

How it happened: Transcript of the US-China opening remarks in Alaska

China's Yang: 'Is that the way that you had hoped to conduct this dialogue?'

NEW YORK -- This is a U.S. State Department transcript of the opening remarks at the U.S.-China meeting in Anchorage, Alaska, on Thursday, attended by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, national security adviser Jake Sullivan, Chinese Director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi and Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

BLINKEN: Well, good afternoon, and welcome. On behalf of national security adviser Sullivan and myself, I want to welcome Director Yang and State Councilor Wang to Alaska, and to thank you very much for making the journey to be with us.

I just returned myself from meetings with Secretary of Defense [Lloyd] Austin and our counterparts in Japan and the Republic of Korea, two of our nation's closest allies. They were very interested in the discussions that we'll have here today and tomorrow because the issues that we'll raise are relevant not only to China and the United States, but to others across the region and indeed around the world. Our administration is committed to leading with diplomacy to advance the interests of the United States and to strengthen the rules-based international order.

That system is not an abstraction. It helps countries resolve differences peacefully, coordinate multilateral efforts effectively and participate in global commerce with the assurance that everyone is following the same rules. The alternative to a rules-based order is a world in which might makes right and winners take all, and that would be a far more violent and unstable world for all of us. Today, we'll have an opportunity to discuss key priorities, both domestic and global, so that China can better understand our administration's intentions and approach.

We'll also discuss our deep concerns with actions by China, including in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, Taiwan, cyberattacks on the United States and economic coercion toward our allies. Each of these actions threaten the rules-based order that maintains global stability. That's why they're not merely internal matters and why we feel an obligation to raise these issues here today.

I said that the United States' relationship with China will be competitive where it should be, collaborative where it can be, adversarial where it must be. Our discussions here in Alaska, I suspect, will run the gamut. Our intent is to be direct about our concerns, direct about our priorities, with the goal of a more clear-eyed relationship between our countries moving forward. Thank you for being here.

And before turning to you, Mr. Director, I'd like to invite national security adviser Sullivan to say a few words.

SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Secretary, and welcome to Director Yang and State Councilor Wang. It's fitting that we're meeting here in Alaska. We may be far from the continental United States, but there are few places that are as quintessentially American: big-hearted, resilient, intrepid. This is truly a fitting place for us to host this meeting.

Secretary Blinken and I are proud of the story about America we're able to tell here, about a country that, under President Biden's leadership, has made major strides to control the pandemic, to rescue our economy and to affirm the strength and staying power of our democracy. We're particularly proud of the work that we've done to revitalize our alliances and partnerships, the foundation of our foreign policy. Just last week, President Biden hosted the Quad leaders' summit that spoke to the can-do spirit of the world's democracies and committed to realize the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific. It is through partnerships like these that all of us can deliver progress and prosperity for our peoples.

Secretary Blinken laid out many of the areas of concern, from economic and military coercion to assaults on basic values, that we'll discuss with you today and in the days ahead. We'll do so frankly, directly and with clarity. These are the concerns that are on the minds of the American people, but it goes beyond that. We've heard each of these concerns posed from around the world -- from our allies and partners to the broader international community during the intensive consultations we've undertaken in the last two months.

We'll make clear today that our overriding priority from the United States' side is to ensure that our approach in the world and our approach to China benefits the American people and protects the interests of our allies and partners. We do not seek conflict, but we welcome stiff competition and we will always stand up for our principles, for our people and for our friends. We look forward to discussing all of these matters with you in the hours ahead. Thank you.

YANG: (In Mandarin). It's a test for the interpreter.

BLINKEN: We're going to give the translator a raise. (Laughter.)

YANG: (Via interpreter) Secretary Blinken and Mr. Sullivan, the State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi and I have come to Anchorage, the United States, to have this strategic dialogue with the United States. We hope that this dialogue will be a sincere and candid one. Both China and the United States are major countries in the world, and together we shoulder important responsibilities to the peace, stability and development of the world and the region. In China, we have just concluded the *Lianghui*, or the two sessions of the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. During the sessions, we adopted the outline for the 14th five-year economic and social development plan and the long-range objectives through the year 2035.

For China, we are now in a historic year where we will move from finishing the first centenary goal to the second centenary goal, and by the year 2035 China will surely achieve basic modernization. And by the year 2050, China will achieve full modernization. China has made decisive achievements and important strategic gains in fighting COVID-19, and we have achieved a full victory in ending absolute poverty in China. China's per-capita GDP is only one-fifth of that of the United States, but we have managed to end absolute poverty for all people in China. And we hope that other countries, especially the advanced countries, will make similar efforts in this regard. And China has also made historic achievements in building the country into a moderately prosperous one in all respects. The Chinese people are wholly rallying around the Communist Party of China. Our values are the same as the common values of humanity. Those are: peace, development, fairness, justice, freedom and democracy.

