

CNN's Fareed Zakaria Interviews Wang Yi

by [Anthony Atlas](#) (August 2020)



Wang Yi and Fareed Zakaria

Fareed Zakaria: [to audience] *Tonight . . .*

He is a trained scientist. He has an unlined face. He keeps very still indeed at the podium. And he is said, by those who respect the wishes of the Chinese people to him, to put the *nocra* in technocrat. He is the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs.

He is Wang Yi.

There were some conditions to our interview. My condition was

that I be allowed to ask any question the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs deemed not offensive to the Chinese people. His condition was that I think twice before asking any question deemed offensive to the Chinese people. Wang Yi is an undemonstrative subject, and he sits quite still throughout our conversation. But just occasionally he *Raises His Finger And Holds It Up* (RHFAHIU) to shush any potential deviance from respectful deference. I would encourage transcript readers to view this as a quirk and not a threat. Indeed, Wang Yi was so enthusiastic that he began the interview before I did, bringing to the table a very original and, might I say, *Chinese* form of protocol.

Wang: First of all, I want to say that I will answer your questions from the bottom of my ideology. That is to say, with a pure notebook. The second thing I want to say is this: Do not offend the Chinese people. I want to emphasize that. I will be emphasizing that throughout this interview. And I mean this, in all *bigcountryness*, as a leader of the Chinese people meeting with you today in a spirit which had better not be mischaracterized. Do not mention US-Covid-19. If I believe you are about to refer to US-Covid-19 I shall (RHFAHIU).

Fareed Zakaria: May I start by thanking you, sir, for the compromised format in which to set out these respectful questions. It is a privilege for our network to have the honor of a conditionally free discussion. Now I wish to start in matters economic. Do you think the 2008 crisis in Anglo Saxon finances proved that not only is the economic model flawed, but the modeler, too? By that I guess I mean, is the Anglo-Saxon male a lapsed demographic?

Wang: To look at the 2008 financial events through only Chinese eyes would be obfuscating. We mustn't obfuscate. We Chinese say that a man who is thinking about dinner while he eats breakfast when he ought to be thinking about lunch, or a man who is thinking about breakfast while he eats lunch when he ought to be thinking about dinner, or a man who is thinking

about lunch while he eats dinner when he ought to be thinking about breakfast, is condemned to repeat the pattern of his consumption over . . . and over . . . and over and (RHFAHIU) . . . and over. This is not to accuse other significant nations of greed. It is to accuse one other significant nation of greed. Our world today is interconnected in ways that those outside of the Chinese Communist Party could barely have imagined 5,000 years ago. We live in an era where no problem occurs in isolation. So we should not seek to isolate one another. Let us instead share the information we have on our hard drives. Allow me to be more specific. Let *us* share the information you have on your hard drives.

Fareed Zakaria: You mean that no problem in today's world remains a problem only at its origins—that it will become a global problem even if it starts in London, Paris, Lagos, Wu-

Wang: (RHFAHIU) —No problem *is* a problem only at its origins. We must come together as global citizens to urgently acknowledge that all problems affect China. The aftertaste of financial crises in the United States, which once upon a time would have been a matter for CCP banquets at the state level, now no longer taste exquisite to a billion point five palates. The United States adopted measures and steps to combat the financial crisis. We noted the measures and steps adopted by the United States to combat the financial crisis. The world should note that we noted the measures and steps adopted by the United States to combat the financial crisis.

[huge pause] (RHFAHIU)

Fareed Zakaria: Some people point to what they see as a contradiction in China's system. They point to the simultaneous presence of a huge government and the role of free choice, of the state and the market. How do you run a system based on inefficient central planning *and* market inequality?

