



European Union
Delegation to Singapore

MEDIA REPORT

HR/VP Josep Borrell in Singapore

Shangri-La Dialogue

3-5th June 2023



From the 3rd until the 5th of June, the HR/VP Josep Borrell travelled to Singapore where he participated in the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue.

The HR/VP joined defence ministers, military leaders and senior officials, business leaders and security experts from all over the world to discuss common security challenges. On June 3rd, he delivered a speech during the third plenary session 'Resolving Regional Tensions'.

During his visit, the HR/VP met Acting Prime Minister of Singapore Lawrence Wong, Minister of Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen and Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan. On the agenda was the further strengthening of the EU-Singapore partnership, EU-ASEAN relations as well as a range of regional and international security issues, both in Europe and in Asia.

In the margins of the Dialogue, Borrell also had bilateral meetings with his Asian counterparts, to discuss regional and bilateral issues.





"It was good to hear Singapore's perspective and discuss how EU and Singapore are true partners for all the issues that matter." HR/VP said.

On June 4th, HR/VP Borrell held a discussion with China's Minister of Defence Li Shangfu on common strategic concerns, including Russia's war against Ukraine, Taiwan and the South China Sea.

"Looking forward to continue to develop EU-China relations based on trust and respect of international law." HR/VP tweeted.



HR/VP Borrell also held a meeting with South Korea Defence Minister, Lee Jong-sup.

"Shared alarm at continued DPRK provocations. I explained Ukraine's needs for ammunition. We are working together to build a new security and defence partnership, following up on our successful summit". HR/VP tweeted.



Interview Transcript

Q: Short of an unconditional Russian withdrawal or a Ukrainian military victory, does the European Union have a peace plan for Ukraine that would be acceptable to both sides?

A: Look, everybody wants peace. Us too. And the ones who want peace the most are the Ukrainians. But what does peace mean? Peace is something more than “not war”. We should not confuse the terms. If I want to stop the war, I know how to do it very quickly, in one week. I stop supporting Ukraine, stop sending arms to Ukraine and the war will stop because Ukraine will have to surrender. Would that mean peace? No. Peace is something more. Peace means to recognise the right of Ukraine to exist, to respect international borders, to arrange for war reparations and accountability from Russia. I understand at the moment, it's not very propitious for that because Russia wants to continue attacking Ukraine. So, yes, of course we want peace, but unhappily, we have to face a situation where the war will continue.

Q: Most countries in the world do not participate in the sanctions on Russia. A lot of the Global South has not even condemned Russia's invasion. Is this a problem? How do you explain it?

A: Altogether 146 countries have condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine. That's an important share of the world community. So, some, but not many, have not condemned the invasion. But what is true, and the question that I ask myself, is why the indignation that we feel in Europe against this invasion is not shared in the same way by several countries. Some countries condemn Russia, but they don't follow up with sanctions. And they show some reluctance in making the distinction between the aggressor and the victim. Why is this? There are several reasons. For example, in Africa, there is a feeling of anti-colonialism. Some countries also feel that since Russia supported them during their fight for independence or against apartheid, they cannot go against it. In Latin America, there are still strong anti-imperialist sentiments and there is a feeling that things are not black and white – that Nato expansion was part of the problem.

I understand these considerations, but one thing is clear: there was no reason for Russia to attack Ukraine. There were no Nato troops in Ukraine and no negotiations for Ukraine to become a member of Nato. And it is not Nato that is trying to expand: it is that countries want to enter Nato. For example, Sweden and Finland have been neutral for years, but now, suddenly, they want to join Nato. Why? Because of Russia's behaviour. Because people perceive that they are being threatened, and the best guarantee against this threat is to become members of Nato.

Q: How do you respond to the view that while rich countries are readily willing to fund Ukraine in the war and to provide generous support for their own people in the pandemic, they claim they don't have enough money to support debt relief, climate finance or even pandemic support for developing countries?

A: Perception is one thing, but let us look at the facts. The developed world promised US\$100 billion (S\$135 billion) to countries to help fight climate change. Europe has done its part. We have pledged US\$36 billion.

Second, not a single euro of our resources that support other countries has been diverted to Ukraine. We have continued providing the same level of support for other countries. Third, who is the biggest aid donor to developing countries? Who has been the biggest exporter and donor of vaccines? Europe. Yes, certainly, we could do more. But we are doing more than anyone else. I can understand people saying that we haven't treated equally Ukrainian refugees and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa. Yes, but we must keep things in perspective.

