



# COMPARATIVE

---

## C O N N E C T I O N S

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL  
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

US-JAPAN RELATIONS

## SUGA AND BIDEN OFF TO A GOOD START

SHEILA A. SMITH, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
CHARLES T. MCCLEAN, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

The early months of 2021 offered a full diplomatic agenda for US-Japan relations as a new US administration took office. Joe Biden was sworn in as the 46th president of the United States amid considerable contention. Former President Donald Trump refused to concede defeat, and on Jan. 6, a crowd of his supporters [stormed](#) the US Capitol where Congressional representatives were [certifying the results](#) of the presidential election. The breach of the US Capitol shocked the nation and the world. Yet after his [inauguration](#) on Jan. 20, Biden and his foreign policy team soon got to work on implementing policies that emphasized on US allies and sought to restore US engagement in multilateral coalitions around the globe. The day after the inauguration, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan [reached out](#) to his counterpart in Japan, National Security Secretariat Secretary General Kitamura Shigeru, to assure him of the importance the new administration placed on its allies. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to focus the attention of leaders in the United States and Japan, however.

---

This article is extracted from *Comparative Connections: A Triannual E-Journal of Bilateral Relations in the Indo-Pacific*, Vol. 23, No. 1, May 2021. Preferred citation: Sheila A. Smith and Charles T. McClean, "US-Japan Relations: Suga and Biden Off to a Good Start," *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp 21-28.

Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide faced rising numbers of infections, declaring a [second state of emergency](#) in January, which was lifted in March, and then a [third state of emergency](#) at the end of April. As the number of cases surged, Suga suffered from public frustration over the government's handling of the pandemic response. Moreover, the Suga Cabinet had been slow to approve vaccinations, waiting until Japanese clinical trials were conducted before beginning negotiations with Pfizer and other pharmaceutical companies for supplying vaccines to the Japanese public. The Tokyo Olympics also loomed large for the Suga Cabinet. Public opinion in Japan was increasingly negative toward the idea of hosting the Olympics, and yet the government continued to emphasize the importance of hosting the Games. Suga, who [entered office](#) last September with an impressively high approval rating of 74%, saw his approval fall as low as 33% in some polls in January ([Mainichi](#), [Asahi](#)) before rebounding slightly to 40-44% in April ([NHK](#), [Asahi](#)).



Figure 1 US President Joe Biden speaks as he holds a joint news conference with Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga in the Rose Garden at the White House in Washington, U.S., April 16, 2021. Photo: Reuters/Tom Brenner

The US-Japan alliance thus focused on navigating the leadership transition in Washington. A new foreign policy team came into office, with many familiar faces from the Obama era. Despite the pandemic, Washington and Tokyo were still trying to manage the growing assertiveness of China in the vicinity of Japan and across the Indo-Pacific. Within the first few months, the Biden administration made it clear that the Indo-Pacific was a foreign policy priority, and Japan an increasingly critical partner in shaping its agenda in the region. In April, Suga became the first head of state to visit Washington, DC, demonstrating the new focus

on Asian allies and on the primacy of the US-Japan partnership.

### Biden's Team Gets to Work

While Trump's efforts at obstructing the presidential transition spilled well into January, Biden wasted no time in sharing his planned nominations for key positions on his foreign policy team. On Nov. 24, just 17 days after the Associated Press and other major networks [declared](#) Biden the winner of the US presidential election, Biden [announced](#) Antony Blinken as secretary of state and Jake Sullivan as national security advisor. Two weeks later, Biden [announced](#) Lloyd Austin as his secretary of defense.

All three men have worked closely with Biden in the past. Blinken first worked for the president nearly 20 years ago when he was a foreign policy advisor to then Senator Biden on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Blinken went on to serve as national security advisor to Vice President Biden (2009-2013), deputy national security advisor to President Obama (2013-2015), and deputy secretary of State (2015-2017). Sullivan likewise has a long history with the president. After serving as director of policy planning in the State Department (2011-2013), Sullivan succeeded Blinken as national security advisor to Vice President Biden (2013-2014). Biden similarly got to know the defense secretary-to-be well when Austin was commander of United States Central Command (2013-2016), and Austin was the commanding officer of Biden's late son, Beau.