Wang: We give full play to both the visible and the invisible hand. That is, the visible hand of state activity in the form of taxes and regulation and the invisible hand of state activity in the form of rigorous unregulated police questioning. It has been fifty years since Deng Xiaoping remarked that it is not important what color the cat is, so long as it catches the mouse. We might now update that saying to better capture the times we live in. But doing so would violate the Chinese principle of conducting historical revisionism on CNN. So I am not going to. But let us just say that if the cat becomes too fat—

Fareed Zakaria: —You have preempted, so to speak, my next question, which was to be about the issue of corruption—

Wang: —Please let me finish. We agreed when our people and your people formulated the “October 14 Six Interview Principles Between Wang Yi and Fareed Zakaria,” that he who performed the role of interviewer was to be allowed to complete his questions without interruption, while he who performed the role of Wang Yi was to be allowed to complete his answers without interruption. Thus far I believe I have respectfully conformed to my role of Wang Yi by allowing the interviewer to complete his questions. I ask only that you as interviewer perform your role accordingly and allow he who performs the role of Wang Yi to perform his role as Wang Yi.

Fareed Zakaria: My apologies, ambassador. From now on—

Wang: (RHFAHIU) Interjections even for the purposes of contrition shall constitute interruptions. Page 7, paragraph 3. I am here today to answer your questions in a spirit of open bureaucratism and, as such, I tend toward harshness in my apprehension of your presence. Please heed to the desires and determination of the New China in this respect. And I am not an ambassador. Now I will take a sip of water and continue my previous answer with a confirmed sense that you will never understand the concept of face regardless of how long I were

to spend explaining your misdemeanor and how long you were to sit there taking it. Water. [takes a sip] Several moments ago I was in the process of turning a metaphor into an analogy. I was going on to say that if the cat that chases the mouse were to catch and kill too many mice, or if it were to become too easy for the cat to kill mice, or if fawning lackeys seeking Politburo Standing Committee preferment were to approach the cat with dead or maimed mice for the cat to consume, then that cat would become what is sometimes referred to in critiques of capitalism as a 'fat cat'. (Please write the word fat cat in single quotation marks in the transcript of this interview.) The party frowns with great severity on such individuals. And such individuals have been known to spend their last day inside a soccer stadium which is not hosting any sporting event that day.

Fareed Zakaria: Recently, a senior general in the PLA remarked that if the islands of *Wa* do not belong to the Chinese then we can still certainly say they don't belong to their current inhabitants. Of course, *Wa* is the ancient Chinese word for Japan. Is this China laying claim to the nation of Japan as its sovereign territory? And so what if it is?

Wang: Questions of sovereignty are set to vex the northeast-Asia region for the next 2.5 generations. At least, that is our current estimate. There are a number of historical issues which could be solved peacefully if the relevant parties are rational, willing, compliant, and bend to take a correct view of history. This correct view of history is available for all to grasp in numerous publications originating at a single publishing house in downtown Beijing. We are trying to summarize them in one little book. It is time for all actors in the region to exhibit the full maturity which a peaceful and equitable solution to historical disputes demands. They have our phone number. Take the South China Sea. We have demonstrated great patience in the face of irrational protests from smaller nations that it is not a completely Chinese body

of water. And so every day thousands of vessels navigate Chinese H2O without so much as an air to sea missile being laser targeted upon them. Of course, this situation cannot continue. One day the patience of the Chinese people will bend. On the following day it will break. In the afternoon of that day our armed forces will be obliged to peacefully take action. We Chinese hope—and it is a small hope—that it won't come to that. We hope that all smaller parties arrive at a reasonable surrender, well in advance of the day we feel our dignity to have been imperceptibly scratched. As I say, we estimate that process to take 2.5 generations, give or take any Arab-oriented setbacks.

Fareed Zakaria: So if I may reiterate what you have said—

Wang: (RHFAHIU)

Fareed Zakaria: It is important for the small countries of the region to acknowledge that they are smaller countries.

Wang: Yes. But what is equally important is that the other big countries of the region also acknowledge that they are small countries. To say that they are merely “smaller” countries is to hide the truth behind comparatives. Since Mao Zedong, the Chinese people have never hidden behind comparatives. *Smaller equals small*. Upon this big-China centered basis, a sound and secure future for the region may be established. One built on the hopes of the peoples of the small countries for the hopes of the Chinese people.

Fareed Zakaria: Might we say that China is still in a process of opening up to the world? I say this because of an incident which hit the headlines recently in which French synth composer Jean Michel Jarre was refused an entry visa to the PRC on the grounds that he stole the principle ingredient of fireworks at his stage shows from the Chinese invention of gunpowder.

Wang: I am not aware of the incident to which you are

referring so I cannot amplify on why the individual you talk about was correctly refused entry.

