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Wednesday, July 20, 2022

Fireside Chat with Ambassador Qin Gang, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the U.S.

Moderator: **Edward Luce**, U.S. National Editor, *Financial Times*

Introduction: **Anja Manuel**, Executive Director, Aspen Strategy Group and Aspen Security Forum

Anja:

You have done a lot to try to get us China relations which has been in a in a complicated place back on track and have even said that that's your goal, get the relationship back on track so that we have a healthy and stable development that will benefit both countries. There's a lot going on, to say the least in the US China relationship. There were recent high level conversations between Foreign Minister Wang Yi and our Secretary of State Tony Blinken, Janet Yellen and Lou her and of course last month, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin met with his counterpart as well. So we have a lot of ground to cover, and here to help us do it is at loose real expert in Asia and columnist for The Financial Times, thank you. Thank you.

Ed:

Thank you, Anya, and thank you Aspen genuinely for this wonderful forum and it's a great pleasure ambassador to be with you.

0:54

Here today. There's a lot to get through. I should mention, though, by way of introduction, you you're a lifelong Chinese diplomat. You've held us spokesman for the spokesperson for the foreign ministry between 2005 and 10. Then ambassador to the UK, then had a protocol a very important position in the Foreign Ministry, then vice foreign minister to one year, of course, is still foreign minister as Anya mentioned, And now Ambassador to China and it's been a whole year, One year exactly, I think since you took this position, given your considerable diplomatic experience.

I hope you'll forgive me if I start off with a relatively hard question, which is the US and China, entering into a new Cold

Ambassador:

First of all, thank you for having me. It's a good pleasure to be here to share my views with you with our audience On China, on China. US relations, which, you know, our audience is very interested in. I know.

2:13

It's after lunchtime. People can easily get sleep after lunch. And I try my best to make you awaken. All right.

2:29

So, to answer your question Cold War is a tragedy.

So when people speak of Cold War, They think about estrangement division, confrontation and conflict. But your question yourself. In the case that people are worrying about history would repeat itself. Why people are worrying about Cold War it's coming back because some people have cold war mentality. Some people mistakenly taking China As a former Soviet Union as a threat.

3:32

But I want to say that as a matter of fact, China is not the former Soviet Union.

3:40

And it's coming to the party. It's not former Soviet Communist Party. the Communist Party of China, the CPC, stay true, is finding mission. That is to serve the people wholeheartedly to put people at the center.

4:04

It has successfully lifted 100 million people out of poverty over the past 40 years, accounting for 70% of the global poverty reduction. China has been developed it into the second largest world economy and the largest trading partners of more than 120 countries, including the United States.

4:40

China is providing a massive amount of public goods for the world. Internationally, China is a peace loving country.

4:53

stay committed to the path of a peaceful development. China is the only country to include peaceful development in its constitution. China has never been engaged with for expansion and the invasion. China never exports its ideology. On the country, China is working hard with other countries to build up a community of shared future for mankind by saying so back in all these facts do you believe that? China is the former Soviet Union? Chinese Communist Party is the former Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Do you think that China is a threat?

5:52

So, taking China a threat is selected just like to pick up a wrong fight?

So there'll be no winner Only losers from a new cold war.

6:09

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6:00

So there'll be no winner only losers from a new Cold War.

6:09

Fighting a new Cold War. We'll build up a new Berlin wall which will divide us it will create hostility and division.

6:24

It will bring unbearable consequences to the ward

6:31

old country want new Cold War kinda doesn't work.

6:38

So does the United States President Biden has claimed many times that the US does not seek to have a new cold war with China.

So the key is to honor the words with actions.

7:03

So we do hope that the US side will make reassurance about this strategy because you get attention on China.

7:12

So to get rid of those Cold War elements from his policies, no democracy versus authoritarianism narrative. No geopolitical confrontation. No decoupling, no supply cut. No arms race. Only by doing so. can we prevent us China relations from sliding into a new Cold War, which we all hate to see? Thank you.

