

China Media Warns Japan Against Siding With U.S. Over Taiwan

Communist Party newspaper says Japan faces “grave” consequences—including countermeasures by Beijing—if it sides with the United States over the question of Taiwan’s security in the face of an increasingly assertive China.

Japan’s Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and President Joe Biden will together stress the importance of stability in the Taiwan Strait following their summit in Washington next month, reports *Nikkei Asia*, but the rare joint statement “will definitely” harm relations between Tokyo and Beijing, China’s state-owned *Global Times* said in an op-ed on Tuesday.

“If the passage on Taiwan is included in the joint statement after the summit between Suga and Biden, the hit will be grave,” the author wrote in the nationalistic tabloid, saying Tokyo’s decision to take a position on Taiwan “impairs China’s national interests.”

“China will take countermeasures against it,” the author said, adding “Japan’s loss will sharply outweigh its gain” if it sides with Washington, which has issued statements in support of democratic Taiwan amid continued military pressure from Beijing since Biden took office.

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Global Times, which presents some of the Chinese government’s most hawkish views, did not reveal how exactly Beijing would react if the upcoming U.S.-Japan statement calls attention to Taiwan’s security. Tuesday’s report by *Nikkei Asia* says Taipei has not been jointly mentioned by the two countries’ leaders for over half a century.

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China's ruling party claims sovereignty over the self-ruled island, which has been an unofficial U.S. partner in Asia for decades and now counts Japan among its closest allies.

A cross-strait conflict would inevitably impact other nations in the region, especially Japan, whose westernmost inhabited island of Yonaguni lies less than 70 miles off Taiwan's east coast.

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Peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait was also mentioned in a U.S.-Japan joint statement earlier this month following "2+2" meetings between Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, and their counterparts, Japan's Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and Defense Minister Kishi Nobuo.

An unconfirmed Kyodo News report after the ministerial meetings said Tokyo had also agreed to closely cooperate with Washington in the event of a military conflict between Taiwan and China, highlighting the effect such a clash would have on regional stability.

U.S. government concerns about a Taiwan Strait crisis and its potential impact on the region have been discussed in private for nearly 30 years, said senior defense analyst Su Tzu-yun, who believes there is a public shift from ambiguity to clarity when it comes to the importance of Taiwan's security.

"It's clear that they believe strategic ambiguity can help prevent conflict," he told *Newsweek*. "The U.S.-Japan joint statement next week will act as a

clear commitment to allies and deter China's military adventurism."

Bound by a mutual defense treaty, Tokyo and Washington are obliged to assist one another if either's safety is jeopardized. Suga and Biden are expected to reaffirm the defense agreement in April, which will cover the Senkaku Islands—controlled by Japan and claimed by China as Diaoyu.

Su, an associate research fellow at the Institute for National Defense and Security Research, a government-funded think tank in Taipei.

The Japanese government is planning to increase its troop presence on Yonaguni—part of Okinawa Prefecture—which is currently home to around 1,700 inhabitants and fewer than 200 soldiers, according to a recent report by Tokyo newspaper *Yomiuri Shimbun*.

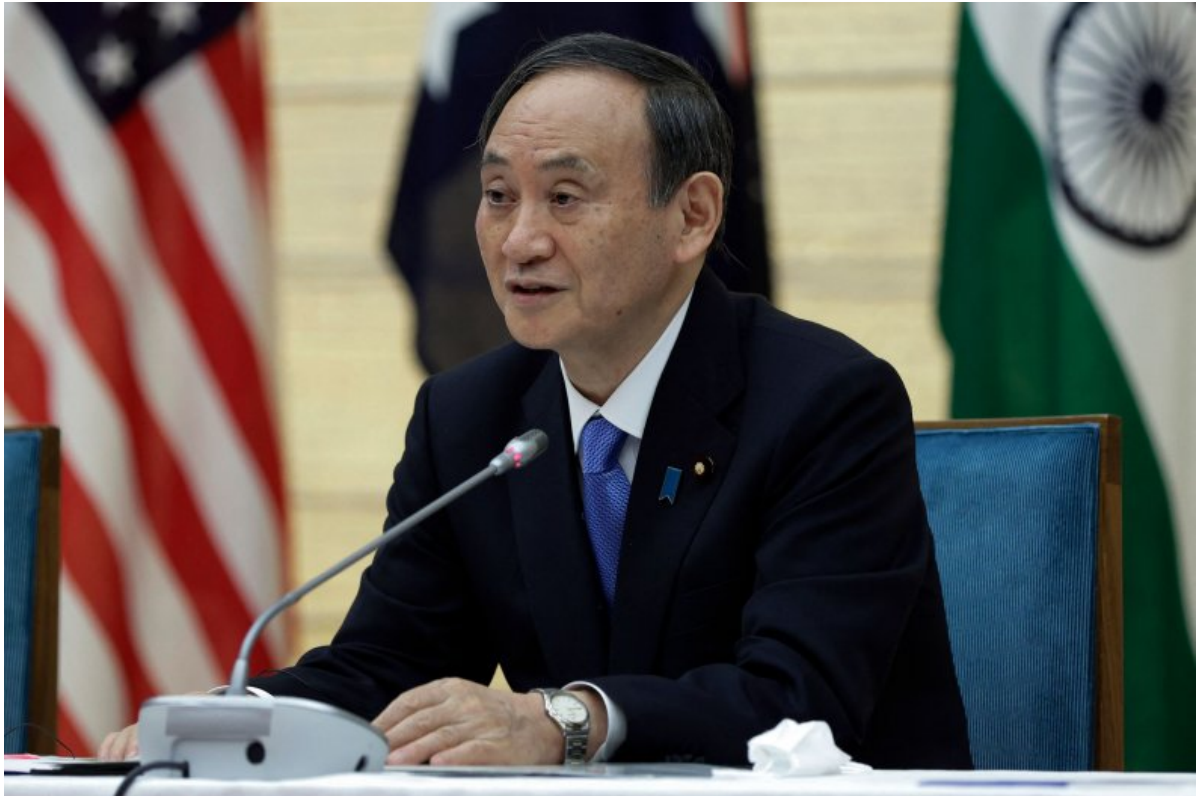
The move would boost Japan's national defense capabilities as cross-strait tensions between Taipei and Beijing continue to escalate, but the "geopolitical strategy" would also offer support for U.S. troops stationed in the region, Su said.

Wednesday's *Global Times* editorial concludes that Washington and Tokyo are collaborating against China for their own gain—the U.S. for "global and regional hegemony" and Japan for "more security guarantees" as Suga seeks re-election in the fall.

"The current state of affairs is a result of Beijing's military expansionism, so it is caught in a dilemma. It doesn't want other countries to come together to contain it, but it's provoking other countries," said Su.

"Beijing needs to understand that it doesn't benefit from its military expansionism, but it does reflect its domestic problems, which it is trying to solve by displaying nationalism through its military."

Prime Minister Suga and President Biden's summit is scheduled for April 9.



Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga speaks during the virtual Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) meeting, at his official residence in Tokyo on March 12, 2021. KIYOSHI OTA/POOL/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

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