



By: TA | AP Brief

China replaces senior diplomat as questions persist on his whereabouts



China has named Liu Haixing, a diplomat with experience in European affairs, at the top of its International Department, state media said.

He replaces Liu Jianchao, who has not been seen in public since July amid speculation he has been detained over disciplinary reasons.

The International Department is the Communist Party's diplomatic arm, tasked with establishing connections with political parties in other countries.

Liu Haixing, 62, spent much of his career serving in a variety of diplomatic positions in Europe. Between 2009 and 2012, he was a minister with the Chinese Embassy in France, where he had earlier studied public administration, according to his resume, posted on the Foreign Ministry's website.

Upon his return to Beijing, he served as assistant foreign minister and director-general of the Department of European Affairs.

His last posting was that of executive vice-director of the general office of the National Security Commission of the Communist Party's Central Committee, a top ruling body.

His appointment, which was announced earlier on the International Department's website, raises questions about the whereabouts of his predecessor, Liu Jianchao.

A potential new foreign minister

Liu Jianchao, who is unrelated to Liu Haixing, had served as head of the International Department since June 2022. He had traveled extensively abroad as part of China's post-pandemic diplomatic drive, and his name was circulated as a potential new foreign minister.

Liu Jianchao has not been seen in public since late July, after he returned from a work trip abroad. The Wall Street Journal reported sources saying he has been detained for questioning as part of a disciplinary probe.

His disappearance followed the high-profile

vanishing in June 2023 of then-Foreign Minister Qin Gang, who had only gotten the job seven months earlier. His predecessor, Wang Yi, returned to the posting.

The Journal reported that an internal party investigation had found that Qin had engaged in an extra-marital affair during his previous stint as Beijing's ambassador to Washington.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has led a relentless campaign of disciplinary purges since his appointment in 2012.

More than 6 million officials have been punished for corruption and misconduct, though critics say he has also used the campaign to remove some of his opponents and consolidate power.