

Secretary Blinken Trip to China - Background & Talking Points Memo

Secretary Anthony Blinken's trip to China to meet with Senior Officials is an important step to opening communications channels with China and to manage competition and relations responsibly.

Background:

Secretary of State Anthony Blinken will travel to Beijing on June 16 for a two-day visit from June 18-19. It has been 5 years since a Secretary of State has traveled to China. He will have a series with meetings with senior PRC officials, but the exact schedule and who he will be meeting remains to be confirmed.

He has articulated 3 goals for the trip:

1. Establish communication channels that are open and empowered.
2. Stand up and speak out for U.S. values and interests; and
3. Explore potential cooperation on transnational challenges when it is in our interest – in areas such as climate and global macroeconomic stability, increase exchanges between the American and Chinese peoples.

Kurt Campbell has said noted: "intense competition requires intense diplomacy" and David Kritenbrink has cautioned: "objective is to focus on those topline goals, not necessarily to produce a long list of deliverables." Read A/S Kritenbrink and Kurt Campbell's full briefing [here](#).

Blinken initially planned to travel to Beijing early February 2023 as a follow-on to an agreement to resume discussions made by President Biden and President Xi in November 2022, but that meeting was postponed due to the revelation of the Chinese balloon over the United States.

Messaging Guidance:

- Manage expectations about the trip, one trip or meeting is not going to solve the core challenges between the United States and China, but they are a first step in creating opportunities to address these issues and this will take time and effort.
- Emphasize that diplomatic talks are a good idea – as Secretary Albright used to say: "diplomatic talks are not a gift, they are the way you talk to people you disagree with."
 - o Clear communication is critical to mitigating against misperceptions and misinterpretation of intent and actions.
 - o "There is no substitute for in-person meetings"
- It is because we are secure and confident that we should talk to China and manage our relationship responsibly.
- The world—especially our allies and partners—is watching this trip closely and worried about a confrontation between the U.S. and China. A [recent poll](#) of residents in South Korea, the Philippines and Singapore by the Eurasia Group Foundation found 90% of people are worried about a geopolitical confrontation between the U.S. and China.

Talking Points:

- “Diplomatic talks are not a gift, they are the way you talk to people you disagree with.”
- Letting the problems in the U.S.-China relations fester is not a strategy for success, the U.S. is taking proactive steps—backed by significant action taken by both the White House and Congress to bolster our resilience and economy through CHIPS, IRA, and the Infrastructure bill—to address concerns before they snowball into bigger more intractable problems
- Talking with the Chinese should signal how important we think it is to push back against Chinese behavior and gives the United States the advantage to be clear about its own policies and expectations from China.
- There has never been a problem that has been solved through silent treatment, which is childish and ineffective – the United States is demonstrating leadership, resolve, and strength backed by sharpened economic tools and global partnerships.
- Waiting until our relationship is on life support is too late to prevent disastrous consequences for the American people and the international community.
- Deterring and engaging China does not have to be an either-or approach, we must be able to do both in order to have a clear, effective, and comprehensive approach to this relationship.
- Now is not the time to be reactive. We can't wait for the next balloon or near-collision in the Taiwan Strait to decide how we want this relationship to look. There needs to be consistent communication between the two most powerful countries in the world.
- We also need to work with China to deal with existential challenges like climate change and nuclear risk. To even get to that point, we have to be able to pick up the phone and talk to each other.

Items to amplify:

- Rep. Andy Kim on NPR: <https://twitter.com/FP4America/status/1669748725235822599>
- Rep. Gregory Meeks: <https://twitter.com/HouseForeign/status/1669035849030197249>
- Ryan Hass: https://twitter.com/ryan_hass/status/1669422996858064904

FYSA - What are skeptics saying:

- **Senator Risch:** “...the Chinese have got everything they want just by getting Blinken to go over there” ([WSJ](#))
- **Rep. Gallagher:** “This is the trap of zombie engagement. It almost always places the burden of “improving” relations on the U.S. rather than demanding that Beijing adjust its malign behavior. We give up the farm simply to get to the negotiating table. Once we’re there, we’re beholden to an entirely new process of concessions because of the pressure to present “deliverables.” While we build guardrails for ourselves, the Communist Party builds fast lanes to achieve its long-term objectives. “
 - o “siren song of engagement invariably leads to appeasement in the face of foreign aggression” ([WSJ](#))
- **Senator Cotton:** We just learned that China is building a base in Cuba to spy on the U.S., yet @SecBlinken is going to China to find “areas of potential cooperation” with the Chinese. This administration needs to confront the Chinese, not chase them for meetings. ([Twitter](#))

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