Thus, in addition to their personal ties to the president, Blinken, Sullivan, and Austin bring deep experience in Washington policymaking to the table, and they are familiar to many in Asia. On Jan. 13, Biden further signaled his administration's intention to focus on Asia when he announced that Kurt Campbell would fill the newly created position of National Security Council Coordinator for the Indo-Pacific. Campbell has experience in both the departments of defense and state, having worked on the Futenma relocation plan as deputy assistant secretary of defense for Asia and the Pacific in the Clinton administration, and on the Asia pivot as Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs in the Obama administration.

With the key members of his foreign policy team in place, Biden's outreach to Asia has proceeded quickly from the transition period through his first few months as president. Biden and Suga [spoke](#) by telephone on Nov. 12, just five days after the election was called, and [again](#) on Jan. 28, just eight days after Biden's inauguration. Since entering office, Biden's team has been in [close coordination](#) with their counterparts in Tokyo and other regional allies to orchestrate a flurry of diplomatic meetings throughout the winter and spring, culminating in the [summit meeting](#) between Suga and Biden on April 16.



Figure 2 US President Joe Biden hosted Japanese Prime Minister Suga for his first foreign leader visit. Photo: [Twitter/@WhiteHouse](#)

### China's Increasing Activism

As the US leadership transition took place, Beijing continued to challenge the interests of the United States and Japan. From the imposition of a National Security Law in Hong Kong to the growing repression in Xinjiang, US observers became increasingly alarmed at the acceleration of China's crackdown internally. Moreover, China's maritime and air forces grew ever more active in the vicinity of Japan. In January and February, the Japanese government reported considerable activity in and around the Senkaku Islands. At a news conference on March 1, Chief Cabinet Secretary Kato Katsunobu shared that Chinese Coast Guard ships had been spotted entering the contiguous zone near the Senkakus on [26 of 28 days in February](#), including six instances where these ships crossed into Japan's territorial waters and five cases where they approached Japanese fishing boats.

But it was PLA activities in and around Taiwan that drew the attention of Washington and Tokyo. Increasingly large deployments of PLA

Air Forces crossed into Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), signaling greater Chinese willingness to demonstrate its military power vis-à-vis Taiwan. Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense reported that Chinese aircraft had violated its ADIZ on [more than half of the days](#) in the first four months of 2021 and [more than 380 times](#) in 2020. The largest such incursion came on April 12, when 25 military aircraft [breached](#) Taiwanese airspace, just days before the Suga-Biden summit in Washington.

Japan's Ministry of Defense chronicled these intrusions closely as well, and increasingly Japanese political leaders spoke publicly about their concerns over how Washington would react. For example, in December, the parliamentary vice minister of defense, Nakayama Yasuhide, called on the incoming Biden administration to make its policy toward Taiwan clear in an interview with *Reuters*. Stating his belief that Taiwan would be a ["red line in Asia,"](#) Nakayama urged the Biden administration to "be strong" and make its policy clear so that Japan would know what to do.

China's use of economic leverage to coerce its trading partners continued to worry policymakers in both Tokyo and Washington. The Chinese government [imposed trade sanctions](#) on imports from Australia in 2020 after Canberra had [called for a WHO investigation](#) of the origins of COVID-19. Beijing imposed tariffs on barley, beef, coal, cotton, wine, and other imports from Australia, costing Australia approximately [\\$3 billion in lost exports](#) in 2020. In a speech at NATO headquarters in Brussels on March 24, Blinken called out ["China's blatant economic coercion"](#) as a threat not only to Australia, but for all democratic nations. Yet, Beijing suggested it would treat the European Union in a similar fashion if it did not proceed with the joint investment agreement the two concluded in principle last December.

Rising tensions between Beijing and the Western nations grew even more as the Biden administration along with the European Union, United Kingdom, and Canada announced on March 22 that they would [sanction](#) Chinese individuals for their role in the repression in Xinjiang. Relations with China thus became more tense as the Biden administration [aligned itself with other nations](#) on human rights violations within China. Japan notably did not

join in these sanctions, or in earlier ones concerning Hong Kong, although Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu [raised Japan's concerns](#) in his meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on April 5.

