

Japan lines up with US against China over Taiwan

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The United States and Japan are preparing to escalate the confrontation with Beijing over Taiwan, which will be discussed in the upcoming summit between US President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga. Originally slated for April 9, the meeting—Biden’s first in-person meeting with a foreign leader since coming to office—will now take place a week later.

Reportedly, the two leaders will release a joint statement on Taiwan—the first since 1969 when Richard Nixon and Eisaku Sato declared Taiwan was important for Japan’s security. On Sunday, Suga pledged to work closely with Washington in ratcheting up its pressure on Beijing. “It is important for Japan and the United States to work together and maintain deterrence to create an environment in which Taiwan and China can find a peaceful solution,” he stated.

The talk of “a peaceful solution” seeks to mask the fact that Tokyo is trying to justify “deterrence”—that is, a military build-up by Japan and the US targeting China. Moreover, it is Washington, not Beijing that is deliberately undermining the “One China” framework, which has maintained a shaky peace in the Taiwan Strait since 1979.

During last month’s “two plus-two” meeting involving US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken with their Japanese counterparts, Taiwan was a major focus of discussion. Austin raised the possibility, with Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi, of the Japanese military being deployed in the event of a US or Taiwanese clash with Beijing.

Kishi told Austin that Tokyo would review the possibility of dispatching troops “given the strait’s geographical proximity and the possibility of an armed conflict there, affecting the safety of Japanese citizens,” according to the Kyodo news agency, despite that being

a clear violation of Japan’s post-World War II constitution. Even under Japan’s 2015 “collective self-defense” security legislation, Tokyo would have to claim that conflict over Taiwan jeopardized Japan.

Last Thursday, Taiwan’s representative in Japan, Hsieh Chang-ting, called for Japan to play a larger role in confronting Beijing, suggesting that it enact legislation similar to the US 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, which authorizes US arms sales to Taiwan and military action against supposed Chinese aggression. He declared: “The current enemy [of China] is the United States. Japan will be next... If Taiwan is unified by China, Japan would have to face China directly.”

Beijing’s hawkish *Global Times* hit back in an opinion piece on March 30, warning: “If Japan makes any substantive move that impairs China’s national interests on the Taiwan question, China will take countermeasures against it. Japan’s loss will sharply outweigh its gain if it ties itself on the US anti-China chariot and sows discord across the Taiwan Straits.”

Among the other accusations directed at Beijing, Washington and Tokyo are seizing on Beijing’s new coast guard law, which took effect in February, in an attempt to paint Beijing as an immediate threat to Japan, and thereby provide the justification for Japanese military intervention over Taiwan. However, the law is itself a response to numerous and increasingly belligerent US provocations during the Trump administration, including calling into question the “One China” policy, which states that Taiwan is a part of China and to which Washington formally agrees.

Beijing’s law was drawn up toward the end of 2020. It allows the coast guard to use weaponry in territory Beijing claims, risking a clash with Japanese vessels around the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East

China Sea. Biden and Suga are also set to reconfirm that the US-Japan Security Treaty covers the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.

The US and Japan are preparing joint military drills focused on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, including the possibility that exercises could take place on two of the uninhabited rocky outcrops, which would undoubtedly further antagonize China. In 2014, the US, for the first time, openly sided with Japan over the territorial dispute.

Under guidelines updated in 2015 under the Obama administration, the Japanese military would play the leading role in a military response to China, while the US would provide support, including transporting Japanese troops into potential battles.

Washington has fraudulently painted the confrontation with Beijing as concerning “human rights” and the need to maintain a “free and open” Indo-Pacific. While again seizing on Hong Kong and Xinjiang to distract from the real issues, on March 25 Biden bluntly stated the motivating fear in Washington, that China would eclipse the US economically and strategically.

“China has an overall goal, and I don’t criticize them for the goal, but they have an overall goal to become the leading country in the world, the wealthiest country in the world and the most powerful country in the world. That’s not going to happen on my watch because the United States are (sic) going to continue to grow and expand,” Biden declared.

Biden, along with both the Democratic and Republican parties, is seeking to whip up an anti-China atmosphere over Taiwan, Hong Kong and Xinjiang in order to justify military intervention that would quickly grow into a devastating conflict with another nuclear-armed country.

The US and Japan are directly responsible for transforming Taiwan into one of the world’s most dangerous flashpoints. Japan annexed Taiwan in 1895, after defeating China in the First Sino-Japanese War, recognizing that the island was a strategic base for its broader ambitions in Southeast Asia and the Chinese mainland. After a half century of brutal Japanese colonial rule, the island was returned to China following Japan’s defeat in World War II.

When the 1949 Chinese Revolution overthrew the Kuomintang (KMT) regime headed by the US-backed

dictator Chiang Kai-shek, he fled with his forces to Taiwan. The repressive KMT regime on Taiwan was protected by the US navy and allowed to posture as the legitimate government of all China. In the lengthy negotiations following US President Nixon’s 1972 visit to Beijing, the status of Taiwan was the most fraught obstacle to establishing diplomatic relations. While Washington finally agreed to the One China Policy, signaling that Beijing, not Taipei, was the legitimate government of all China, the Taiwan Relations Act ensured Beijing had only nominal jurisdiction over Taiwan.

By forging closer ties with Taiwan against China, Japan and the US are moving toward the junking of the One China policy, which has been the bedrock of diplomatic relations with China for more than four decades and, in doing so, setting course for an inevitable clash involving the world’s three largest economies.



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