What China and the international community follow or uphold is the United Nations-centered international system and the international order underpinned by international law, not what is

advocated by a small number of countries of the so-called rules-based international order. And the United States has its style -- United States-style democracy -- and China has the Chinese-style democracy. It is not just up to the American people, but also the people of the world, to evaluate how the United States has done in advancing its own democracy. In China's case, after decades of reform and opening up, we have come a long way in various fields. In particular, we have engaged in tireless efforts to contribute to the peace and development of the world, and to upholding the purposes and principles of the U.N. Charter.

The wars in this world are launched by some other countries, which have resulted in massive casualties. But for China, what we have asked for, for other countries, is to follow a path of peaceful development, and this is the purpose of our foreign policy. We do not believe in invading through the use of force, or to topple other regimes through various means, or to massacre the people of other countries, because all of those would only cause turmoil and instability in this world. And at the end of the day, all of those would not serve the United States well.

So we believe that it is important for the United States to change its own image and to stop advancing its own democracy in the rest of the world. Many people within the United States actually have little confidence in the democracy of the United States, and they have various views regarding the government of the United States. In China, according to opinion polls, the leaders of China have the wide support of the Chinese people. So no attempt to -- the opinion polls conducted in the United States show that the leaders of China have the support of the Chinese people. No attempt to smear China's social system would get anywhere. Facts have shown that such practices would only lead the Chinese people to rally more closely around the Communist Party of China and work steadily towards the goals that we have set for ourselves.

In 1952, China adopted its first five-year development plan, and now we are into the first year of the 14th five-year development plan. We will continue along this path, step by step. China's development is not just about delivering benefits for the people of China, but also about contributing to the development of the world in the 21st century. China and the United States are both major countries and both shoulder important responsibilities. We must both contribute to the peace, stability and development of the world in areas such as COVID-19, restoring economic activities in the world and responding to climate change. There are many things that we can do together and where our interests converge.

So what we need to do is to abandon the Cold War mentality and the zero-sum game approach. We must change the way we think and make sure that in this century, the 21st century, countries big or small, particularly the big countries, should come united together to contribute to the future of humanity and build a community with a shared future for humankind. It's also important for all of us to come together to build a new type of international relations, ensuring fairness, justice and mutual respect. And on some regional issues, I think the problem is that the United States has exercised long-arm jurisdiction and suppression and overstretched the national security through the use of force or financial hegemony, and this has created obstacles for normal trade activities, and the United States has also been persuading some countries to launch attacks on China.

And as for China, we believe and we have handled import- and export-related issues according to scientific and technological standards. Secretary Blinken, you said you just came back from Japan and the ROK. Those two countries are China's second- and the third-largest trading

partners. [The Association of Southeast Asian Nations] has now become China's largest trading partner, overtaking the European Union and the United States. So we do hope that the United States will develop sound relations with all countries in the Asia-Pacific. We should have many mutual friends. This is the right way forward in the 21st century.

On the eve of the Chinese Lunar New Year, President Xi Jinping and President Joe Biden had a phone conversation. The two presidents agreed to step up communication, manage differences and expand cooperation between our two countries. We are having this dialogue today to follow up on the common understanding of the two presidents reached during their phone conversation. And having this dialogue is, in fact, a decision made by the two presidents. So for the people of the two countries and the world, they're hoping to see practical outcomes coming out of our dialogue. And with Xinjiang, Tibet and Taiwan, they are an inalienable part of China's territory. China is firmly opposed to U.S. interference in China's internal affairs. We have expressed our staunch opposition to such interference, and we will take firm actions in response.

On human rights, we hope that the United States will do better on human rights. China has made steady progress in human rights, and the fact is that there are many problems within the United States regarding human rights, which is admitted by the U.S. itself as well. The United States has also said that countries can't rely on force in today's world to resolve the challenges we face. And it is a failure to use various means to topple the so-called authoritarian states. And the challenges facing the United States in human rights are deep-seated. They did not just emerge over the past four years, such as Black Lives Matter. It did not come up only recently. So we do hope that for our two countries, it's important that we manage our respective affairs well instead of deflecting the blame on somebody else in this world.

And for China, we will manage our own affairs well, and we hope to deliver a better life for our 1.4 billion Chinese people. This is the goal of China's diplomacy. And also, we will make our contribution to the peace and stability of the world. Since breaking the ice between our two countries in our engagement several decades ago, China and the United States have achieved a lot together. This is the result of the concerted efforts of the people with vision of both countries, and this past is a part of our achievements. Although so much has changed in this world, it is important that our two countries think about how we can work together and expand our cooperation under the new circumstances.

