

Wang Yi: Mobilizing Cooperation For Global Development

by Marcia Merry Baker

March 12—In the traditional press briefing on the sidelines of the annual Two Sessions events (the National People’s Congress, and the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference), China’s State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wang Yi, spoke and answered questions for 100 minutes on March 7.

Minister Wang opened with very brief comments that “countries need solidarity, not division, dialogue, not confrontation,” stressing multilateralism in the face of the challenges of the current international situation. There followed 25 questions from Chinese and major media from all continents, to which he responded by making clear China’s view of current crises, including Ukraine, the widespread use of sanctions, and other fronts of confrontation.

He then reviewed, with interesting details, the world map of infrastructure projects and related updates, furthering the idea of the Global Development Initiative (GDI), President Xi Jinping’s proposal to steer global growth in a balanced, coordinated, and inclusive way in the face of the severe shocks of COVID-19.

We summarize some of Minister Wang’s major points below. The full transcript is available [here](#).

On the conflict in Ukraine:

[The conflict in Ukraine] has become what it is for a variety of complex reasons.... China is prepared to continue to play a constructive role to facilitate dialogue ... and work alongside the international community when needed to carry out necessary mediation.... There must be a balanced, effective and sustainable European security architecture. [The Red Cross of China will be sending a] tranche of emergency supplies as soon as possible.

On confrontationism and forming blocs:

Some major country, trying to hold on to its hegemony, has resurrected Cold War mentality,



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Wang Yi, State Councilor and Foreign Minister of China.

and stoked bloc confrontation. [Concerning the Indo-Pacific:] The U.S. professes a desire to advance regional cooperation, but in reality, it is stoking geopolitical rivalry.... From strengthening the Five Eyes, to peddling the Quad, from piecing together AUKUS to tightening bilateral military alliances, the U.S. is staging a “five-four-three-two” formation in the Asia-Pacific....

The real goal of the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy is to establish an Indo-Pacific version of NATO. It seeks to maintain the U.S.-led system of hegemony, undermine the ASEAN-centered regional cooperation architecture, and compromise the overall and long-term interests of countries in the region. The perverse actions run counter to the common aspiration of the region for peace, development, cooperation and win-win outcomes. They are doomed to fail.

Wang was very stern about Taiwan, saying that the U.S. states that it—

does not support “Taiwan independence,” and that it is not looking for conflict or confrontation with China. Regrettably, however, these statements are just verbal assurances and have yet to be put into practice.

When the Bloomberg reporter asked for a comment on the “similarities” between Ukraine and Taiwan, and on conflict in the Taiwan Strait, Wang answered,

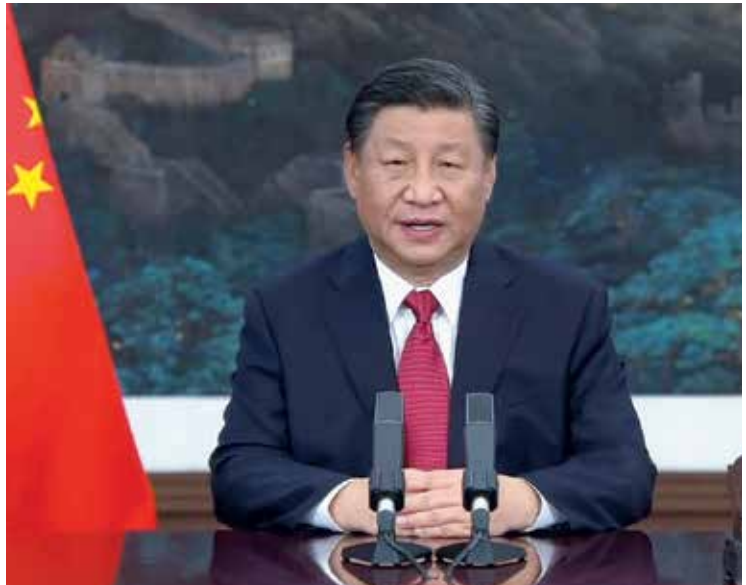
Let me first make clear that the Taiwan question and the Ukraine issue are different in nature and are not comparable at all.

