

US Secretary of State Blinken in China with a bagful of demands and threats

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US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has landed in China for a three-day visit armed with a slew of demands and threats as part of the Biden administration's aggressive confrontation and military build-up against Beijing. Chief among those demands is that China halt the export of so-called dual-use items to Russia, which the US claims are helping Moscow prosecute the war against the US-NATO backed regime in Ukraine.

Having goaded Russia into invading Ukraine, the US and its European allies are desperate to reverse the deteriorating position of the Ukrainian military amid its loss of territory to Russian forces. While funnelling ever-more quantities of sophisticated arms to Ukraine, Washington is now demanding that China assist in crippling Russia's industrial capacity and thus the Russian military.

"When it comes to Russia's defence industrial base, the primary contributor in this moment to that is China," Blinken told reporters last week after a G7 meeting in Italy. "If China purports on the one hand to want good relations with Europe and other countries, it can't on the other hand be fueling what is the biggest threat to European security since the end of the Cold War," he said.

The US is not only demanding that China halt the sale of so-called dual-use items, including computer chips and machine tools. It is also threatening to cut Chinese banks facilitating such trade from the global financial system based on the US dollar. US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen warned during her visit to China earlier this month: "Any banks that facilitate significant transactions that channel military or dual-use goods to Russia's defence industrial base expose themselves to the risk of US sanctions."

Washington's demand is completely hypocritical.

The Biden administration acknowledges China has not sold weapons to Moscow, yet it is pushing through Congress a huge \$95 billion-package of military funding of which \$61 billion is to go to Ukraine and the US-NATO war against Russia. Now the US is insisting that the sale of dual-use items—a broad, undefined category to which almost anything could be added—be stopped.

A spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in Washington told the *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ): "China's right to conduct normal trade and economic exchanges with Russia and other countries in the world on the basis of equality and mutual benefit should not be interfered with or disrupted. The United States should immediately stop imposing unilateral sanctions on Chinese companies and individuals."

Blinken's remarks about the Ukraine war were also aimed at driving a wedge between China and Europe and pressuring the European powers to impose tougher sanctions on Beijing. The WSJ noted: "Washington's European allies have shown even more reticence to apply punitive measures against a major trade partner and financier, sanctioning only a fraction of the scores of [Chinese] firms put on US rosters... Germany and some other key European allies had been satisfied with that no-arms policy as enough."

A former senior US national security official told the newspaper: "Now there's an effort to adjust that in part because of the scale of Chinese support. The hope is that we get the Europeans to read China the riot act."

The funding package that passed the US House of Representatives last Saturday was aimed not only at shoring up the Ukrainian military. It will also provide \$26 billion to Israel for its genocidal war in Gaza and escalating conflict with Iran, which the US has accused of providing arms to Russia. Significantly, from

Beijing's standpoint, the legislation includes \$8 billion in military funding for Taiwan. Biden has pledged to sign the bill into law as soon as it hits his table.

Far from being separate conflicts, the legislation passed with bi-partisan support makes clear that the US regards its confrontation with China as a prelude to it becoming the third front in a war to maintain American imperialism's global hegemony. In a similar fashion to its provocative inclusion of Eastern European countries in NATO, Washington is goading China to take military action over Taiwan. Biden has ramped up ties with Taiwan and boosted arms sales to Taipei effectively undermining the One China policy under which the US de facto acknowledges that Beijing is the legitimate government of all China, including Taiwan.

Asked about US military aid to Taiwan at press conference on Wednesday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin warned that closer military ties between the US and Taiwan would "not bring about security for Taiwan" and would "only escalate tensions across the Taiwan Strait." Beijing has long warned that it would take military measures in the event that Taipei declared formal independence from China, yet US actions are actively encouraging the Taiwanese government to move in that direction.

While deliberately provoking tensions with China over Taiwan, Blinken is also slated to raise the issue of "aggressive manoeuvres" by Chinese ships in the South China Sea. Over the past decade, the US has deliberately inflamed longstanding territorial disputes in the South China Sea between China and neighbouring countries as a means of isolating Beijing and strengthening military ties in South East Asia. Biden this month hosted a summit with the leaders of Japan and the Philippines that pledged closer military collaboration directed against China.

Chinese trade with Russia is not Blinken's only target. The US is also threatening trade penalties over what it alleges to be China's "dumping" of cheap goods on the American markets, particularly electric vehicles and solar panels. Since Yellen's visit, the Biden administration is also considering increased tariffs on Chinese steel and aluminium and is carrying out an investigation into alleged Chinese subsidies in shipbuilding and other industries.

The Biden administration not only maintained the heavy trade penalties imposed on China by the Trump

administration but has ramped up efforts to hobble Chinese hi-tech industries by banning the export of the most advanced computer chips and chip-making equipment to Beijing and has prevailed on allies to do the same.

At a briefing on Tuesday, a Chinese foreign ministry official hit back at US claims of Chinese overcapacity and dumping as "outright economic coercion and bullying," adding: "Behind it is the evil intention of curbing and suppressing China's industrial development, aiming to seek a more favourable competitive position and market advantage for the country."

In an utterly cynical move, Blinken is also preparing to trot out the litany of "human rights" allegations against China, including the outright lie that Beijing is engaged in "genocide" against Muslim Uyghurs in western Xinjiang province. He does so even as the US arms, bankrolls and politically defends the fascist Israeli regime as it wages a genocidal war in Gaza that has already claimed more than 34,000 Palestinian lives, a majority women and children, and has plunged the entire population into hunger and destitution.

Against this backdrop, suggestions by the Biden administration and the American media that Blinken is going to China to improve relations are absurd. He has gone to bully Beijing into making further concessions even as US imperialism builds up its military forces and strengthen its military alliances in the Indo-Pacific in preparation for war.



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