If there is competition between our two countries, I think the competition focuses on the economic aspect, and in this area, as I have said just now, for frictions in our economic engagement, it is important to respond to them in a rational way and seek win-win results. And China-U.S. trade has already achieved a lot, and we should do even better. The overwhelming majority of American businesses in China have said that China's business environment is good and nobody has forced them to stay in China. They see a profit coming from their presence in China, and they see immense opportunities in China. That's why they are staying in China. And I believe that for our two countries, under the new circumstances, we need to enhance communication, properly manage our differences and expand our cooperation instead of engaging in confrontation.

But between our two countries we've had confrontation in the past, and the result did not serve the United States well. What did the United States gain from that confrontation? I didn't see any,

and the only result was damages done to United States. And China will pull through and has pulled through such confrontation.

So the way we see the relationship with the United States is as President Xi Jinping has said -- that is, we hope to see no confrontation, no conflict, mutual respect and win-win cooperation with the United States. And actually, during the phone call between the presidents, President Biden himself also talked about the importance of having no conflict or confrontation between our two countries. So at our level, I think it's vital that we do everything we can to fully and faithfully follow up and implement the understandings reached between our two presidents and bring back the China-U.S. relationship to the track of sound and steady growth.

On cyberattacks, let me say that whether it's the ability to launch cyberattacks or the technologies that could be deployed, the United States is the champion in this regard. You can't blame this problem on somebody else.

The United States itself does not represent international public opinion, and neither does the Western world. Whether judged by population scale or the trend of the world, the Western world does not represent the global public opinion. So we hope that when talking about universal values or international public opinion on the part of the United States, we hope the U.S. side will think about whether it feels reassured in saying those things, because the U.S. does not represent the world. It only represents the government of the United States. I don't think the overwhelming majority of countries in the world would recognize that the universal values advocated by the United States or that the opinion of the United States could represent international public opinion, and those countries would not recognize that the rules made by a small number of people would serve as the basis for the international order.

Because, Mr. Secretary and NSA Sullivan, you have delivered some quite different opening remarks, mine will be slightly different as well.

WANG: (Via interpreter) Well, I will stay quite brief compared with Director Yang. Secretary Blinken, NSA Sullivan, you have been involved in the relationship with China for many years, so you're also true friends for the Chinese people. And I would say that I am pleased to meet you today, and China -- the Chinese delegation -- is here at the invitation of the United States. And as NSA Sullivan said, Anchorage is the midpoint of the air route connecting our two countries, and it is fair to say that this place is a refueling station for China-U.S. exchanges and also a place that China and the United States can meet each other halfway.

And China certainly in the past has not and in the future will not accept the unwarranted accusations from the U.S. side. In the past several years, China's legitimate rights and interests have come under outright suppression, plunging the China-U.S. relationship into a period of unprecedented difficulty. This has damaged the interests of our two peoples and taken its toll on world stability and development, and this situation must no longer continue. China urges the U.S. side to fully abandon the hegemonic practice of willfully interfering in China's internal affairs. This has been a longstanding issue, and it should be changed. It is time for it to change. And in particular, on the 17th of March, the United States escalated its so-called sanctions on China regarding Hong Kong, and the Chinese people are outraged by this gross interference in China's internal affairs and the Chinese side is firmly opposed to it.

Anchorage is a midpoint between China and the United States, but after all, it's still the United States territory, and I accept that the Chinese delegation has come here at the invitation of the

United States. However, just the other day, before our departure, the United States passed these new sanctions. This is not supposed to be the way one should welcome his guests, and we wonder if this is a decision made by the United States to try to gain some advantage in dealing with China, but certainly this is miscalculated and only reflects the vulnerability and weakness inside the United States. And this will not shake China's position or resolve on those issues.

And let me also say that the phone conversation that President Xi Jinping and President Biden had on the eve of the Chinese New Year is a very important one, and during this phone conversation they agreed to some common understandings that have pointed the way forward for us to bring back the China-U.S. relationship onto the right track. And the international community is following very closely our dialogue for today and tomorrow. They're watching whether our two sides will each demonstrate goodwill and sincerity, and they are watching whether this dialogue will send out a positive signal to the world.

So we will be watching what will happen today and tomorrow, and if United States is willing, I think our two sides should step up to this responsibility and deliver on this task that we are given. I will stop here. Thank you.

BLINKEN: Thank you very much.

Mr. Director, State Councilor, given your extended remarks, permit me, please, to add just a few of my own before we get down to work, and I know Mr. Sullivan may have things to say as well.

I have to tell you, in my short time as secretary of state, I have spoken to, I think, nearly a hundred counterparts from around the world, and I just made my first trip, as I noted, to Japan and South Korea. I have to tell you, what I'm hearing is very different from what you described. I'm hearing deep satisfaction that the United States is back, that we're reengaged with our allies and partners. I'm also hearing deep concern about some of the actions your government has taken, and we'll have an opportunity to discuss those when we get down to work.

