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In wake of Pelosi visit, US-China military standoff continues

Military tensions remain high across the Taiwan Strait in the wake of US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's provocative trip last week to Taiwan. The American nuclear aircraft carrier, the USS Ronald Reagan, with its strike group, has been ordered to remain in nearby waters, as the Chinese military yesterday announced ongoing military drills.



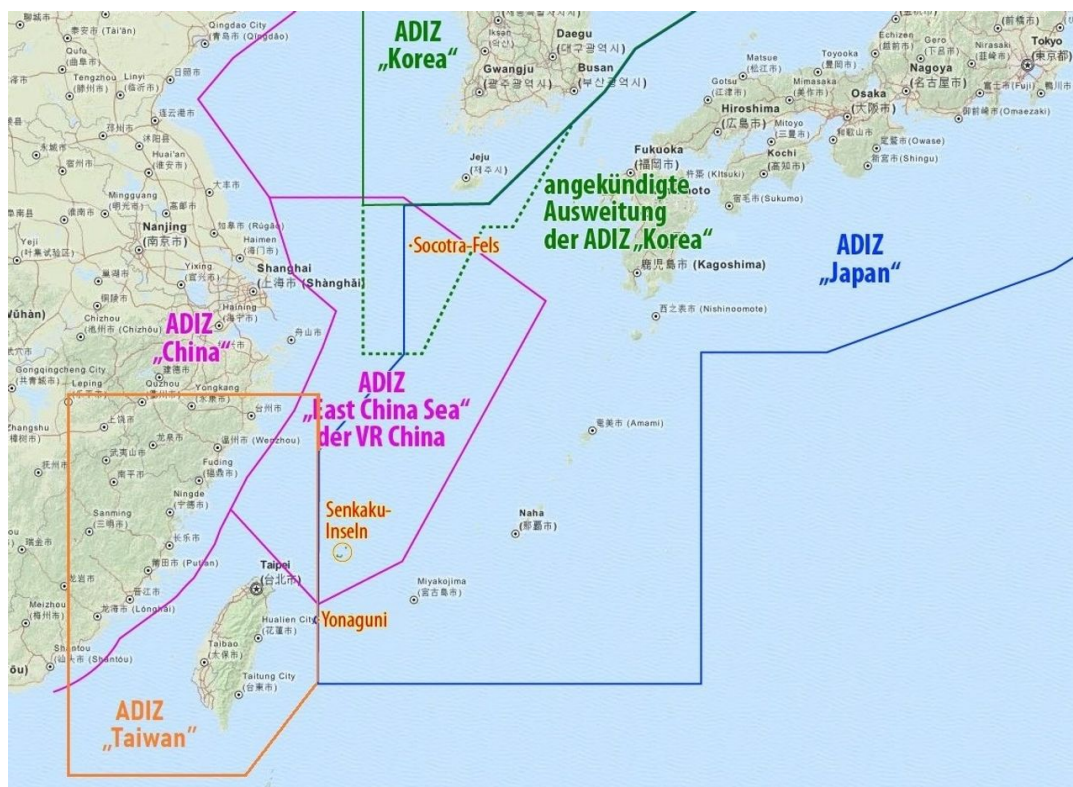
US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, center, walks with Taiwan's Foreign Minister Joseph Wu, left, as she arrives in Taipei, Taiwan, Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2022. [AP Photo/Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs via AP]

China's Eastern Theatre Command declared that it was continuing "to carry out practical joint exercises and training in the sea and airspace around Taiwan island" and "focusing

on organising joint anti-submarine and sea assault operations.” No indication was given of the time and place of the drills.

The continuing military activities follow the ending of major Chinese live-fire exercises involving warships, warplanes and missile launches in five different zones adjacent to Taiwan, in some cases crossing the median line in the Taiwan Strait. The Chinese military fired a number of short-range ballistic missiles, including several that landed inside Japan’s 200-nautical mile Economic Exclusion Zone.

The live-fire exercises ended at noon on Sunday, but the potential for an incident or clash remained high up until the last minute. An unnamed source told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation that shortly before those drills ended, about 10 warships each from China and Taiwan manoeuvred at close quarters around the unofficial median line of the Taiwan Strait. At its narrowest the Taiwan Strait separating the island from the Chinese mainland is just 130 kilometres wide.



