways to resolve conflict.

Jake Sullivan Meets with Wang Yi

On May 11, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met in Vienna for talks with Wang Yi, China's highest-ranking diplomat. According to the White House [readout](#):

"The two sides had candid, substantive, and constructive discussions on key issues.... This meeting was part of ongoing efforts to maintain open lines of communication and respon-

sibly manage competition. The two sides agreed to maintain this important strategic channel of communication to advance these objectives, building on the engagement between President Biden and President Xi in Bali, Indonesia, in November 2022."

This is part of a broader outreach of American officials to China. This is from a May 10 [article](#), "Biden Presses for China Contact Despite Risk of Losing Clout," in *Bloomberg*:

"Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, and climate envoy John Kerry are all planning trips to China. That planning has also been accompanied by a broader messaging campaign from Yellen and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan saying the U.S. doesn't want to 'sever economic ties—just address the possible national security concerns.'"

China To Build World's First 1,000 km/h Maglev Train

China will now build the world's first experimental ultrahigh-speed maglev train, with a maximum speed of over 1,000 kilometers per hour, in Harbin, Northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, China News Service reports. Construction of associated facilities and manufacturing plants will also be launched as part of the project.

In a [statement](#) to *Global Times* May 10, the Beijing-based transport technology firm World Artery, one of the firms behind the project, said that the experimental project will also be used to "boost local tourism."

A major part of the program is a partially evacuated vacuum transportation tube in which the ultrahigh-speed maglev will travel, its relatively frictionless environment allowing it to

accelerate to over 1,000 km/h at a relatively low cost and high level of safety.

According to *Global Times*, “Zheng Bin, president of World Artery, said the construction of the trial route will be a breakthrough in the field, which is also a great leap in technology translating the concept into reality.” The transportation tube and relevant manufacturing plants will be jointly built by World Artery and the Harbin Industrial Investment Group Co (HGT).

Canada Picks a Fight with China

On May 8, Mélanie Joly, Canada’s Foreign Minister, declared China’s Toronto-based diplomat Zhao Wei *persona non grata* and ordered him to leave the country. According to BBC [coverage](#):

“The move by Ottawa follows a Canadian intelligence report appearing in the *Globe and Mail* newspaper that accused Mr. Zhao of being involved in gathering information about Mr. Chong [Conservative MP Michael Chong], 51, following his vocal criticism of China’s treatment of its Uyghur minority population.”

The charge is that the diplomat tried to intimidate Chong by gathering information on his family in Hong Kong. China’s Foreign Ministry said the charge was “slander and defamation,” and retaliated by expelling Canada’s consul in Shanghai, Jennifer Lynn Lalonde, “reserving the right to further act.”

On May 9, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Canada “will not be intimidated” by China following Beijing’s expulsion: “We will continue to do everything necessary to keep Canadians protected from foreign interference.” In March, he had announced the appointment of an independent special rapporteur to investigate the interference claims.

Zhao left Canada May 12.

More Efforts To Escalate Taiwan Tensions

Escalating the targeting of China by the British continues as former UK Prime Minister Liz Truss announced she will visit Taiwan on May 17, where she expects to meet officials and deliver a speech titled, “Taiwan: On the Frontline of Freedom and Democracy.” Her appearance is being sponsored by the Prospect Foundation, which describes itself as “Taiwan’s leading think tank,” with cabinet ministers on its board.

Truss told the press on May 9:

“Taiwan is a beacon of freedom and democracy. I’m looking forward to showing solidarity with the Taiwanese people in person in the face of increasingly aggressive behavior and rhetoric from the regime in Beijing.”

Meanwhile, in response to comments by Congressman Seth Moulton (D-MA) that the U.S. would “blow up” Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. (TSMC) in order to keep it out of China’s hands, Taiwan Minister of National Defense Chiu Kuo-cheng said on May 8 that the Taiwanese armed forces would not tolerate the destruction of any Taiwanese facility.

Atlanticists on China’s Role in Ukraine-Russia Negotiations

Representatives of the Anglophile foreign policy establishment may be resigning themselves to a negotiated peace between Ukraine and Russia, brokered by China. A [commentary](#) published May 7 in Australia’s *ABC News* by Global Affairs Editor John Lyons, reporting from Kiev, carries the headline: “China Is Making Its Move in Ukraine, and the U.S. Has No Chance of Matching It.” The piece says that China’s President Xi Jinping seized the initiative in his April 26

phone call with Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky:

“Recently, when Xi brokered a peace agreement of sorts between Saudi Arabia and Iran, he would have known—as with the Ukraine envoy offer—that he was offering something that the U.S. cannot offer. Washington could deliver Riyadh to a negotiating table, but it certainly could not deliver Tehran....” [He knows that] “Washington would be unable to deliver Putin to a negotiating table.”

In an interview with CBS broadcast May 7, Henry Kissinger emphasized that Chinese-brokered peace talks could begin by the end of 2023:

“Now that China has entered the negotiation, it will come to a head, I think by the end of the year.” By that time, “we will be talking about negotiating processes and even actual negotiations.”

A *Wall Street Journal* piece describes a “shift in Western thinking” due to concern over what will happen with Ukraine’s much-touted Spring counteroffensive. It claims that there is support for the shift in the National Security Council, but that the Department of State and the CIA are more skeptical.

The fact that this shift is not yet hegemonic among the Atlanticists is illustrated in a May 10 [article](#) in *Foreign Affairs*, titled “Beyond Ukraine’s Offensive: The West Needs To Prepare the Country’s Military for a Long War.” The authors write:

“It is critical that Ukraine’s Western partners develop a long-term theory of victory for Ukraine, since even in the best-case scenario, this upcoming offensive is unlikely to end the conflict.... The U.S. and Europe must make the necessary investments to support the war effort well beyond 2023, develop plans for successive operations—and avoid pinning their hopes on any single offensive effort.”