A hallmark of our leadership, of our engagement in the world, is our alliances and our partnerships that have been built on a totally voluntary basis. And it is something that President Biden is committed to reinvigorating.

And there's one more hallmark of our leadership here at home, and that's a constant quest to, as we say, form a more perfect union. And that quest, by definition, acknowledges our imperfections, acknowledges that we're not perfect. We make mistakes, we have reversals, we take steps back. But what we've done throughout our history is to confront those challenges openly, publicly, transparently, not trying to ignore them, not trying to pretend they don't exist, not trying to sweep them under a rug. And sometimes it's painful, sometimes it's ugly, but each and every time, we have come out stronger, better, more united as a country.

I recall well when President Biden was vice president and we were visiting China. This was in the wake of the financial crisis. There was much discussion then, including with then-Vice President Xi Jinping. And Vice President Biden at the time said it's never a good bet to bet against America, and it's true today.

STAFF: Thank you, press.

SULLIVAN: Just briefly, to add to what Secretary Blinken has said -- because I was actually going to make the same point without us even consulting -- a confident country is able to look

hard at its own shortcomings and constantly seek to improve. And that is the secret sauce of America.

The other secret sauce of America is that our people are a problem-solving people, and we believe we solve problems best when we work together with allies and partners around the world.

Just a couple of weeks ago, the United States landed another rover on Mars, and it wasn't just an American project. It had technology from multiple countries from Europe and other parts of the world. It is also going to leave behind a collection of material [from] Mars that the United States and Europe will build a device that can fly there to pick it up and bring it back.

That is what can be accomplished by a country that is constantly reinventing itself, working closely with others and seeking constantly to produce the kind of progress that benefits all of us, and is rooted in a concept of human dignity and human rights that is truly universal that every man, woman and child in this world aspires to.

So we will look forward to the conversation today, but I do hope this conversation will be one carried out with confidence on both sides. So it's not lectures or long, winding statements; it's the opportunity for us to explain where we're coming from, to hear where you are coming from and to indicate, at bottom, what our principles, our priorities and our long-term strategies are. That's what we hope for in the dialogue that lies ahead, that is the spirit with which we approach this, and we look forward to continuing the discussion today. Thank you, everybody.

STAFF: Thank you very much, everyone.

YANG: (Via interpreter) Well, it was my bad. When I entered this room, I should have reminded the U.S. side of paying attention to its tone in our respective opening remarks, but I didn't.

The Chinese side felt compelled to make this speech because of the tone of the U.S. side.

Well, isn't this the intention of the United States -- judging from what, or the way that you have made your opening remarks -- that it wants to speak to China in a condescending way from a position of strength?

So was this carefully all planned and was it carefully orchestrated with all the preparations in place? Is that the way that you had hoped to conduct this dialogue?

Well, I think we thought too well of the United States. We thought that the U.S. side will follow the necessary diplomatic protocols. So for China it was necessary that we made our position clear.

So let me say here that, in front of the Chinese side, the United States does not have the qualification to say that it wants to speak to China from a position of strength. The U.S. side was not even qualified to say such things even 20 years or 30 years back, because this is not the way to deal with the Chinese people. If the United States wants to deal properly with the Chinese side, then let's follow the necessary protocols and do things the right way.

Cooperation benefits both sides. In particular, this is the expectation of the people of the world. Well, the American people are certainly a great people, but so are the Chinese people. So have the Chinese people not suffered enough in the past from the foreign countries? Well, at times I have not been sure since China started being encircled by the foreign countries.

Well, as long as China's system is right with the wisdom of the Chinese people, there is no way to strangle China. Our history will show that one can only cause damages to himself if he wants to strangle or suppress the Chinese people.

While the United States has talked about its cooperation to land on some other planet with the European side, well, China would welcome it if there is a will to carry out similar cooperation from the United States with us.

I'll stop here. Would the state councilor wish to add?

WANG: (Via interpreter) Secretary Blinken and NSA Sullivan, you mentioned that during your engagements and the visit that Mr. Secretary had just recently, the two countries you visited mentioned coercion from China. We don't know if this is a direct complaint coming from those countries that you visited, or is it just the United States' own view?

Well, I think for those relationships, it brings in China's relationship with the United States, with Japan and with Australia. I don't think we could know from all being together, because for all of those instances, they each have their own set of issues and different positions are involved. So to accuse China of coercion even before sharing the relevant views with China, is this the right act to do? Of course not.

If the United States would indiscriminately protest and speak up for those countries just because they are your allies or partners, we believe for the long term (inaudible), then it will be very difficult for international relations to develop properly. So we don't think one should be so testy as to accuse some other country of coercion. Who is coercing whom? I think history and the international community will come to their own conclusions.

But if the United States is interested in having those discussions with China, then we are ready to have those discussions with the U.S. side, but based on mutual respect so that we can increase our mutual understanding on those issues.