Q: Are the sanctions against Russia working?

A: Actually, the word "sanctions" does not exist in any European treaties. The phrase used is "restrictive measures". We restrict some actions, like buying Russian gas and selling Russia the electronics it needs to produce arms. That's the least we could have done. We say: "You are attacking Ukraine, so we don't want to buy your oil and gas because with that money you pay for the war. You are producing arms, so we won't sell you the electronics that you need to do that. I don't want to give you the spare parts you need for your civilian planes." Seventy-five per cent of Russia's civilian air fleet cannot fly because there are no spare parts. Ninety per cent of Russia's production of cars has stopped. But there is a big difference between our restrictive measures and those taken by the United States. Our measures are not extraterritorial. We cannot ask an Indonesian company to conform to our laws. The Americans can – everybody must comply with their sanctions. We consider that to be against international law. We don't believe in imposing our laws on third countries. So, we cannot prevent Indian companies from buying Russian oil – and they are doing it.

Q: What is your response to that?

A: It's perfectly normal. If nobody was buying Russian oil, there would be a scarcity of oil in the world, the price of oil would jump, and we would be paying much more. So we don't care if India is buying Russian oil, as long as total Russian oil revenues go down. But a different thing is circumvention.

So, for example, I don't sell electronics to Russia, but maybe I sell electronics to a third country which then resells it to Russia. This is something that has to be avoided, and we are taking measures to ensure this. We won't sell banned items to countries that are buying from us to resell to Russia.

Q: How has the Russia-Ukraine war changed the EU's attitude to defence policy, and what is the EU doing in this area?

A: The war has been a wake-up call. In Europe, we got used to peace, after many years of war in the past. We thought that war was something that happened only far away from our borders, and didn't feel that we could be in danger. That's why we reduced our military spending. But suddenly, the war came, and it came within a few kilometres of our cities. That has reminded us that the world is dangerous. So, we have to be prepared to face adversaries who want to wage war on us. We don't want to wage war, but we have to be prepared if others want to do that to us. That's why today we are increasing our military spending, which is now 30 per cent higher than in 2013. But we have to do more than just increase military expenditure. We have to do it in a coordinated manner, because we have 27 different armies.

Q: On China, the rhetoric from the EU and the Group of Seven has changed from decoupling to derisking? What is the difference in practice?

A: Decoupling means we are not going to engage economically with China. Every day, our trade with China is around US\$2.7 billion. Every day! So, decoupling? Forget about it. If we tried to do that, we would produce a worldwide crisis. Derisking is different, it's about avoiding risk. We have to avoid excessive dependencies. When Covid-19 came, we discovered that in Europe, we don't produce a single gram of paracetamol. All paracetamol was produced in India or China. And in the pandemic, this became a problem. So we have to reduce such excessive dependencies. What are they? This is a question that has to be analysed and corrective policies need to be implemented. Derisking cannot be a slogan. It has to translate into policies.

We have to also be mindful of the border between derisking and decoupling. Where does derisking end and decoupling begin? That is not clear. So we have to be careful and practical to avoid excessive dependencies, but not to cut economic links.

Q: Some countries, including Singapore, are concerned that derisking can have unintended consequences. Would you be willing to engage with other countries to take on board their concerns?

A: Certainly, certainly. Countries are right to be concerned. Derisking sounds good and logical, but we have to be careful to define what are the risks, what additional risks are created by derisking and what are the collateral effects of our policies. If there is something for which Europe can be blamed, it's that maybe we don't take enough into consideration the collateral impact of some of our policies. For example, I am very much engaged with our Asean partners on the effects of our deforestation policies. When we say stop deforestation, we have to take into account how that affects other people and countries. Palm oil is one example, which has been at the centre of a lot of controversy.

Q: What are the differences in perceptions of China between the EU and the US?

A: I'm very much in favour of Europe having its own policies. We will always be closer to Washington than to Beijing, because we share the same political and economic system. But we don't always have the same interests. That's why, in some areas, we don't share the same approaches. Perceptions also vary by country. The relations with China are not the same in Germany as they are in Spain. In the same way, the perception of Russia as a threat is not the same in Lithuania as in Lisbon. Geography, history and economics – they all matter.