The background to China’s proposal for a Global Development Initiative is that—

COVID-19 has had a serious impact on the development process. Developing countries, in particular, are taking the brunt. It is against this backdrop that President Xi Jinping proposed the GDI at the UN [in September 2021], calling on all countries to focus on development, pool their efforts, and meet challenges together.

The primary goal of the GDI is to implement the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Wang reported that,

In January, representatives from over 100 coun-



UN

Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, proposes the Global Development Initiative at the UN General Assembly in New York City, Sept. 21, 2021.

tries and more than 20 international organizations attended the launch of the Group of Friends of the GDI at the UN headquarters in New York, building greater international consensus on implementing the GDI.

On the Belt and Road Initiative:

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is moving ahead. Reviewing its achievements, Wang reported on many specifics, and said that China’s commitment is—

to make the BRI a “belt of development” to the benefit of the world, and a “road to happiness” for people of all countries.... The physical connectivity of infrastructure made solid progress. Major projects such as the China-Laos railway and the new Haifa port in Israel were completed. The construction and operation of projects in relation to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the Piraeus port, the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway and the Budapest-Belgrade railway ad-



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Box girders are emplaced in the construction of an overpass for Indonesia's 142 km Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway. This Belt & Road project was 79% complete as of Nov. 2021.

vanced steadily. The China-Europe Railway Express reached new records in the number of freight services and the amount of cargo transportation, providing a strong boost to economic recovery in relevant countries.

Overall, Wang said that the BRI enlisted 10 more nations in 2021, and now has 180 collaborating countries.

On the coming year:

The coming year has major meetings in Asia to further development. Wang reported that,

In the course of this year, China, Thailand and Indonesia will host the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) Summit, APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, and G20 Summit respectively. Asia's time has come in global governance. In the race of global governance, we look forward to seeing EMDCs (emerging markets and development countries) turning from "followers" to "forerunners" and even "pace-setters." Together, we can play a more active role, speak with a bigger voice, help make the international order more just and equitable, and promote more open, inclusive, balanced and win-win globalization for all.

With ASEAN, China plans cooperation in new areas, including the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor, under the BRI. Wang took special note of China's relations with Russia, as—

close neighbors and strategic partners. Our relationship is one of the most important bilateral relations in the world. Our cooperation not only advances the interests of both peoples, but also contributes to peace, stability and development in the world.

On projects and commitments:

Wang reviewed China's many projects and commitments in many nations, from the South Pacific Islands, to Central Asia, Africa, and the Americas, including joint work to combat COVID-19. For example, he said of Indonesia that,

China will deepen cooperation with Indonesia on a complete vaccine production chain to help create a vaccine production hub, and jointly build for the region a health shield against COVID-19. China will work for the early completion and operation of the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway to further boost Indonesia's post-COVID development and the mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries.



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The high-speed 422 km China-Laos Railway, connecting Kunming and Vientiane, opened Dec. 26, 2021. There are plans to extend the line through Thailand and Malaysia to Singapore.

On the Afghanistan emergency:

Wang addressed the Afghanistan emergency bluntly:

The U.S. walked away irresponsibly from Afghanistan, leaving the Afghan people in a serious humanitarian crisis, and creating enormous security challenges to regional stability.... The immediate priorities are to race against time to speed up the provision of humanitarian aid, and to immediately lift the freeze on Afghanistan's assets in the U.S. and various unilateral sanctions, to unconditionally return assets that belong to the Afghan people. [China is] preparing for holding the third Foreign Ministers' Meeting among the Neighboring Countries of Afghanistan, so as to harness and contribute our strengths as neighbors for the durable stability and security of Afghanistan.