

US continues diplomatic provocations towards Beijing over Taiwan

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The United States is continuing its provocations over Taiwan in order to ratchet up pressure on Beijing. Both the Democratic Party, with the Joe Biden administration at the forefront, and the Republican Party are manoeuvring to undermine the “One China” policy without openly crossing Beijing’s red-line on the issue, an agenda that risks war.

Last Friday, House of Representative members Brad Sherman, a Democrat, and Steve Chabot, a Republican, introduced a bill to Congress called the Taiwan Diplomatic Review Act that would rename the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) as the Taiwan Representative Office.

TECRO is the name of the office in Washington of the Taiwan Council for US Affairs (TCUSA), which serves as Taipei’s de facto embassy as the US has no formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan. The TCUSA is the relatively new name for the body known as the Coordination Council for North American Affairs (CCNAA) until 2019.

The bill, if passed, would call upon the US Secretary of State to enter into negotiations with Taipei to rename the office. Rep. Sherman openly stated the broader political rationale, “This bill simply says that it is time for the State Department, and Congress, to take action to elevate our relationship with Taiwan. We should also be taking action to encourage more robust engagement between US and Taiwanese officials.”

The proposed bill would also alter the diplomatic status of Taiwanese representatives in Washington by creating a special visa category. These officials currently do not receive diplomatic visas, but investor visas instead. The change is meant to facilitate closer relations between US and Taiwanese officials in line with the agenda set during the Trump administration.

It also includes the Taiwan Envoy Act, which would

mean new directors appointed to the American Institute in Taiwan—the de facto US embassy on the island—would be required to receive Senate confirmation, similar to an ambassador.

The goal of these changes is to elevate Washington’s relationship with Taipei as the US prepares for conflict with Beijing. Taiwan is a self-governing island that the US and other countries recognize under the “One China” policy as Chinese territory. In 1949, Chiang Kai-shek’s Kuomintang was defeated in the Chinese Revolution and forced to flee to Taiwan, previously a colony of Japan, which had been returned to China following World War II.

From then until the 1970s, the US recognized Taipei as the legitimate government of all of China. Taipei even sat on the United Nations Security Council as a permanent member until 1971 when it was expelled from the UN and Beijing was acknowledged as China’s representative. In 1979, Washington cut formal ties with Taiwan and recognized Beijing as China’s government while upholding the “One China” policy.

To recognize Taiwan as an independent country, or to create the conditions for Taipei to declare independence, is a serious threat to Beijing. The ruling Chinese Communist Party will not allow Taiwan to be used as a launch pad for war against mainland China or set a precedent for Western powers to carve up existing Chinese territory in regions like Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and Tibet while returning the country to a semi-colonial state. As such, Taiwan represents a red-line for Beijing, which has stated that it will go to war if Taiwan ever declares independence.

Beijing’s fears of attack are not unfounded as demonstrated through documents recently published by Daniel Ellsberg, who leaked the Pentagon Papers. The new publications revealed that Washington had been

prepared to launch nuclear strikes on major Chinese cities in 1958, only five years after the end of the Korean War. To this day, Washington continues to engage in regime change operations around the world, leaving countries like Ukraine, Libya, and Iraq completely devastated.

The danger of war has not given Washington pause as it inches closer to overturning the “One China” policy. Last Thursday, nominee for assistant secretary of defense for special operations and low-intensity conflict, Christopher Maier, stated during a Senate hearing that the US should help train special operation forces in Taiwan, in effect, preparing for a guerilla war against China.

Maier stated, “I do think that is something that we should be considering strongly as we think about competition across the span of different capabilities we can apply, [special operations forces] being a key contributor to that.”

He was backed by rightwing Senator Josh Hawley, who supported Donald Trump’s claims of a stolen election. Hawley suggested the US should train forces similar to those it had trained in the Balkans, a region carved up by US and European imperialism and plunged into war following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Since 1979, Washington has backed Taiwan militarily, including training troops, though this has not been officially acknowledged. Last November, Taiwan’s Naval Command confirmed that US Marines were in Taiwan for training exercises, the first public acknowledgement of such drills in over 40 years. The Ministry of National Defense and the US Pentagon walked back on this acknowledgement given the implications for a clash with Beijing. Therefore, official training exercises would set a dangerous precedent.

Alexander Huang Chieh-cheng, a professor of international relations and strategic studies at Taipei’s Tamkang University told the *South China Morning Post*, “[Improving and enlarging] the scale of US-Taiwan cooperation in training of special operations and irregular warfare...will definitely enrage Beijing and add difficulties to US-China and cross-strait relations.”

Washington has also encouraged Japan to take a more belligerent stance towards Beijing since Biden took office in January. Following a summit last Thursday between leaders of the European Union and Prime

Minister Yoshihide Suga, the two sides released a joint statement calling for “peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait,” the first time Japan and the EU have included Taiwan in such a statement.

The language is nearly identical to that Biden and Suga used following their summit in April. Japan’s involvement has particular significance as Taiwan was a Japanese colony from 1895 to 1945, after Japan seized it from China during the First Sino-Japanese War.

None of these machinations have anything to do with defending democracy in Taiwan or anywhere else in the Asia-Pacific region. They are, above all, aimed at eliminating China as an economic and strategic competitor to US imperialism, even at the risk of instigating a devastating global war.



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