China's growing military activism was the highlight of the testimony on Capitol Hill of outgoing US Indo-Pacific Commander Adm. Philip Davidson. On March 9 in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Davidson said that Chinese activities in the region had "[grown increasingly confrontational](#)." Moreover, Davidson noted that he believed that China was increasingly demonstrating its intention to take military action against Taiwan. Across the region, Davidson's assessment of Chinese capabilities was headline news. Especially noteworthy was his comment that he believed China would move militarily against Taiwan, saying "the threat is manifest during this decade, in fact [in the next six years](#)."

### The Biden Administration's Indo-Pacific Rollout

The Biden administration's concerted diplomatic push with Japan and its other allies in the Indo-Pacific highlighted the president's call for greater US global engagement and investment, but it also revealed the deepening worry in the region about China's growing assertiveness. The strategic outlook of Tokyo and Washington, in particular, converged in the effort to accelerate cooperation among the Quad.

On Feb. 18, Secretary Blinken and Foreign Minister Motegi [participated](#) with their Quad counterparts in a US-Japan-Australia-India foreign ministers' meeting by telephone. The call paved the way for the first [Quad leaders' summit](#) on March 12, with Biden, Suga, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi all joining via videoconference. Elevating the Quad discussions to the leader level significantly raised the profile of the group, and the meeting led to several [concrete deliverables](#). In their [joint statement](#), the four leaders agreed to expand COVID-19 vaccine production and distribution; establish working groups on the pandemic, climate change, and emerging technologies; promote a "free, open rules-based order" in the Indo-Pacific; and hold an in-person leaders' summit by the end of 2021. Speaking with reporters at a briefing at the White House after the meeting, National Security Advisor Sullivan

said "The Quad ... at the end of today, is now a [critical part of the architecture](#) of the Indo-Pacific."



Figure 3 Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga speaks while a monitor displays US President Joe Biden, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the virtual Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. Photo: Kiyoshi Ota/Bloomberg

The Biden administration followed up on the Quad summit by sending Secretaries Blinken and Austin to Tokyo, and then Seoul, in their first overseas trips since taking office. On March 16, the two joined Foreign Minister Motegi and Minister of Defense Kishi Nobuo for a Japan-US Security Consultative Committee ("2+2") meeting in Tokyo. In a first for these meetings, the two governments singled out China in their [joint statement](#) and expressed "serious concerns" about its destabilizing behavior and growing maritime assertiveness, including specific mentions of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and the human rights situations in Hong Kong and Xinjiang.



Figure 4 US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin bumps elbows with Japanese Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi following a Tokyo press conference. Photo: Pool via Kyodo

The [joint statement](#) from the 2+2 talks in Seoul similarly highlighted the importance of regional security and Korea-US-Japan trilateral cooperation, although it focused more on North Korea and did not explicitly mention China. Building on these talks, on April 2, National Security Advisor Sullivan hosted National Security Secretariat Secretary General Kitamura and Korea's National Security Advisor Suh Hoon in Annapolis for the first ever US-Japan-Korea Trilateral National Security Advisors' Dialogue. The three officials [discussed](#) stability on the Korean Peninsula and shared support for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The surge of US diplomatic activity in Asia was largely welcomed by its allies in the region, who have worried about the extent to which the United States, Japan, India, Australia, and South Korea are aligned in their priorities vis-à-vis China. The concerted effort by Biden officials in their first few months in office appears to have gone a long way toward signaling that the new administration places great importance on the region, and on a coalitional approach to the challenges posed by China as well as global problems such as the pandemic and climate change.

Chinese reactions to the flurry of US diplomacy, by contrast, were much less enthusiastic. In their first face-to-face meeting on March 18-19 in Anchorage, Alaska, senior officials on both sides offered unusually terse public remarks. Secretary Blinken opened by saying the US side planned to discuss its "[deep concerns](#)" with Chinese actions, "including in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, Taiwan, cyber-attacks on the United States, [and] economic coercion of our allies," which Blinken said "threaten the rules-based order that maintains global stability." Chinese Foreign Affairs Minister Yang Jiechi [responded](#) with a long speech criticizing US democracy, treatment of minorities, and foreign policy, saying "the United States uses its military force and financial hegemony to carry out long-arm jurisdiction and suppress other countries." While both sides later said there were [some productive elements to the discussions](#), the animosity displayed in the public remarks suggested there is a long road ahead to improving US-China relations.