Q: Former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger allegedly asked: "When I want to call Europe, who do I call?" What would be your answer?

A: Although that phrase is attributed to Mr Kissinger, he says he never said that. But it's an interesting question.

You know, the European Union is a complex institution. It's a club, not a state. So, there is no head of state, no minister of defence, no collective army. It's a club of states that has decided to share some competencies and manage some things in common – for example, the currency, and open borders. It's natural that the complexity of European institutions is not well understood by the rest of the world. How many people understand the difference between the Council of the EU and the European Council?

So who do you call? It depends on whom you want to talk to, and for what. If you want to talk about trade, there is a commissioner for trade. There is a president of the European Commission. If you want to talk about foreign policy, then you have to talk either with me, or with the president of the European Council, Mr Charles Michel, because foreign policy is not made community-wide. Each member state has its own foreign policy.

Q: How do you achieve policy coherence amid all this diversity?

A: With a lot of patience.



HR/VP's Interview with Channel NewsAsia (CNA), Singapore

On Sunday, June 4th 2023, Asia's leading multinational news channel, CNA, ran an exclusive interview with HR/VP.

Link: [HR/VP Interview with CNA](#)

The full interview airs early July.

World

China can play role in ending Ukraine war as it has 'a lot of influence' on Russia: EU's top diplomat



Article Transcript

Beijing has a role to play in ending the Ukraine war due to its significant influence on Moscow, the European Union's (EU) top diplomat said on Sunday (June 4).

The EU's High Representative for Foreign Policy and Security Josep Borrell met with China's defence minister Li Shangfu on the final day of the Shangri-La Dialogue, in a surprise high-level bilateral meeting between both delegations.

It was the first time the two met face-to-face, after General Li took over as China's Minister of National Defence two months ago.

"China has a lot of influence on Russia. If someone can tell (Russian President) Putin 'You made a big mistake', if someone can say that with credibility to Putin... it's certainly China, not me," Mr Borrell told CNA a few hours after the meeting.

Held in Singapore annually, the Shangri-La Dialogue is Asia's biggest security summit where the world's defence ministers gather to exchange views, in both public and closed-door sessions.

This year's edition was marked by General Li's refusal to meet with his American counterpart, US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin.

The Chinese delegation said the rejection of the invitation from the Americans was due to Washington's unfair sanctioning of General Li in 2018, in connection with China's purchase of Russian military equipment at the time.

Mr Borrell described his meeting with General Li as "constructive" and said the two sides discussed the Ukraine and Taiwan issues.

China has been trying to boost its reputation as a global peacemaker.

Earlier this month, China's Special Envoy for Eurasian Affairs Li Hui, also its former ambassador to Russia, visited the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv to discuss resolving the conflict, despite stopping short of condemning Russia's invasion.

However, Mr Borrell flatly rejected any suggestion that the EU would stop its military support of Ukraine.

The bloc has already provided Ukraine with military, civilian and humanitarian aid to the tune of about 60 billion euros, he said, and if the knock-on impact such as higher food prices and energy bills are included, then the amount rises to a massive 700 billion euros.

"If Ukraine stops fighting, Ukraine is over. And we don't want Ukraine to be over. We have to support Ukraine as far as Russia continues fighting," Mr Borrell told CNA.

Mr Borrell also said that he tried explaining to General Li why Ukraine is as "existentially" important to Europe, as Taiwan is to China.

However, the EU foreign policy chief repeated the point he made in an opinion piece in April this year, that he had asked the navies of some member countries to patrol the Taiwan Straits.

The EU has no unified armed forces under a single command and Mr Borrell does not have executive powers to direct any of the 27 member countries' armed forces.

Individual EU countries have, however, been stepping up their presence in the South China Sea.

Germany's defence minister Boris Pistorius said at the Shangri-La Dialogue that his country will be sending two warships to the region next year.

Patrolling international waters is meant to "ensure freedom of navigation, not with a war-mongering mentality" nor hostility towards Beijing, said Mr Borrell.

He said that the EU does not want to interfere in China's matters, and that "the One China policy means for us... that Taiwan will not be an independent, fully-fledged state".

His comments came after a string of near confrontations between the US and China in the Taiwan Strait.

The US alleged that a Chinese warship veered dangerously close to the bow of an American destroyer on Saturday, during patrols in the Taiwan Strait.

