

## Geopolitical Games in the Asia-Pacific Will Not be Allowed, Warns China

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*China will not let the Asia-Pacific region turn into a hotspot for geopolitical conflict, and will defend its own sovereignty and integrity, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson declared on Monday.*

Media reports said:

Speaking at a press briefing, Wang Wenbin responded to the news of a 10-member German delegation arriving on the self-governing island of Taiwan. He stressed that "the Taiwan question is at the very core of China's interests" and urged Berlin to respect the One China Principle, acknowledging that Taiwan is an inalienable part of the nation.

China considers any treatment of the island as a sovereign nation, including formal visits by foreign officials, as a direct affront to its sovereignty.

Wang said the "root cause" of the historic tensions between Taiwan and China were "the law of the jungle, hegemonism, colonialism and militarism" which had inflicted "deep suffering" on China for many years.

"The Chinese people have been committed to fighting imperialism, hegemonism and colonialism and upholding our sovereignty, territorial integrity and national dignity. We will never allow any force to turn the Asia-Pacific into an arena of geopolitical games once again to maintain their dominance," the diplomat warned.

Taiwan has never formally declared independence from Beijing, but has been self-governed since the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949, when nationalists fighting under the Kuomintang were defeated by communist forces and fled to the island.

While relations between Beijing and Taipei have always been strained, tensions boiled over following the visit of US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to the island in August.

China has repeatedly warned that it will use whatever means necessary to establish full control over the island, but has insisted it will search for a diplomatic solution.

## **Beijing Deploys Troops Near Taiwan**

Another media report said:

China has announced a military exercise near Taiwan on the eve of visits by German and Lithuanian lawmakers to the self-governed island. The drill has been described as countering “separatist forces.”

The training exercise was announced on Sunday by **Colonel Shi Yi**, the spokesman for the Eastern Theater Command of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). He said it would involve sea and airspace maneuvers around Taiwan, focusing on land strikes and amphibious assault action.

The exercise was “designed to test the joint combat capabilities of the troops and resolutely counteract the provocative actions of external forces and ‘Taiwan independence’ separatists,” a statement said.

Taiwan is a Chinese island that served as the last bastion of nationalist forces during the 1940s civil war. It is self-governed, but is recognized as part of China by most nations.

The island’s military reported detecting at least four PLA ships on Monday, along with scores of military aircraft in the Taiwan Strait. It said Taiwan’s naval, aerial and ground assets were monitoring the situation and were ready to respond.

The exercise comes amid a visit to Taiwan by a delegation of German MPs from the Free Democratic Party, which is part of the country’s ruling coalition. The group is being led by Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, the chair of the Bundestag Defense Committee, and Johannes Vogel, a deputy chair of the party.

During their four-day trip, they will meet a number of top Taiwanese officials, including President Tsai Ing-wen, Premier Su Tseng-chang, and Wellington Koo, the chair of Taiwan’s national security council, the administration’s foreign affairs office reported. The visit is one of several by foreign MPs scheduled for this week, according to Taiwan’s diplomats.

Separately, a delegation from Lithuania headed by Laurynas Kasciunas, the chair of its parliamentary National Security and Defense Committee, arrived on the island on Monday.

Another group of lawmakers came on Sunday from Paraguay, led by Carlos María Lopez, the president of the national parliament.

Beijing considers any treatment of Taiwan as a sovereign nation, including formal visits by foreign officials, as undermining the ‘One China’ policy that outlines its claim to the island. Chinese officials have accused Washington of deliberately eroding the long-standing arrangement.

## Be Alert Of U.S. Pressure: South Korea Urged

A media report from China said:

South Korea should be “alert” to U.S. pressure in confronting China amid a meeting with Jose W. Fernandez, the U.S. undersecretary of state for economic growth, energy and the environment, Chinese observers said, as deepened cooperation with China is where South Korea’s real interests lie.

Unlike China, which is willing to further open up to the world and pursue a globalized, win-win approach when establishing relations with other countries, the U.S. has proved many times that it will only sacrifice the interests of its “allies” to crack down on potential competitors and maintain hegemony, Chinese observers said.

The comments come as **Jose W. Fernandez**, U.S. undersecretary of state for economic growth, energy and the environment, is in Seoul this week to meet with his South Korean counterpart **Lee Do-hoon**, the second vice foreign minister, to discuss energy, emerging technologies and supply chains, Korea Joongang Daily reported on Monday.

Their meeting will be their second in a few weeks. In December, Lee traveled to Washington to meet with Fernandez and members of the U.S. Congress. The two are expected to hold a press conference following their meeting on Tuesday, the report said.

“One of the main reasons for the visit is that the U.S. has desperately hoped to bring South Korea on board in forming its small circle to exclude China from the global chip industrial chain, and South Korea is an important link for it to achieve that goal,” Gao Lingyun, an expert at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, told the Global Times on Monday.

But Seoul has maintained a good balance between China and the U.S., Gao said.

Moreover, from the perspective of the global supply chain, South Korea is deeply integrated into the overall industrial development of China, a format that has lasted for decades, and is completely in line with the interests of the nation and its business community, experts said.

## China-S Korea Trade

Data from China’s General Administration of Customs showed that trade volume between China and South Korea surpassed \$360 billion in 2021, which was 72 times the figure in 1992 when diplomatic ties were established.

During the January-November period of 2022, the actual use of foreign direct investment into Chinese mainland expanded 9.9 percent on a yearly basis to 1.16 trillion yuan (\$171.09 billion), among which investment from South Korea climbed by 122.1 percent.

Ma Jihua, a veteran industry analyst, pointed out that the frequent meetings also reflect that South Korea and the U.S. have demands for each other – while the U.S. urgently needs South Korea’s cooperation in relocating industrial chains, South Korea hopes to find cooperation from the U.S. in terms of security.

Neither can fully agree on the other’s requests, thus they can only communicate and negotiate back and forth – a move that may be unable to generate results although it can

“make a show” for domestic politicians, Ma told Monday.

“But this does not rule out that the two sides may ‘partially compromise,’ which we need to pay close attention to,” Ma said.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said at a China-South Korea business dialogue in mid-December that China and South Korea should jointly maintain the stability and smooth flows of regional and global industrial and supply chains, and further expand economic and trade cooperation by completing talks for an upgraded bilateral free trade agreement.

Li said that China is ready to work with South Korea to uphold a good neighborly friendship, mutual respect and equal treatment, and to promote the sound and steady development of bilateral ties, leveraging their complementary strengths and deepening cooperation in fields such as high-tech manufacturing, the green economy and big data.

South Korea and China are neighboring countries with strong connections not only in the economy and trade sectors, but also in the security sphere. China is where South Korea’s real interests lie, and Seoul’s best strategy is to balance its ties between China and the US, and stick to that, experts stressed.

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