Ed:

Thank you. Thank you, and we'll get into we'll get into the definitions of COBOL and also the Biden administration's policy towards China in a moment, but let me just ask about China's own diplomatic stance. Deng Xiaoping had the very famous phrase that China was biding its time hiding it's light under a bushel, and that was something Jang Jae min stuck to even who Jintao but since Xi Jinping became president in 2012. Clearly, you've moved into a new and more robust, shall we say, diplomatic interface with the world.

8:27

To put it mildly.

8:29

If I'm right in saying that the bidding time hiding light phase is over, that China is a less patient hour today. What are you impatient for? What are you seeking?

Ambassador:

Well, we are talking about China's foreign policies and and the behavior let me give the example of myself as ambassador as ambassador.

9:03

I know my responsibility and my job is to follow through on the important the mutual understanding between presidency and the President Biden to make sure that China US relations are stable, manageable and constructive.

9:34

So the ambassador should be a representative carrying the best of his country. So I and my colleagues would like to be a bridge and the bond between China and the United States. We are working very hard to reach out to people of different sectors of different places.

10:07

to tell people what is really happening in China. What is the real development the intention of China. And what is happening between China and the United States.

Right. So we want to build trust, respect, and to reduced misunderstanding and miscalculation.

10:38

We want to listen, listen to different people, different voices. so that we can have a comprehensive view about the situation right.

10:57

as a diplomat, So his job is to protect his country's interests.

And we have differences And but our differences do not justify misinformation, disinformation.

11:22

lies, and the malicious attacks. Right, facing those words and ADIZ interfering in China's domestic affairs, damaging China's interests as a diplomat. We have to stand up to say no. We have to protect our interests. This is a job of every diplomat.

11:54

I believe that diplomats of other countries would only do the same.

but doesn't mean that China change its a foreign policy; that China changed is posture. China has 5000 years of civilization.

12:19

Try China's development and rejuvenation

12:25

are underpinned by a very clear historical logic and a strong internal driving force for China's rejuvenation, Is it reversible?

12:44

So in dealing with the outside world, We have enough patients, confidence, wisdom, and the capability, although we know that, our road ahead is not a smooth one.

But the question is, do some countries in the world have patience with China's development. That's the question I would like to ask.

Ed:

Okay, just picking up on your point about non interference in the internal affairs of another country. I assume you are referring to criticisms over Zhang Jiang and Hong Kong, for example, amongst other things, but it is fair to point out that China is a signatory to the UN Charter And to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on human rights, which imply it implicitly restrain the sovereignty of a government to do what it likes, internally, there is a limit there in terms of international law, isn't it therefore legitimate to criticize what's happened in Hong Kong, and what's happening in Xinjiang?

Ambassador:

The shijiang and the Hong Kong related issues fundamentally are not about democracy, human rights and as an entity or religion.

14:31

It is about anti terrorism, anti secession is about protecting people's lives.

14:43

See safeguarding China's national sovereignty security and development interests.

Shinjang can never be allowed to be another Islamic State.

what is happening in Hong Kong?

15:16

Hong Kong cannot be better has to be decolonized and governed by people loving China loving Hong Kong

15:31

So that, you know after Hong Kong has returned to the arms of his motherland, so that the one China, two systems is working well.

So you asked me why China is a facing criticism from other Western countries.

15:58

What took a long time for me to explain the ins and outs about shijiang and Hong Kong.

In the interest of time, let me share this with you.

16:12

While I arrived in though in Denver on Sunday, I saw President Lincoln's famous line on a billboard, at the airport: A house divided cannot stand. So, president Lincoln's famous words explain

everything. Some Western countries are seeing and doing Kristjana Hong Kong And what China is doing there

16:59

We are both trying to prove that President Lincoln was correct, but from opposite angles, out of different purposes.

One thing I can be reassure you is that the House of China will stand united firm and strong.

Ed:

Okay, and I'm going to get get into Taiwan, the Taiwan issue in a moment, but it seems logical sequentially to ask you about Russia's invasion of Ukraine, because that is a direct breach of China's principle of non interference in other countries there's the inviolability and sovereignty of boundaries international boundaries. Now on February the fourth, Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin signed this treaty. Well, their statement of friendship between China and Russia with no limits. Does that imply that actually this principle of non viability of sovereignty matters less than this limit this partnership that you now have with Putin's Russia?