### **The Biden-Suga Summit**

Japan's importance to the Biden administration's Indo-Pacific approach resulted

in the [visit](#) of Prime Minister Suga to Washington, DC on April 15-18. As the first in-person head of state to visit Biden, Suga brought his own agenda in addition to a reaffirmation of the goals set forth in the March 2+2 meeting.

In an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal*, Suga [laid out his vision](#) for Japan's economic recovery and his hopes for focusing on "green policies and digital transformation." These goals were reflected in the [US-Japan Competitiveness and Resilience \(CoRe\) Partnership](#), one of the two initiatives discussed in the [joint statement](#), in which the two leaders committed to investing a combined \$4.5 billion to "strengthen competitiveness in the digital field ... including 5G and next-generation mobile networks." Similarly, a [US-Japan Climate Partnership on Ambition, Decarbonization, and Clean Energy](#) was also identified as a priority initiative, reflecting President Biden's hope for renewing a global climate change effort.

But attention focused less on the US-Japan agenda for accelerating bilateral scientific and environmental cooperation. Instead, what the US president and Japanese prime minister said about Taiwan [created quite a stir](#), particularly dominating headlines in the Japanese press. For the first time since President Richard Nixon and Prime Minister Sato Eisaku noted Japan's security was linked to the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan in their [1969 Joint Communiqué](#), Biden and Suga included reference to US and Japanese interests in Taiwan. In a paragraph noting their concerns over Chinese behavior, including human rights and maritime challenges, Biden and Suga referenced their desire to "underscore the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and encourage the peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues." The language was not new; US and Japanese leaders had frequently noted this shared interest in peace across the Taiwan Strait.

But the inclusion of Taiwan in a leaders' statement, nonetheless, led many in Japan and the United States to [wonder aloud what this might mean](#) for the potential for the use of force by Beijing. The US debate reflects [serious divisions](#) about both the nature of the challenge for US policy as well as the assessment of [whether Beijing might use military force](#). On April 28, a [provocative piece](#) in *Foreign Affairs* magazine suggested that defending Taiwan against China was not in US interests and Washington should step back. In contrast,

National Security Council Coordinator for the Indo-Pacific Campbell said in an interview with *Nikkei* on May 5 that the long-held US policy of strategic ambiguity “provides ... the [best pathway towards maintaining peace and stability](#).”

Domestic politics will, of course, shape whatever US-Japan diplomatic agenda emerges. Perhaps more interesting than the choice of diplomatic language in Washington, representatives of both Biden and Suga chose that same week in April to demonstrate Japanese and US interests in Taiwan and its vicinity. On April 15, at the request of Biden, former Sen. Chris Dodd traveled to Taipei to meet with President Tsai Ing-wen accompanied by two former deputy secretaries of states, Richard Armitage of the Bush administration and James Steinberg of the Obama administration. Tsai, in her public comments at the meeting with the US delegation, noted: “We are [very willing to work with like-minded countries](#), including the United States, to jointly safeguard the peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific and deter adventurous manoeuvres and provocations.”

Meanwhile, on April 17, Japan’s Defense Minister Kishi visited Yonaguni Island, the closest island in the Ryukyu chain to Taiwan. His Twitter account noted his trip, with a [photo](#) of the defense minister looking across the 110 kilometers of sea between the island and Taiwan. Kishi visited the Ground Self-Defense Forces stationed there, a not-so-subtle signal of how Japan’s defense interests would be intimately linked should armed conflict occur in and around Taiwan, and said afterward that “strengthening the defense system in the southwestern region is an [extremely important issue](#).” By early May, Japanese media reported that the Ministry of Defense was working to [update defense capabilities](#) throughout Japan’s southwestern islands.

## Conclusion

2021 began with a busy agenda for US-Japan diplomatic cooperation. The agenda was full but calling out China for its recent behavior dominated early statements of alliance objectives. The Biden administration’s new foreign and security policy team quickly joined Tokyo, as well as other allies, in defining its Indo-Pacific approach to cope with this strategic competition. In rapid succession, the president’s Quad meeting, Cabinet-level

consultations in person in Tokyo and Seoul, and invitation to Suga to be the first leader to meet with Biden demonstrated how closely coordinated the US and Japanese efforts to build a coalition of like-minded regional partners would be.