The East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone as shown in pink boundaries (Source: Wikipedia - CC BY-SA 2.0)

Taiwan's foreign ministry yesterday condemned the announcement that China's Eastern Theatre Command was continuing to drill, declaring that Taiwan would not back down in the face of military intimidation.

Taiwan's comments are part of the chorus of criticism orchestrated from Washington condemning Beijing's response to Pelosi's visit. White House officials, US politicians and media commentators have been joined by American military allies, such as Australia and Japan, in lashing China's actions as "disproportionate," "destabilising" and "aggressive."

What hypocrisy! The Biden administration was well aware that Pelosi's trip was playing with fire and initially even warned against it, knowing that it had the potential to provoke a conflict. Both the Trump and Biden administrations have step-by-step been deliberately undermining the One China policy that has been the bedrock of US-China relations since formal diplomatic ties were established in 1979.

Under the One China policy, the US de facto recognised Beijing as the legitimate government of all China, including Taiwan, ended diplomatic relations with Taipei and withdrew all military forces from the island. After decades of limited low-level contact, the US has not only ratcheted up high-level US visits to Taiwan, but acknowledged the presence of US troops on the island and dramatically boosted arms sales to Taiwan.

In that context, the visit by Pelosi, the second in line to the US president, was calculated to provoke a response. Just as the US goaded Russia into invading Ukraine by ignoring its national security concerns, so the Biden administration is intent on provoking a proxy war with China in Taiwan.

Biden has now declared on three occasions that the US would join Taiwan in any conflict with China—a clear breach of the longstanding policy of "strategic ambiguity." The US previously sought to stabilise the inherently unstable situation across the Taiwan Strait. In order to inhibit Taiwanese provocations against Beijing, it refused, until now, to declare military support for Taiwan in a war with China, in all circumstances.

All of this gives the lie to the repeated claims by top US officials that Washington has done nothing, including with Pelosi's trip, to change the status quo. The US and

international media is full of speculation and propaganda about what China is doing and warnings of Beijing's aggressive intentions towards Taiwan.

For instance, the *Guardian* cited US defence department policy chief, Colin Kahl, who accused Beijing of trying to “salami-slice their way into a new status quo” across the Taiwan Strait. “It’s the activities in the strait itself,” he said, “the sheer number of maritime and air assets that are crossing over this de facto centre line, creeping closer to Taiwan shores, where it’s clear that Beijing is trying to create a kind of new normal.”

In reality, it is US imperialism that is implementing its “salami-slicing” strategy—step-by-step rendering the One China policy a dead-letter, arming Taiwan to the hilt and conducting provocative air and naval operations in sensitive waters close to the Chinese mainland—in order to provoke and bog China in a protracted military conflict in Taiwan.

In the wake of Pelosi's visit, the US is already preparing new provocations. Kahl told the *Guardian* that the US military would “continue to fly, to sail and to operate wherever international law allows us to do so, and that includes in the Taiwan Strait.”

Last week White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby announced that the US would conduct “air and maritime transits through the Taiwan Strait in the next few weeks.” He provided no details. Under the Biden administration, the Pentagon has been sending warships through the Taiwan Strait roughly once a month, knowing that such operations inflame tensions with China.

At the same time, anti-China hawks in the US Congress are intensifying their bipartisan campaign to push through the Taiwan Policy Act that would mandate a far more belligerent US stance on Taiwan. The Act would end the pretence of “strategic ambiguity” and commit the US to joining a war by Taiwan against China. As well as providing almost \$4.5 billion in military assistance to Taiwan, the bill would designate Taiwan as a Major Non-NATO Ally, effectively overturning the One China policy, rupturing relations with China and setting the US on the path to war.

In bellicose comments on Sunday on NBC's “Meet the Press,” Democrat Senator Chris Van Hollen declared: “We need to help Taiwan make that as difficult as possible for China, and we've been doing that by supplying Taiwan with military assistance. We need

to continue to do that to make Taiwan into the porcupine, so that when China looks at Taiwan, it realizes that this is going to be a hell of a fight and not a winnable fight.”

What Van Hollen and others portray as a strategy of deterring China, is, in fact, a strategy of goading Beijing into reunifying Taiwan by force to prevent it from being transformed into a US base of operations against China. Washington’s aim is an extended proxy war that will weaken, destabilise and ultimately fragment the country it regards as the chief threat to US global dominance even at the risk of a far broader nuclear conflagration.

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