Ambassador:

The issue of Ukraine has historical and practical complexities. It is a long story.

18:43

China observe this issue based on merits and matter itself and the China makes his decision, independently. We advocate that national sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries must be respected.

19:10

The purpose and the principles of the United Nations Charter must be upheld. The legitimate security concerns of all countries must be taken seriously. And all efforts conducive to the peaceful settlement must be supported. So China's stance is fair and objective China doesn't stand alone. It is in a similar situation as many other developing countries, including India, South Africa, Brazil and Indonesia.

Now, the conflict is still going on. The impact is spilling over, leading to multiple prices. Political crisis, energy storage, food crisis, economic downturn, all flow of refugees. So what China is calling for is immediate ceasefire and resumption of talks. All parties

involves involved should be engaged, including between Russia and the United States and its NATO allies. Sit down. Calm down, find a way out of dilemma is on the principles of our common dating each others legitimate concerns. Only by doing so, can we achieved peace and can we restore the security in Europe which should be stable, should be comprehensive, should be balanced, effective, and sustainable. I'm puzzled that over the past more than 100 days since the crisis, people keep challenging China's principled position on sovereignty and territorial integrity without looking into the root causes for the conflict. Actually, there's a double standard when talking about sovereignty. When talking about Ukraine, there is an emphasis on sovereignty. People emphasize the principle of sovereignty on China doing damage to China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, particularly on Taiwan, on Xinjiang, and on Hong Kong. Chinese companies were punished and then sanctioned. And there are a lot of disinformation and allies around Not happy with that. And there's a misunderstanding of China Russia relations. You're mentioned the joint statement of February 4. Let me tell you this, China Russia, relationship is not an alliance to not for confrontation, not targeting an insert party.

23:29

not targeting an insert party.

23:37

Please. I suggest that you read the joint statement carefully from beginning to end, without taking any words out of context. The documents summarizes the common views and the views of China and Russia on democracy, security, development, and word order. It shows the two countries' common opposition to the cold war mentality to geopolitical confrontation.

And it shows the two countries' common support for promoting democracy, international relations for upholding the purposes and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations for practicing to multilateralism. In this sense, China's cooperation with any other countries have no limits, and forbidden areas.

If United States or any other countries want to join us, to this end we welcome them to come on board.

24:14

Ed:

Thank you for mentioning Taiwan because that was my next question. Clearly, there's been a ratcheting up of tensions in the last year or two, there's been more high level us visits to Taipei there's been more Chinese military exercises overflights etc. And the perception particularly since February 24 that actually the next great geopolitical

flashpoint is Taiwan. President Biden himself has on three occasions said the US would come to the aid of Taiwan in the event of China invading. He was then clarified by his staff, I guess amended, They said no there was no change to the Biden administration's officials strategic ambiguity over Taiwan. Do you accept that clarification?

26:18

Amb:

Well, the question of Taiwan is the most sensitive important core issue in China, US relations. China loves peace. People on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are compatriots. We will try our best for peaceful reunification, because we believe that best serve the interests of people on both sides.

We have seen tensions In recent years in the situation across the Taiwan Strait. The root cause is that the one China principle has been undermined and is under threat As you mentioned, the time when authority in Taiwan is other wanting its political agenda for Taiwan independence in a discriminatory discriminatory way.

27:52

It borrows the US support And the United States. is a hollowing out and blurring up the One China policy.

28:04

It is substantially uplifting the official links with Taiwan.

28:15

It is sending sophisticated weapons to Taiwan and even times that the US will defend Taiwan military.

28:31

So, the one title principle which is underpinned by the international documents and the three China US John community case is under threat.

28:48

one China principle is the political foundation for China, US relations, and is a bedrock for the peace and stability across Taiwan Straits, as well

So what we need to do, President Biden has said many times that the United States is still committed to the One China policy United States, that they now support Taiwan independence, and the United States doesn't want to have a conflict with China on Taiwan.

[AUDIO RECORDING CUTS OUT, picks up again at 1:33pm MST

One China, two system implies that the carrot to Taiwan. Here's how you can live within China has been removed and all that remains is a stick. Do you understand why that might be how people interpret,]

Amb:

Let me clarify what one country to assist means.

