

US-China relations

China warns Antony Blinken US must choose between 'co-operation or confrontation'

Secretary of state expected to demand Beijing cease support for Russia's war in Ukraine



US secretary of state Antony Blinken is expected to reiterate a message on Ukraine sent by Treasury secretary Janet Yellen on her trip to China earlier this month © Mark Schiefelbein/Reuters

Joe Leahy in Beijing and **Demetri Sevastopulo** in Washington YESTERDAY

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China has warned the US that Washington and Beijing must choose between “confrontation or co-operation” as secretary of state Antony Blinken began an official visit during which he is expected to deliver an ultimatum over the war in Ukraine.

Blinken met the powerful Shanghai Communist party boss Chen Jining on Thursday, ahead of talks with China’s central leadership including foreign minister Wang Yi in Beijing over the next two days.

“Whether China and the US choose co-operation or confrontation, it affects the wellbeing of both peoples, of nations and also the future of humanity,” said Chen.

Tensions are running high over US accusations that China is supporting Russia’s military industrial machine in Ukraine, providing Moscow with materials including semiconductors, sophisticated machine tools and [cruise missile engines](#).

Blinken is expected to warn that the [US will take punitive steps](#) unless China stops

sending dual-use weapons-related technology to Russia, reinforcing a similar message from US Treasury secretary Janet Yellen during a visit to China this month.

During that trip, [Yellen also indicated](#) that Washington was scrutinising the role of Chinese financial institutions in the Russia trade.

In his remarks before the closed door meeting with Chen, Blinken did not mention Ukraine, saying only: “We have an obligation . . . to manage the relationship between our two countries responsibly.”

The Blinken visit comes as the US and China have sought a detente in their strained [relations](#), with President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping meeting in San Francisco last year and [holding a phone call](#) this month.

It was not clear whether Blinken would see Xi, whom the US secretary of state last met [in Beijing in June](#) last year.

Blinken’s trip also comes as the US Congress this week approved a bill to ban short-form video app TikTok [if its Chinese owner ByteDance does not sell it](#) within 270 days.

Ahead of the visit, China’s foreign ministry published a briefing paper in the official news agency Xinhua laying out its expectations on issues such as Taiwan, technology and the South China Sea.

It highlighted some positive developments in the relationship, such as China’s support for efforts to [crackdown on fentanyl exports](#) to the US.

But it accused the US of seeking to curb China’s development of high-tech industries with export controls and complaints that Beijing was [encouraging industrial overcapacity](#) to prop up economic growth. This was “a false narrative” whose “evil intention” was to curb China’s industrial development, it said.

The ministry also lashed back at US accusations on Ukraine, saying “China is not the creator or party to the Ukraine crisis”, while also charging the US with interfering in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in the contested South China Sea, which Beijing claims almost in its entirety.

The Biden administration has expressed particular concern that [clashes in recent weeks](#) between Chinese vessels and the Philippine navy in the South China Sea could trigger its mutual defence treaty with Manila.

Analysts said the increased US-China dialogue in recent months reflected an interest from both sides in stabilising relations before the US presidential election campaign gets into full swing this year.

China needs the relationship to be on a more stable footing to support its economic recovery, while the Biden administration wants to show it can responsibly manage ties while still being seen to be firm with Beijing, said Zhao Minghao, professor and deputy director of the Center for American Studies at Fudan University.

“Both sides have the willingness to maintain the openness of communication but so far, I think the practical results are still limited,” said Zhao.

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