Lingering just below the surface, however, is the equally important effort by the Biden administration to rebuild confidence in US-Japan-ROK trilateral consultations. After reaching out to his counterparts within days of assuming office, National Security Advisor Sullivan [invited](#) Japanese and South Korean national security advisors to a meeting in Annapolis on April 2. On April 29, military leaders from the trilateral nations [gathered](#) in Honolulu to discuss the military balance in the Indo-Pacific, and intelligence chiefs are expected to meet in the near future. On May 5, a brief meeting between Japanese and South Korean foreign ministers with Secretary Blinken was [held](#) in London on the sidelines of the G7 meeting. President Moon Jae-in is expected to visit Washington, DC in May, suggesting that an emphasis on allied coordination on peninsular security remains a priority of US policymakers.

Prospects for US-Japan consultations over the remainder of 2021 are good and will likely focus on several priorities. First, a second 2+2 is expected to follow up on Japan’s defense concerns and on the implementation of the US Pacific Deterrence Initiative, passed into law by Congress in December. Second, the working groups established at the Quad Leaders’ Meeting should begin to reveal the contours of Quad cooperation on regional COVID-19 vaccinations, climate change, technological innovation, and supply chain resilience. Third, Japan’s election looms large. Suga’s management of the COVID-19 pandemic has been closely scrutinized, and an extension of a third state of emergency has many in Japan frustrated. The Tokyo Olympics this summer will continue to be a [source of criticism](#) and a recent [series of by-elections](#) gave Japan’s opposition some hope that they may put a dent in the LDP’s electoral chances.

# CHRONOLOGY OF US-JAPAN RELATIONS

## JANUARY – APRIL 2021

**Jan. 6, 2021:** Members of the US Congress meet to [certify](#) the November election results, but a violent mob of Trump supporters [storms](#) the US Capitol building.

**Jan. 7, 2021:** Suga [declares](#) a second state of emergency due to COVID-19 in four prefectures (Tokyo, Kanagawa, Saitama, and Chiba) through Feb. 7.

**Jan. 12, 2021:** Kurt Campbell and Rush Doshi [publish](#) article in *Foreign Affairs* on the US role in Asia.

**Jan. 13, 2021:** Biden [appoints](#) Campbell as deputy assistant to the President and coordinator for Indo-Pacific affairs on the National Security Council.

**Jan. 13, 2021:** Suga [declares](#) a state of emergency for seven more prefectures (Osaka, Hyogo, Kyoto, Gifu, Aichi, Fukuoka, and Tochigi) through Feb. 7.

**Jan. 19, 2021:** Biden [appoints](#) Ely Ratner principal adviser on China in the Department of Defense.

**Jan. 20, 2021:** Joe Biden is [inaugurated](#) as the 46th US president.

**Jan. 20, 2021:** Biden announces the US will [rejoin](#) the Paris Climate Agreement.

**Jan. 20, 2021:** Biden [restores](#) US ties with the World Health Organization.

**Jan. 20, 2021:** Avril Haines is [confirmed](#) by the Senate to be Director of National Intelligence.

**Jan. 21, 2021:** National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and National Security Secretariat Secretary General Kitamura Shigeru [speak](#) by telephone.

**Jan. 22, 2021:** Lloyd Austin is [confirmed](#) by the Senate to be secretary of Defense.

**Jan. 22, 2021:** China [passes](#) Coast Guard Law authorizing its coast guard to use force in defense of Chinese territorial claims.

**Jan. 23, 2021:** Biden [publishes](#) article in *Foreign Affairs* on US foreign policy.

**Jan. 25, 2021:** Janet Yellen is [confirmed](#) by the Senate to be secretary of the Treasury.

**Jan. 26, 2021:** Antony Blinken is [confirmed](#) by the Senate to be secretary of State.

**Jan. 26, 2021:** Foreign Minister Motegi and Secretary of State Blinken [speak](#) by telephone.

**Jan. 28, 2021:** Biden and Suga [speak](#) by telephone.

**Feb. 2, 2021:** Alejandro Mayorkas is [confirmed](#) by Senate to be secretary of Homeland Security.

**Feb. 2, 2021:** Suga [extends](#) the state of emergency to March 7 for 10 prefectures.

**Feb. 11, 2021:** Secretary of State Blinken and Foreign Minister Motegi [speak](#) by telephone.

**Feb. 18, 2021:** FM Motegi, Secretary Blinken, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Marise Payne, and Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar [speak](#) by telephone in a meeting of the Quad foreign ministers.

