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Biden again lashes out against China over Taiwan

Speaking via video link at the East Asia Forum this week, US President Biden again condemned China over a series of issues, with Taiwan at the top of the list. The East Asian Forum, which is part of the annual meetings of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), was also attended by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and Russian President Vladimir Putin, as well as the leaders of South Korea and Japan.



President Joe Biden in a CNN town hall at the Baltimore Center Stage Pearlstone Theater, Thursday, Oct. 21, 2021. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

Biden declared that the US was “deeply concerned by China’s coercive and proactive actions... across the Taiwan Strait,” saying that such actions “threaten regional peace and stability.” The remarks are the latest in a rising drumbeat of inflammatory statements from Washington that undermine the diplomatic and strategic status quo.

Earlier in the week, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called on members of the United Nations to support Taiwan's "robust" participation in UN bodies. Monday marked 50 years since the UN adopted a resolution recognising Beijing as the legitimate representative of China in 1971 and ending the claim by the Kuomintang (KMT) dictatorship in Taipei to China's UN seat.

The following year, US President Nixon visited Beijing to forge an anti-Soviet partnership with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime and lay the basis for the establishment of diplomatic relations between the US and China in 1979. Washington tacitly accepted the "One China" policy that Beijing was the legitimate government of all China, including Taiwan, and ended diplomatic and military relations with Taipei.

Now the Biden administration is ramping up tensions with China over Taiwan by step-by-step undermining the One China policy and in doing so encouraging the Democratic Progressive Party administration in Taipei to declare independence. Beijing has repeatedly declared that it would resort to force if Taiwan, which it regards as a renegade province, formally declared independence.

The media in the US and its allies parrots the White House propaganda, accusing China of aggressive intentions toward Taiwan and endlessly citing breaches of Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) by Chinese warplanes. Taiwan's ADIZ, which has no standing in international law, covers large swathes not only of international air space but also of air space over the Chinese mainland.

While accusing China of "coercive" actions, the US continues its provocative air and naval exercises close to the Chinese mainland, including through the Taiwan Strait. Some of China's largest "incursions" into Taiwan's ADIZ at the beginning of the month took place as the US mounted major naval war games in waters near Taiwan, along with warships from Japan, Britain, New Zealand and the Netherlands.

In a CNN interview on Thursday, Taiwan's president Tsai Ing-wen confirmed what the *Wall Street Journal* revealed earlier this month—that US Special Forces troops have been on Taiwan for more than a year training their Taiwanese counterparts. The US military presence on Taiwan is a particularly provocative breach of undertakings made to Beijing as part of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1979.

Declaring that Taiwan was a “beacon” of democracy, Tsai appealed to US “democratic” allies within the region, including Japan, South Korea and Australia, to support the island. “When authoritarian regimes demonstrate expansionist tendencies, democratic countries should come together to stand against them. Taiwan is on the front lines,” she said.

Tsai’s remarks are in line with Biden’s calls for US allies to forge closer ties with “democratic” Taiwan. Washington’s claims to be defending “democracy” against “autocracy” are a sham. For decades, the US, along with its allies such as Japan and Australia, backed the KMT dictatorship of Chiang Kai-Shek diplomatically and militarily until Washington forged ties with China in 1979 to further its economic and strategic interests.

Likewise, Washington’s current shift toward Taipei has nothing to do with defending the limited democratic rights on Taiwan, but is bound up with the accelerating US preparations for war with China over the past decade under Obama then Trump. US imperialism is determined to use all means, including military ones, to counter the threat to its global hegemony posed by China’s economic rise.

Biden exploited the East Asian Summit to attack China over its maritime claims, declaring that the US was “fully committed to the freedom of the seas, open waterways, and unimpeded flow of commerce, including in the South China Sea.” Biden was vice president in the Obama administration which seized on longstanding territorial disputes in the South China Sea to try to drive a wedge between China and its South East Asian neighbours.

Having largely ignored the rival claims in the South China Sea, the US suddenly declared that it had a “national interest” in the disputes, siding with Vietnam and the Philippines in particular against China. On the bogus pretext of assuring “freedom of navigation,” the US provocatively sent warships into or near waters claimed by China around islets it occupies in the South China Sea. These misnamed “freedom of navigation operations” increased under Trump and have been maintained by Biden.

Biden also utilised the opportunity to strengthen a “strategic partnership” with ASEAN through the provision of limited funds on the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. His claim that the US is leading the fight against the virus is absurd given the continuing

high numbers of daily cases and deaths. Moreover, amid concerns among American corporations over “supply chain” disruptions, Washington has been pressuring ASEAN members to adopt the same criminal “live with the virus” policy and open up their economies.

Biden also backed the decision by ASEAN to bar Myanmar general Min Aung Hlaing from attending for failing to implement a reconciliation plan with detained civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD). The military seized power in February after its party was defeated in national elections, provoking widespread protests that were met with a brutal crackdown.

Biden expressed support for ASEAN efforts to hold the military regime “accountable,” declaring that he had “grave concerns about the military coup and horrific violence.” These hypocritical statements have nothing to do with concern for democratic rights in Myanmar but are aimed at undermining its strengthening ties with China.

The Obama administration hailed Myanmar as a budding democracy when the junta released Suu Kyi, held sham elections and shifted its orientation away from Beijing and toward Washington. Even as Suu Kyi functioned as an apologist for the military’s murderous assault on the Muslim Rohingya minority, US criticisms were limited. Now, however, as the junta has increasingly relied on Beijing’s support, Biden is once again cynically posturing on “human rights.”

Biden’s involvement in the East Asian Summit—the first by a US president since 2017—underscores the remark by Vice President Kamala Harris during her trip to Singapore and Vietnam in August that “America is back” in the “critically important region in the world.” Biden’s aggressive comments against Beijing at the summit, particularly over Taiwan, are another sign of his administration’s preparations for conflict with China.

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