

Answer to Question

Blinken's Visit to China

(Translated)

Question:

CGTN (Chinese Global Television Network) published on 30/6/2023: (The Chinese Foreign Ministry criticized the United States for making irresponsible statements about bilateral relations. US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken said in an interview earlier that Washington will continue to defend its own interests, and will continue in taking actions and making statements that China does not like, regardless of the differences between the two sides, and the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs objected to these statements.) Note that Al-Arabiya had published a week before that on 23/6/2023: (One of the expectations from Blinken's visit is that US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen will soon make an official visit to China, and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo and John Kerry, Biden's climate envoy, may also visit... President Xi is also likely to visit San Francisco in November to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting, where he may meet with Biden). It was expected that the relations between China and the United States, after Blinken's visit to China on the 18-19 of the month of June 2023, would be to calm relations, not for the situation to return to tension again! Was Blinken's visit to China unproductive, or was it just a formality? I apologise for the length of the question. Jazak Allah Khair.

Answer:

For a clear answer, let's review the following:

First: The background to the situation regarding Blinken's visit to China:

1- The relations' situation between America and China are somewhat tense. At least since the trade war launched by former US President Donald Trump, the US government has placed various restrictions on China's trade and products, imposed high tariffs on some Chinese goods, and imposed sanctions on Chinese companies such as Huawei and its chiefs. And this policy was not revoked by the Biden government. The Chinese government has responded with a similar policy. This alone is sufficient to create tension in the relations between the two countries.

2- The Chinese have long worked to become independent in the field of technology under the Made in China 2025 plan, and more than that, the way the Americans dealt with Huawei and other Chinese companies created tension that made China plan to build its own silicon chips. American analysts expect that China will achieve, within five to seven years, independence in the chip industry... All of this generates competition closer to a clash between the two countries.

3- On the military and security level, last February, a suspected Chinese spy balloon was flown into American airspace, and although China denied this, this matter caused the cancellation of Blinken's visit to Beijing, which was planned to take place last February. Then, there were maneuvers by Chinese warships in the Taiwan Strait. America responded by maneuvering the American destroyer in the Taiwan Strait last month, considering the South China Sea as free international waters. In the last month, a Chinese warplane approached American planes, then the atmosphere between the two countries became tense... Thus, Blinken's visit did not take place at the time.

4- America has concluded multiple military and security agreements to harass China, and the Biden administration has taken a series of policies in these directions, including initiatives aimed at confronting China militarily, especially the AUKUS agreement with Australia and the United Kingdom, and the quadruple security dialogue with Australia, India and Japan. As well as attempts

to expand the role of NATO in Asia, America concluded a treaty with the Philippines to use five additional military bases to become nine bases in the Philippines, and others.

Second: As for Blinken's visit to China, it was not a formality, but rather had goals:

1- An attempt to reduce the tension resulting from the previous matters. The US State Department issued a statement stating that the aim of this visit is to reopen the channel of communication between the two countries to find understanding between them, and a channel of communication between the military, and to open the way for more and strengthening cooperation between the two countries... It is also clear from the statement, Blinken's visit achieved goals, but it did not succeed in achieving communication between the military.

2- Asharq Al-Awsat Newspaper published on June 19, 2023: (Despite the positive language used by the Chinese leader, expressing his satisfaction after a 35-minute meeting with Blinken, **the latter made it clear that Beijing refused to reopen military channels with Washington, knowing that this issue is a priority for the administration of President Joe Biden, and it was one of the main objectives of this visit.** However, the meeting that took place in the Great Hall of the People was a sign that the two countries do not want their relations to reach outright hostility, and that they realize that their rivalry and diplomatic efforts carry huge risks).

3- The newspaper added, [After two days of meetings with senior Chinese officials, Blinken said that the United States set specific goals for the trip and achieved them, pointing out **that he raised the issue of military contacts "repeatedly." He added, "It is absolutely necessary that we have these types of contacts (...) This is something we will continue to work on,"** in an effort that began in 2021 when China rejected more than a dozen requests from the Pentagon for high-level dialogues with the Chinese side. However, Blinken described his previous discussions with senior Chinese officials as "candid and constructive" (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat Newspaper, 19/6/2023)].

4- **Thus, one of the main unresolved issues was the restoration of military contacts between the United States and China. Communications between senior military officials between the two countries remain frozen, and two recent incidents have raised fears that the strained relationship could spiral into conflict. China recently refused a meeting between US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Chinese Defense Minister Li Shangfu in Singapore...** Blinken said that although he raised the need for such channels "repeatedly" in his meetings, there was "no immediate progress". "At the moment, China has not agreed to go ahead with it. I think that is an issue that we have to continue to work on," he added. He said, "It is very important that we restore those channels" (CNN, 19/6/2023)

5- There is no doubt that Blinken's visit made some progress. But as Blinken said, the progress hasn't been easy. ["The relationship was in a period of instability, and both sides recognized the need to work on stabilizing it," Blinken said before leaving China. He added: "But progress is difficult. It takes time. It is not the product of one visit, or one trip, or one conversation. My hope and expectation is: We will have better communications, better engagement in the future." He added, "US officials have been playing down the possibility of a major breakthrough, but they hope Blinken's visit will pave the way for more bilateral meetings, including possible trips by Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo. "It was hoped that this would pave the way for a summit between Xi Jinping and Biden later this year." (Reuters, 20/6/2023)].