**Feb. 18, 2021:** Acting Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Sung Kim, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director General for Asian and Oceanian Affairs Funakoshi Takehiro, and Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs Noh Kyu-duk [hold](#) US-Japan-Korea meeting on North Korea.

**Feb. 19, 2021:** The United States officially [rejoins](#) the Paris Climate Agreement.

**Feb. 23, 2021:** G7 Foreign Ministers [release](#) a joint statement on the situation in Burma.

**March 1, 2021:** Suga [lifts](#) the state of emergency in six prefectures (Aichi, Gifu, Osaka, Kyoto, Hyogo, and Fukuoka).

**March 2, 2021:** Biden [publishes](#) the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance.

**March 3, 2021:** Secretary Blinken [gives a speech](#) outlining the Biden administration's vision for US foreign policy.

**March 10, 2021:** Secretary Blinken and NSA Sullivan [meet](#) China's Director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi and State Councilor Wang Yi in Anchorage, Alaska. [Remarks](#) are released on March 18.

**March 12, 2021:** Suga, Biden, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi [hold](#) first Japan-US-Australia-India ("Quad") video conference. [Joint Statement](#)

**March 12, 2021:** Acting Assistant Secretary of State Sung Kim and Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs David Helvey [give a briefing](#) ahead of the secretaries' trip to Japan and Korea.

**March 15-17, 2021:** Secretaries Blinken and Austin [travel](#) to Japan for the Japan-US Security Consultative Committee ("2+2") meeting in Tokyo.

**March 15, 2021:** Secretary Blinken holds virtual meetings with Japanese [business leaders](#) and [women entrepreneurs](#).

**March 16, 2021:** Secretaries Blinken and Austin [meet](#) with Suga before the 2+2 meeting.

**March 16, 2021:** FM Motegi, DM Kishi Nobuo, Secretaries Blinken, and Defense Austin [hold](#) a Japan-US Security Consultative Committee ("2+2") meeting in Tokyo. [Joint Statement](#), [Press Conference](#)

**March 17, 2021:** Secretary Blinken gives interviews to [TV Asahi](#) and [Nippon TV](#).

**March 17, 2021:** Katherine Tai is [confirmed](#) by the Senate to be US Trade Representative.

**March 20, 2021:** Secretary of Defense Austin [meets](#) Indian Defense Minister Raksha Mantra Shri Rajnath Singh in New Delhi.

**March 22, 2021:** Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control [announces](#) sanctions on two Chinese officials in response to the human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

**March 22, 2021:** Suga lifts the state of emergency in the four remaining prefectures (Tokyo, Kanagawa, Saitama, and Chiba).

**March 23, 2021:** FM Motegi and US Trade Representative Tai [speak](#) by telephone.

**April 2, 2021:** NSA Sullivan, National Security Secretariat Secretary General Kitamura, and Korea's National Security Advisor Suh Hoon [hold](#) first US-Japan-Korea Trilateral National Security Advisors' Dialogue in Annapolis, Maryland.

**April 3, 2021:** Chinese aircraft carrier and five escort vessels [pass by](#) Okinawa en route to the Pacific.

**April 12, 2021:** China [sends](#) 25 warplanes into Taiwan's air defense identification zone.

**April 14, 2021:** Suga [publishes](#) an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal*.

**April 15-18, 2021:** Suga [visits](#) the United States to meet with Biden.

**April 16, 2021:** Biden and Suga [hold](#) a US-Japan summit meeting in Washington, DC. [Joint Statement](#), [Fact Sheet on Competitiveness and Resilience \(CoRe\) Partnership](#), [Fact Sheet on Climate Partnership](#)

**April 19, 2021:** Biden [expands](#) COVID-19 vaccine eligibility to all adults in the United States.

**April 21, 2021:** Biden [nominates](#) Ely Ratner to be assistant secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs.

**April 23, 2021:** Suga [declares](#) a third state of emergency in Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, and Hyogo due to a surge in COVID-19 cases.

**April 29, 2021:** Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley [meets](#) Chief of Staff Joint Staff Gen. Yamazaki Koji and Chairman of the Republic of Korea Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Won-in Choul in Honolulu.