

**US foreign policy**

## US to retain focus on China as greatest threat to international order

Secretary of state accuses Beijing of becoming 'more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad'



Antony Blinken at the Asia Society in Washington: 'Beijing's vision would move us away from the universal values that have sustained so much of the world's progress over the past 75 years' © Alex Wong/Getty Images

**Demetri Sevastopulo** in Washington YESTERDAY

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US secretary of state Antony Blinken says Washington will stay focused on China as the most serious threat to the international order despite Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In the first broad articulation of the [Biden administration's policy toward Beijing](#), Blinken said China was the only country with the intent and capabilities to reshape the international order and that it was doing so in a way that would undermine global stability.

"Beijing's vision would move us away from the universal values that have sustained so much of the world's progress over the past 75 years," Blinken said at the Asia Society in Washington.

"Under President Xi [Jinping], the ruling Chinese Communist party has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad," he said.

Blinken's speech came as [US-China relations](#) are at their worst since the countries normalised diplomatic relations in 1979. In recent months, ties have been strained by Beijing's refusal to condemn Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and by its growing military ties with Russia.

This week, Chinese and Russian nuclear-capable bombers flew together over the Sea

of Japan as US president Joe Biden was in Tokyo.

“Beijing’s defence of president Putin’s war to erase Ukraine’s sovereignty and secure a sphere of influence in Europe should raise alarm bells for all of us who call the Indo-Pacific region home,” Blinken said.

The speech came on the heels of Biden’s first visit to Asia as president, a trip intended to further his strategy of [bolstering alliances to counter China](#). It included a meeting of the Quad — a security grouping that consists of the US, Japan, Australia and India.

During his visit to Tokyo, Biden said the US [would intervene with force to defend Taiwan](#) if it came under attack from China. The comments appeared to overturn a decades-old policy under which the US does not make clear whether it would defend Taiwan, and came as concerns are rising that China could be emboldened to take military action.

But Blinken said US policy on [Taiwan](#) had not changed and that Washington opposed “any unilateral changes to the status quo from either side”. He said the US had been consistent over decades, but China had shifted.

“What has changed, is Beijing’s growing coercion — like trying to cut off Taiwan’s relations with countries around the world.” Blinken added that China was engaging in “increasingly provocative” activity by frequently flying warplanes near Taiwan. “They risk miscalculation and threaten the peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait.”

Blinken said the administration had implemented a comprehensive strategy over the past year to counter China but was “not looking for conflict or a new cold war”.

He described the US strategy regarding China as having three elements: investing more domestically to strengthen industry and the economy; bolstering alliances; and competing assertively with China.

Blinken portrayed the competition as a battle between two ideologies — democracy versus authoritarianism — but said Washington was not trying to change China.

“We do not seek to transform China’s political system. Our task is to prove once again that democracy can meet urgent challenges and create opportunity to advance human dignity, and that the future belongs to those who believe in freedom.”

While the speech was largely a summation of previous policies, Blinken said the state department would create a new China-focused team because of “the scale of the scope of the challenge posed by the People’s Republic of China”, which would test US

diplomacy “like nothing we’ve seen before”.

He said the US was willing to increase communication with China on a range of issues, but “cannot rely on Beijing” to change its trajectory.

“So we will shape the strategic environment around Beijing to advance our vision for an open, inclusive, international system,” Blinken said.

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