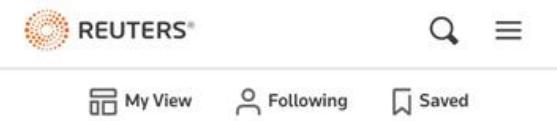
The incident happened a week after a Chinese fighter jet performed an "unnecessarily aggressive manoeuvre" near an American surveillance aircraft in the South China Sea, according to the US Indo-Pacific Command.

China's foreign ministry has pushed back in response, calling such surveillance activity "provocative" and "dangerous".

When asked if the EU would ever go to war over Taiwan, Mr Borrell said it would be a "world catastrophe for everybody".



News Coverage



World

EU's top diplomat discusses Ukraine's ammunition needs with South Korea

Reuters

June 3, 2023 7:52 PM GMT+8 · Updated 5 days ago



POLITICO

Europe sends big hitters to Singapore to rally Asian allies against Russia

A high-profile European delegation is heading to the Shangri-La Dialogue to push Asian countries on the war in Ukraine.



The Korea Herald

EU's top diplomat corrects he 'explains' Ukraine's needs for ammunition to S.Korea

By Ji Da-gyum

Published : Jun 4, 2023 - 18:10

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POLITICO

China's new defense chief ghosts the US, but meets with Europeans

At top Asian security forum, Chinese Defense Minister Li Shangfu refused to go beyond a handshake with his US counterpart, Lloyd Austin.



China's Minister of National Defence Li Shangfu delivers a speech during the 20th Shangri-La Dialogue summit in Singapore | Roslan Rahman/AFP via Getty Images

Social Media Highlights



Vivian Balakrishnan ✅ @VivianBala · Jun 5

Always a pleasure to catch up with my good friend @JosepBorrellF. Invited him for a morning #jalanjalan & breakfast at the Singapore Botanic Gardens. We had a good conversation on regional developments, and the history of 🇸🇬's development & transformation into a garden city.



Lawrence Wong ✅ @LawrenceWongST · Jun 3

Productive meeting with EU HR/VP Josep Borrell. We discussed enhancing cooperation between Singapore and the EU in digital and green economies. We also explored EU-ASEAN collaboration to strengthen multilateralism and free trade at the WTO.



Josep Borrell Fontelles ✅ @JosepBorrellF

In my interview with The @Straits_Times, I set out what a just peace in Ukraine means, why our sanctions against Russia are needed and working, and what the risks are to "de-risking": europa.eu/!D8qNng

THE STRAITS TIMES

Peace is not 'no war' and derisking has risks: Josep Borrell



Josep Borrell Fontelles ✅ @JosepBorrellF · Jun 4

Constructive discussion with #China's Minister of Defence Li Shangfu at #SLD23 on common strategic concerns, including Russia's war against Ukraine, Taiwan, South China Sea. Looking forward to continue to develop EU-China relations based on trust and respect of international law



Iwona Piórko

@IwonaPiorkoEU

Together with @EUinSingapore I am looking forward to hosting High Representative @JosepBorrellF in Singapore. 🇪🇺🇸🇬 @eu_eeas



IISS News ✅
@IISS_org

'Europe and Asia have a direct stake in each other's security. In a globalised world, there is no "far away". Any war or major security crisis in one region affects everyone' | @JosepBorrellF #SLD23 go.iiss.org/SLD23



Iwona Piórko
@IwonaPiorkoEU

It has been an honour to host High Representative @JosepBorrellF in Singapore. Read about his takeaways:



Josep Borrell Fontelles @JosepBorrellF · Jun 9

The Indo-Pacific is the epicentre of the global competition between the US and China.

The EU has a major stake in ensuring the regional order stays open, plural and rules-based.

My blog post with three conclusions from my trip to Singapore #SLD23:
europa.eu/!WG9jw6



Oleksii Reznikov @oleksiireznikov · Jun 4

Good feeling being among friends in the EU Family.

uang @PJonson @DefensieMin Boris Pistorius @BMVg_Bundeswehr

carreirash @JosepBorrellF

No matter where, in Europe, or Asia, - we are always stronger together!

#StandWithUkraine #SLD23



IISS News @IISS_org · Jun 3

...
'The European Union will always defend international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the non-proliferation regime. Not just by word but by deeds' | @JosepBorrellF #SLD23 go.iiss.org/SLD23



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