

US-China relations at breaking point

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The reckless and provocative trip by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has strained relations between the United States and China to breaking point.

The Chinese government has reacted to Pelosi's visit by ending dialogue with Washington in key areas, including military-to-military talks, climate change, cross-border crime and drug trafficking, and the repatriation of illegal migrants. Beijing has also imposed unspecified sanctions on Pelosi herself.

"Despite China's serious concerns and firm opposition, Pelosi insisted on visiting Taiwan, seriously interfering in China's internal affairs, undermining China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, trampling on the One China policy, and threatening the peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait," a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson declared.

The eight countermeasures announced yesterday specifically cancel China-US Theatre Commanders meetings, China-US Defense Policy Coordination talks and China-US Military Maritime Consultative Agreement meetings. The *Politico* website reported that multiple calls by US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Joint Chiefs Chair General Mark Milley have not been returned by their Chinese counterparts.

The breakdown of direct military-to-military contact further heightens the danger of an incident or accident leading to a broader conflict amid the tense standoff between Chinese, US and Taiwanese forces triggered by Pelosi's visit.

The US is maintaining a major naval presence in waters near Taiwan, featuring the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan, with its full complement of warplanes, along with the warships of its accompanying strike group. White House spokesperson John Kirby announced further anti-China provocations, with US naval and air transits of the Taiwan Strait in the "next few weeks."

China is staging its own largest-ever military drills in

six areas close to Taiwan, due to continue until noon local time on Sunday. These involve the dispatch of military aircraft into the Taiwan Strait, the firing of missiles into waters to the east of Taiwan, including over the island itself, and the deployment of naval ships into the areas, disrupting international flights and shipping.

In a pointed warning to the US and Japan, several Chinese missiles reportedly landed inside the 200-nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surrounding Japan's southern islands near Taiwan, sparking a protest from Tokyo. The largest US military bases in Japan are sited on Okinawa, which is part of Japan's lengthy southern island chain.

Taiwan's defence ministry reported it had scrambled fighters to warn away Chinese aircraft that it said had entered the island's self-declared Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ), some of which also had crossed the median line in the Taiwan Strait separating the island from the Chinese mainland. The ministry said a total of 68 Chinese military aircraft and 13 navy ships had conducted missions in the strait.

The risk of a military clash is increased by the extremely confined space in which such manoeuvres are taking place. The Taiwan Strait is just 130 kilometres wide at its narrowest point. The nearest inhabited Japanese island, Yonaguni, is only 110 kilometres to the east of Taiwan.

Moreover, the Taiwanese ADIZ, which has no standing in international law, not only hugs the Chinese coast, including heavily-fortified islets just kilometres from major Chinese cities, but covers a significant portion of the Chinese mainland itself. In many cases, Chinese aircraft cannot even take off without "intruding" into the ADIZ.

In a statement steeped in hypocrisy and cynicism, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken condemned the Chinese exercises, saying: "There is no justification for

this extreme, disproportionate and escalatory military response... now, they've taken dangerous acts to a new level."

At the same time, Blinken reiterated that the US intended to stage further provocations by sending its military through the narrow waters between Taiwan and the Chinese mainland and encouraging its allies to do the same.

Despite initial expressions of concern about the inflammatory character of Pelosi's trip, the Biden administration backed it and authorised the mobilisation of US military aircraft and warships as part of the visit. Now the White House, its allies such as Japan and Australia, and the US and international media repeat the lie that the visit in no way changed the status quo surrounding Taiwan.

In reality, the trip is another major nail in the coffin of the One China policy that underpinned the establishment of diplomatic relations between the US and China in 1979. Beijing insists that Taiwan is an integral part of One China of which it is the legitimate government—a position that the US accepted de-facto when it broke diplomatic and military relations with Taiwan and removed its embassy and its armed forces from the island.

Beijing has repeatedly warned that it will reintegrate Taiwan by force if Taipei ever declares formal independence from China. The visit by the highest-ranking US official in 25 years is just the latest in a series of steps by the Trump and Biden administrations calculated to call the One China policy into question. That included a public acknowledgement last year of the presence of US troops on Taiwan—a territory that the US recognises as part of China.

Taiwan would be part of China today if it were not for US imperialism. The protocols reached between the US and its allies at the end of World War II recognised that Taiwan—a Japanese colony known as Formosa since 1895—was part of Chinese territory. In the wake of the 1949 Chinese Revolution, the defeated Kuomintang armies fled to Taiwan, where Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek presided over a brutal military dictatorship.

For nearly a quarter century, successive US administrations maintained the fiction that the Chiang Kai-shek dictatorship was the legitimate government-in-exile of all China. That changed in 1972 when

President Nixon visited China and forged a quasi-alliance with Beijing against the Soviet Union. Taiwan and the One China policy were central to the protracted negotiations that finally culminated in the establishment of formal US-Chinese relations in 1979.

The Biden administration is now deliberately undermining those foundations. In doing so, it is goading Beijing into taking military action to reunify Taiwan and prevent the island being drawn into Washington's web of anti-China alliances throughout the Indo-Pacific. Taiwan is not only critical to China strategically but is home to the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, which has a virtual monopoly on the production of the most advanced semiconductors vital for countless commercial and military applications.

US imperialism is consciously exploiting Taiwan and endangering its population, in the same way as it has used Ukraine to provoke a war with Russia. It is seeking to provoke a conflict over the island and drag China into a military quagmire that will weaken and fracture the country that Washington regards as the chief threat to the "international rules-based order" on which its global domination rests.

Pelosi's visit to Taiwan marks a dramatic escalation in the US provocations against China, but Washington will not stop there. As it increasingly renders the One China policy a dead letter, the US is arming Taiwan to the teeth, as part of its decade-long military build-up throughout the Indo-Pacific region for a war with China with potentially catastrophic consequences.



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