

## China Sent Its Carrier Near Japanese Waters because Tokyo and Washington's Encroachment Unties Beijing's Hands

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Asia-Pacific Research, April 08, 2021

[RT Op-Ed](#) 5 April 2021

Region: [China](#), [East Asia](#)

Theme: [Defence](#), [Politics](#)

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*With the US and Japan all but officially teaming up in trying to encircle China in the Pacific, Beijing has made the most significant military display yet, sending an aircraft carrier group between Japanese islands and Taiwan.*

On Monday morning, China announced it sent an aircraft carrier group through a location known as the [Miyako Strait](#), an island chain which bridges the gap between the Pacific Ocean and the East China Sea. The area largely consists of Japanese waters and has several strategic islands such as Okinawa, the disputed territory of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, and bridging down to Taiwan itself. As Beijing sent the Liaoning steaming through this location, Tokyo sent a destroyer to monitor it. The Global Times later [posted](#) a triumphant article stating that China intends to do more of these exercises, and that its naval capabilities will only continue to grow.

Military tensions between China and Japan are not new, and anyone with even the most basic knowledge of Asia will be aware that it has a long history. Whilst there have been lots of mini standoffs with coastguard boats around the disputed islands recently, the move of sending an entire aircraft carrier group up near Japanese waters is in fact new and raises the stakes dramatically. Beijing wants to send a strong message to Tokyo, which has recently affirmed its alliance with the United States under Biden and [publicly](#) pledged to involve itself, albeit ambiguously, in any Taiwan contingency, with its prime minister also set to visit [Washington](#) soon. As a result, China is flexing its muscles in this strategic area. There's more to come.

Japan and China both have eyes on the Miyako Strait and the Ryukyu island chain as a strategically essential location. It forms a broader segment of regional geography known as 'the first island chain' – stretching all the way from Russia's Far East, incorporating Japan itself, Okinawa, the island of Taiwan, and down into the South China Sea. The key point is that it completely surrounds China's naval periphery. Therefore, whoever dominates this area has the advantage in any conflict involving Beijing. China sees naval and air superiority over this space as essential to its own national security and likewise does Tokyo, which

believes that losing parity over this region means Japan in its entirety becomes vulnerable to Chinese naval hegemony.

For Tokyo, balancing against Chinese power means the island of Taiwan becomes an essential chess piece. If China was to gain control over Taiwan, then Beijing subsequently gains a monopoly of the entire strait itself and the encirclement of Japan is complete. This has led Tokyo to strengthen its alliance with the United States and the Quad initiative countries in order to push back, producing the rare affirmation that the US and Japan ought to work together in a Taiwan war. In America's own war planning for this region, as revealed in [recently](#) declassified documents from the Trump administration, Washington's goal is to try and prevent China from dominating the first island chain outright, and to maintain supremacy over the second in the wider Pacific. Japan is obviously a key partner for this.

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