6- As for the issue of the Ukraine war, Al-Jazeera Net published: [Blinken welcomed China's proposals for a lasting peace in Ukraine, and said that China confirmed that it did not provide any support to Russia in its war on Ukraine, noting, however, his fear "about the involvement of Chinese companies in that." (Al-Jazeera Net, 19/6/2023)]. Blinken said: [China has assured the United States and other countries that it will not provide lethal aid to Russia and "we haven't seen

any evidence to the contrary," although he noted that China's reassurances are in line with repeated statements made in recent weeks. (CNN IN, 19/6/2023)].

7- On the issue of Taiwan, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat Newspaper published that the Chinese minister ["stressed once again his country's position on the Taiwan file, and regarding what Beijing considers a continuous rapprochement in recent years between Washington and the Taiwanese authorities emanating from a party that supports the independence of this island." Chen Gang said, according to what was reported by his ministry: "The Taiwan issue is at the core of China's core interests, the most important issue in Sino-American relations and the greatest danger. "He stressed that "China urges the United States to respect the One-China principle"; that is, not to establish official relations with Taiwan, "and to respect its commitment not to support Taiwanese separatists". For his part, the Chinese chief foreign affairs official, Wang Yi, assured the US Secretary of State that his country would not make "any concessions" on Taiwan." (Middle East, 19/6/2023)].

For his part, Blinken said [His country does not support the independence of Taiwan, and expects a peaceful solution to the issue, indicating that their agreement with China "is based on pursuing a peaceful solution regarding any disputes related to Taiwan, and we support one China." (Al-Jazeera Net, 19/6/2023)]. BBC website reported Blinken's statement that ["there is growing concern about China's "provocative actions" in the Taiwan Strait, but reiterates that the US does not support Taiwan independence. He says that if there is a crisis over Taiwan, it will probably "lead to an economic crisis that could affect the whole world". He explained that 50% of commercial container traffic passes through the Taiwan Strait every day. And 70% of semiconductor exports are made in Taiwan. (BBC, 19/6/2023)].

Third: From all of this, the following is evident:

1- There is no change in the American position towards Taiwan... The United States has not recognized Taiwan's independence (noting that there are about 15 countries that officially recognize Taiwan's independence, including the Vatican). Although the United States of America did not decide to officially recognize the independence of Taiwan, it treats Taiwan as an independent country, as evidenced by the fact that there is a US office in Taipei that functions as an American embassy, and America has concluded defense agreements with Taiwan and provides it with types of advanced weapons, and other assistance. America declares to defend Taiwan in the event of a military attack from China, and Biden confirmed this in May of last year. US President Joe Biden warned that "China is playing with fire in the Taiwan issue" and pledged to intervene militarily to protect the island if it was attacked. (BBC, 23/5/2022).

2- This visit and its "results" are not sufficient to calm the atmosphere between the two countries, but it may be a temporary opening to the door to calm between them and a prelude to other visits... As stated in the question, one of the expectations from Blinken's visit (that US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen carries out an official visit to China soon. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, as well as John Kerry (Biden's climate envoy), may also go on visits, given that both are responsible for issues that bind China and the United States in common interests to cooperate. It is also possible that President Xi will visit San Francisco in November to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting, where he may meet with Biden.) But that does not mean that the door of tension between the two countries has been closed and a new door of permanent truce has been opened between the two countries. This is unlikely because their interests are different... America's allies around China such as Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and then the issue of Taiwan... All of this will prevent the door of tension from closing, but will remain ajar to open again according to the interests of the two countries.

3- **But one of the important goals of this visit, which was not achieved, is that America wanted to open a channel of communication between the Chinese and American military, for purposes akin to espionage! As if China realized that, it rejected these channels**

categorically, and this is what angered Blinken, even if he did not show it explicitly, but he was clear in his words and statements, as we explained above, and I will recall them again:

* (Despite the positive language used by the Chinese leader, expressing his satisfaction after a 35-minute meeting with Blinken, the latter made it clear that Beijing refused to reopen military channels with Washington, noting that this issue is a priority for the administration of President Joe Biden, and it was one of the main objectives of the visit).

* (After two days of meetings with senior Chinese officials, Blinken said that the United States had set and achieved specific goals for the trip, noting that he had raised the issue of military contacts "repeatedly." He added, "It is absolutely necessary that we have these types of contacts (...) This is something we will continue to work on").

* (Two recent incidents have raised concerns that the strained relationship could spiral into conflict. China recently rejected a meeting between US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Chinese Defense Minister Li Shangfu in Singapore...Blinken said that although he raised the need for such channels "in a significant way repeatedly" in his meetings, but "there was no immediate progress."

"At the moment, China has not agreed to go ahead with it. I think that is an issue that we have to continue to work on," he added. "It is very important that we restore those channels," he said.

4- **Perhaps these positions from China remained stuck in Blinken's mind because he was unable to complete the military contacts, so his last statements were mentioned in the question... as well as those reported by Saba website on 29/6/2023:** (The new Chinese news agency Xinhua quoted the spokeswoman of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Mao Ning, in response to the statements of US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, saying: "It is no secret that there are differences between the United States and China." She added: "What the United States said and did violates the basic rules governing international relations" ... stressing her country's opposition to this matter...). Allah Al Qawwi Al Aziz is Truthful: ﴿وَكَذَلِكَ نُؤَلِّي بَعْضَ الظَّالِمِينَ بَعْضًا بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ﴾ **“And thus will We make some of the wrongdoers allies of others for what they used to earn”** [Al-An'am: 129]. ﴿وَالْكَافِرُونَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ﴾ **“And the disbelievers - they are the wrongdoers”** [Al-Baqarah: 254].

15 Dhul Hijjah 1444 AH

3/7/2023 CE