Fareed Zakaria: [turns to camera] At this point in our interview, Wang Yi left the studio. In so far as I know he conferred with some of the CCP's most senior secretaries. After a dignified interval he returned to our studio and had *this* to say.

Wang: I am now aware of the incident to which you are referring and will amplify on why the individual you talk about was correctly refused entry. That particular synth composer combines bright green laser lighting, unnerving hologrammatic imagery, the hubristic demand for vast outdoor arenas, and long hair, all in a manner contrary to the spirit and dignity of the Chinese people's bigness. His music—and I will respect for the time being your decision to call it that—sounds, I am told, like the incidental music to a submarine movie. Mr. Jarre's use of an actual classical orchestra is frivolous. His choice of clothes is what I believe the English call 'barmy.' This individual places cymbals on keyboards. Your linking of this man's visa refusal with China's process of opening up is misleading. China's rejection of Jean Michel Jarre is evidence that we have opened up to such a degree that even our immigration officials have a mature taste in music. We would be willing to accept a blind opera singer. Or Vangelis, he's ok, reports the cadre who transports my spittoon.

Fareed Zakaria: I want to return to Vangelis later on if I may, but in the meantime on the question of North Korea. I can feel this question of North Korea, of what to do about North Korea pulsing between us like the sensation of buzzing shared by strangers on a bus whose feet share an engine-burring floor. (Don't worry, sir, we can edit the formulation of this question before broadcast so as to diminish my articulacy relative to your own.) What are your plans for Korea in the event of a crisis on the peninsula?

Wang: First of all, I will insist that you do rephrase that question before this interview goes out to broadcast. Although we agreed that you were permitted to ask any question I wish, it was under the proviso that the impression garnered of me by the watching western world would be that of someone who not despite but *because of* the slight delay caused by a tonally robotic CNN translator would be of a coming global statesman *sans pareil*, a kind of new presence of authority in the world, one who makes a room hush, and very conceivably the first face on the global currency. So yes, rephrase. The second part of my response begins now, and is in part influenced by the question you asked, but is in no way bound by it. The situation on the Korean peninsula is one which all the relevant parties should ensure remains stable, that is to say in a state of perpetual division poised at any moment to erupt into war.

Fareed Zakaria: Exciting things are happening in medical research facilities in China that we haven't been able to get complete details about. Would you care to elaborate on this and elaborate on that?

Wang: Chinese doctors in Xi'an have successfully transplanted part of a liver from a genetically altered pig to a monkey. To elaborate would be to unpardonably subtract dignity from the Chinese pig and the Chinese monkey. If you look at the course of history, you will find good cause why the Chinese have always fiercely defended their livestock's livers against outside interference.

Fareed Zakaria: Does the world depend too much on the dollar? Isn't it time for another currency upon whose graphic design we can sublimate in conspiracy theory form the human fear of death?

Wang: Today, like the young, ancestor-less country from which it comes, the dollar is a tired currency. It is literally (RHFAHIU) a spent force. But we will help the United States to

pick up its walking cane, to meet the future bravely and realistically, and to come help China selflessly be in the service of the greater Chinese dream of a Greater Chinese world with Greater Chinese dignity.

Fareed Zakaria: In 2007 the Chinese military destroyed a satellite with a missile. It was a great shot. Well done, sir. But what do you intend to do on the moon?

Wang: The moon has always been very close to the hearts of the Chinese people. You cannot imagine the Chinese people without the moon. Indeed, we might say, without the moon there is no Chinese people. And without the Chinese people there is no moon. So, what we have to say -and what I want to see you agreeing with me now by vigorously nodding- is that the world has the Chinese people to thank for the moon. I say this on behalf of the Chinese people: *you are welcome*. The moon has always played a very prominent role in the lives of the Chinese people. It has, after all, appeared in the night sky every day for five thousand years of Chinese history. There are pre-photographic records of the moon's appearance in the Chinese owned night sky done out in simple chalk by the ancestors of tomorrow's astronauts. *Who we shall term Chinauts.* (RHFAHIU) It will be a new moon with Chinese characteristics. Please continue to vigorously nod.