0:24

One Country Two Systems was designed for, firstly for Taiwan, you know and but it was trusted put into practice in Hong Kong One Country Two Systems, the relations between one country and the two systems is crystal clear.

0:50

That is one countries are the precondition for two systems.

0:56

If there's no one cringe country, there are two systems right?

1:03

What happened in Hong Kong over the past three years is that you know, some can some people Eight do not want long countries, they do not want Hong Kong to be a part of China.

1:23

They over emphasize the differences over stressed, the two systems. They want the one country to be denied, and even changed by the two systems.

So how can you tolerate people in Hong Kong as well advocating that mass return the colonial rule of the British Empire?

1:59

Let Hong Kong be a state of the United States.

2:05

Let Hong Kong to be at the outpost to change China.

2:14

So this wrongdoings in vendor perspective of one country two systems So what the central government is doing is to set the record straight and to correct those wrongdoings to put the Hong Kong back to order, back to laws. So that one country, two systems can work well, and Hong Kong can maintain lasting stability and prosperity. I mean, Hong Kong just returned to China for 25 years. And it's too early to say you know that Hong Kong one country two system fails, and we have confidence that to make two countries toasted and successful and is a good example. You know, for the reunification of China.

2:56

Ed

Okay, I should I mean that two, three minutes left, ask you about the economic dimension. I plan to get into that sooner.

3:31

But we have the rather bizarre situation where you China are applying to join the CP TPP which was of course created by the United States co created, but of which the US is not a member.

3:46

Aid do you think you're going to be accepted into the CP TPP and B, can you explain why America notwithstanding some recent more destination natives in the region? Do you understand why the United States is not taking major economic initiatives in the region?

Amb:

China has applied to join CP TPP and we are in talks with members of CP TPP.

4:17

This shows China's determination to deepen reform, further open up and actively participate in that regional economic integration. I don't have a crystal ball.

4:38

I have no timetable.

4:41

But I do know that China's accession will have multiple benefits to all parties concerns. For China of course, CP TPP is a very high standard, the national trade agreement so by joining CP TPP.

It will now make China more prosperous and more development at a higher standard high with higher quality but to CVP seats to cptpp members China's ascension can make the country more contributing to the areas like market access tariff rate reduction competition Digital rules so that members of the cptpp can have benefit more dividends of China's development for the word.

5:54

If China joins the CP TPP, the CP TPP will grow in remarkably, remarkably, in terms of population, in terms of the GDP combined, and in terms of the trade. So it will insert a stronger impetus into the regional and the global economy. And about America's why America is so sensitive to international trade agreements or international trade negotiations. Frankly speaking, I need to know the answer as well. But I do know that the United States is creating a different framework.

6:48

Asia Indo Pacific economic framework, but this framework is closed to certain countries. It rejects refuse to talk about common concerns in the region, such as heart rate reduction market access, and Development Corporation. So it's not open, transparent and inclusive, is really ideologically driven. And I'm worried. I'm afraid that it will create division the coupling and the supply caught in the region which is not in constant in the interest of this region for you know, development and for common prosperity

Ed:

Do you see any difference between dealing with the Trump and Biden administration's and is my suspicion that actually you prefer dealing with Trump the correct one?

Amb:

Well, China US relations haven't been out of the difficulties caused by the previous administration. And it's facing mounting challenges today. So but we have noted that the Biden administration as very serious commitments about China, US relations, you know, these words are positive, and we hope that words can be translated into deeds. The key issue you know, is, Can the US, accept the development of China? the country is a very different from the United States.

8:53

Historically, politically, and culturally. We have differences. But don't forget, we have huge common interests and shared responsibilities not only for the people that were two countries but also for the peace, security and the prosperity of the world. So, who comes first, which comes first, the differences or commonalities? So, we are at a critical juncture.

Shall we work on that ideal of zero sum game or upright paths of weaving cooperation? So the when the world is entering a new period of instability, and transformation, We have more challenges requiring the cooperation between China and the United States. So I think all of you like me can make the right choice. Cold War, political confrontation should not happen.

Ed:

That's a positive note. when Ambassador Chen, thank you very much.

10:36

20:39

19:20