

Taiwan Strait a ‘Powder Keg’ That Could Set Off World War, Military Expert Warns

The Taiwan Strait is a “powder keg” that has the potential to trigger a world war, a military analyst said on Tuesday as a panel of experts gathered to discuss U.S. foreign policy from a Taiwanese perspective.

A Chinese aircraft carrier task group led by *Liaoning* is currently conducting what Beijing has called a “routine” combat exercise east of Taiwan, while the U.S. military monitors the drill in the Pacific and deploys the Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group to the South China Sea.

These are signs that the U.S., China, and Taiwan are locked in a “vicious cycle” as tensions continue to rise in the region, according to Ma Chen-kun, a professor with the Graduate Institute of China Military Affairs Studies at National Defense University in Taoyuan in northeastern Taiwan.

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Ma made the comments while appearing on a four-person panel hosted by the Prospect Foundation, a Taipei-based think tank that researches cross-strait relations and advises the government, Taiwan’s Central News Agency reported.

The Taiwan Strait now resembles the Balkans before the outbreak of the First World War, Ma added, saying the “window for peace”—a non-violent resolution to relations between China and Taiwan—was growing ever smaller.

“Although no country intends to trigger a war, the powder kegs of war are spread

throughout the Taiwan Strait and the surrounding region,” he was quoted as saying.

His remarks came on the day Taiwan’s defense ministry reported four People’s Liberation Army aircraft sorties into the island’s air defense identification zone (ADIZ), a self-declared buffer that is not regulated under international law. On Monday, as *Liaoning* and five accompanying Chinese warships entered the Western Pacific, the PLA flew 10 fighter jets and reconnaissance planes into the ADIZ.

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Chinese warplanes buzzed Taiwan’s air defense radars on a total of 18 days in March and have done so four consecutive days in April so far, according to the defense ministry’s website.

Tuesday’s panel, which discussed Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s visits to Asia and Europe, included Li Shih-hui, a professor at National Chengchi University (NCCU) in Taipei.

Blinken’s foreign visits to Tokyo, Seoul, and Brussels—the first diplomatic calls of the new administration—demonstrated President Joe Biden’s foreign policy strategy of re-establishing the common interests of American and its allies, Li said.

By prioritizing its competition with Beijing and doing so from the perspectives of human rights and security, the Biden administration had created a contrast between the U.S. and China, highlighting the latter’s threat to regional order in Asia, the professor added.

The strategic significance of Taiwan has risen on the agenda in discussions between Washington and Tokyo, said Li, who is with NCCU’s Japan Studies program. The island’s increased visibility on the international stage was a “diplomatic breakthrough,” he added but said it had dragged Taiwan into the larger U.S.-China battle for supremacy.

Despite the support it has received for its technological advancements and human

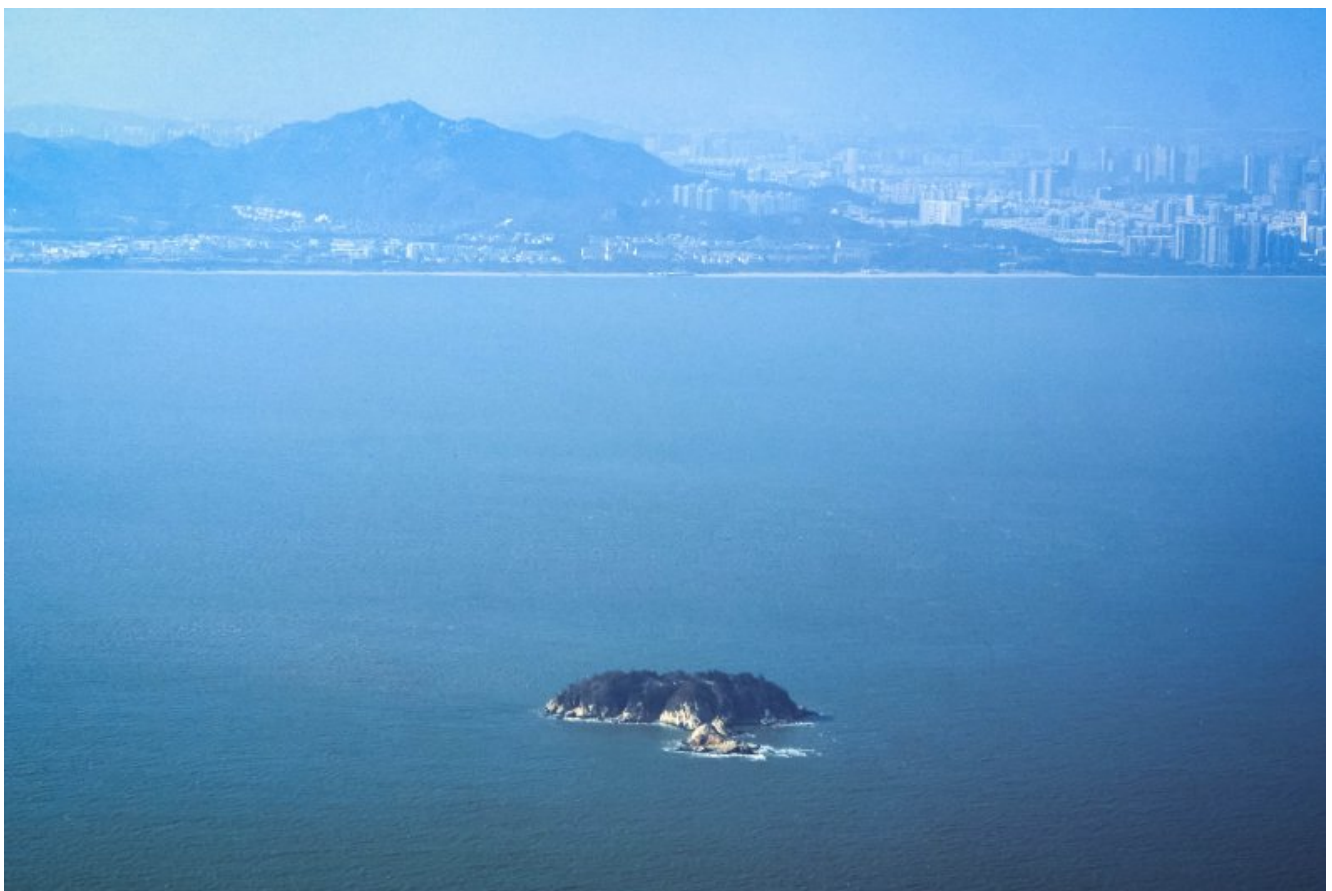
rights achievements, Taiwan needed to be agile and flexible in order to meet the strategic challenges ahead, Li concluded.

Amid warnings from Beijing, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga on Sunday stressed the importance of Taiwan's peace and stability to the region. He said he hoped to work with President Biden to lower cross-strait tensions.

"It is important for Japan and the United States to cooperate and use deterrence to create an environment where Taiwan and China can find a peaceful solution," he said in a television interview.

Suga and Biden are scheduled to hold a summit in Washington on April 16, according to the White House.

The two leaders will reportedly mention peace across the Taiwan Strait as a mutual concern in a joint statement to be released following the Biden administration's first in-person visit by a foreign leader.



Taiwan's outlying Kinmen Islands, in the foreground, lie less than 3 miles from the deep-water port of Xiamen, a city in China's eastern province of Fujian. The Taiwan Strait, just 80 miles wide at its narrowest point, separates China and

Taiwan's main island.AN RONG XU/GETTY IMAGES

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