Fareed Zakaria: How does the Chinese government view United States foreign policy?

Wang: I want to answer your question directly but in order to do so we are going to have to define exactly the terms United, States, Foreign, and Policy. Since in a format like this we are unfortunately not afforded enough time in which to do so, we will just have to proceed upon the basis that my destabilizing of terms demonstrates how my answer to your question is contingent upon me having a more nuanced view of language, politics, the world, and, as I am currently demonstrating, nuance. It has been said, somewhat critically,

that China views the world through a set of very thick lenses, and that for instance we see United, States, Foreign, and Policy as a mystery wrapped inside an enigma wrapped inside a conundrum wrapped inside a cryptogram all neatly tied together by a Gordian knot. This is not true, or rather it is an insufficient view. We see all that but we also see it buried inside a riddle.

Fareed Zakaria: Would it be better to characterize China's relationship with Africa as that of a kindly uncle with a shrewd sideline in investing, or as that of an unkindly uncle with a shrewd sideline in investing?

Wang: I would say a kindly uncle with a dignified sensitivity to offense.

Fareed Zakaria: Do you ever foresee a time in which it will be again necessary to send half a million rightist intellectuals to work as peasants in the countryside for twenty years? Sorry, I'm reading out viewers' tweets by mistake. So, there's China and there's India, these two great border monoliths. The two of you are straddling a whole host of tectonic plates. It is a contiguous border of hot spots and yeti beast-like sightings. So how do two such immense conglomerations of electricity and rice requirements rub along together without it all going bang?

Wang: We don't allow border matters to damage relations with countries whose culture is provably younger.

Fareed Zakaria: Wang Yi, thank you. Now, please, for those watching around the world tonight, could you please describe the method by which our viewers might never offend the dignity of the Chinese people?

Wang: This is an important question. Indeed, this is perhaps the most important question you could ask. It is—I could go on to add—stressing the point in an overly wrought preamble for which there is now no way of stopping me, the most vexing

question facing the world today. One might say that the future of the world depends upon it. If you have children it is a question you had better ask yourself. If you value goods and products you had better ask yourself it. If you are privy to the knowledge that Chinese manufactured computer products are equipped to watch as well as be watched you had better ponder it. If you value the ideas of freedom as you perceive them from a non-Han viewpoint you had better consider it. And most of all, if you value the dollar as a functioning global currency you had better think about it night and day. As to the best method with which not to offend the dignity, esteem, honor, and pride of the Chinese people, I don't wish to be seen to be commanding or even recommending a particular course of action, for that would be to violate our long-held but flexible belief in non-interference in other country's affairs. But I would say—and at this point your viewers should perhaps take out a notebook and pen—the Chinese people are most sensitive about the following issues: interference in matters of the seas which surround the motherland, interference in matters of land which surround the motherland, interference in matters of resources which surround the motherland, interference in matters of the peoples which surround the motherland, and interference in matters of outer space which surround the motherland. I do not wish herein to make a special claim for the dignity of the Chinese people in contrast with say (and only) the dignity of the people of our very close allies—we consider them to be on a par at least with our livestock base—but I do wish to convey the increasingly itchy sensation the Chinese people feel with regard to the occasional absence of unasked for respect and obeisance. The world is entering a new phase in which countries would do well to smooth the path to good relations by honoring the Chinese people unbidden.

Fareed Zakaria: And one final questions. Is it true that Chinese scientists have developed RDF chips the size of grains of rice and successfully planted one in every single grain of

rice? Is it true you have proof that the Americans faked Columbus's voyages? Do you believe that the waves of the Atlantic Ocean pose a threat to the party? How can we prevent factory employees from daydreaming? And when will you be revealing the world's new maps . . . ?

[turns to camera] And with that, ladies and gentlemen, Wang Yi abruptly left our interview, exiting the studios in a manner which preserved his self-respect, out into the waiting arms of a long black car which had tinted windscreens and the right to drive through red lights should the traffic offend the dignity of the Chinese people.

«[Previous Article](#) [Table of Contents](#) [Next Article](#)»

Anthony Atlas is a writer, editor, and translator from Nottingham. This is his first submission to *New English Review* and he can be contacted at atlasanthony@yahoo.co.uk

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](#)