

## 9TH CHINA-JAPAN HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL DIALOGUE-BREAKING THE ICE

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September 16, 2022

*(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)*



China hosted the ninth China-Japan high-level political dialogue on August 17, 2022 in Tianjin. The high-level gathering was co-chaired by Yang Jiechi, Director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs and Akiba Takeo Secretary-General of Japan's National Security Secretariat. This dialogue took place as Tokyo and Beijing prepare to mark the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic ties on September 29. It is important to mention that this dialogue followed China's cancellation of the foreign ministers meeting of the two sides after Japan signed on a statement issued by some countries from the Group of Seven (G7), which protested against China's military drills and war games in close proximity to Taiwan.<sup>1</sup> China termed these statements by Japanese officials as "serious provocation".<sup>2</sup> The timing of this dialogue is of great significance in the wake of escalating tensions in Taiwan and growing resentment between Washington and Beijing.

1 "China, Japan officials meet amid Taiwan tensions," August 18, 2022  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/china-japan-officials-meet-amid-taiwan-tensions/2022/08/18/a7477bac-1ebd-11ed-9ce6-68253bd31864\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/china-japan-officials-meet-amid-taiwan-tensions/2022/08/18/a7477bac-1ebd-11ed-9ce6-68253bd31864_story.html)

2 High-Ranked Japan and China Officials hold seven-hour talks," August 18, 2022  
<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/rest-of-world/high-ranked-japan-and-china-officials-hold-seven-hour-talks/articleshow/93635302.cms>

### ***A brief Recap of the Statements by Chinese and Japanese officials***

In his opening remarks, Mr. Yang Jiechi said that the historic linkages and exchanges between Japan and China date back to 2000 years. The normalization of diplomatic relations between the two states have reinforced that peaceful co-existence and amicable cooperation is the only right course in China-Japan relationship.<sup>3</sup> It was also emphasized by Mr. Jiechi that in the current global scenario, China-Japan relations have become even more prominent and both the nations have important roles to play in the regional and global landscape.<sup>4</sup> It was affirmed that President Xi Jinping's Global Development and Security Initiatives are the answers to the questions of global peace and development.<sup>5</sup> It was asserted by the Chinese side that Taiwan is an 'inalienable' part of Chinese territory. Therefore, Japan needs to understand that to keep a steady relationship with China and to safeguard the interests of the people of the two states Japan needs to form the correct perception of China by adopting a practical and rational policy and by sticking to the trajectory of peace and development rather than the path of zero sum games and confrontation.<sup>6</sup> Hence, Japan should adhere to four political documents and political unanimity between the two states and work closely with China to build a more 'mature', stable and robust relationship. The Chinese official stressed that there is an urgent need to eliminate external and internal differences and work out a mechanism to build a dynamic and robust China-Japan relationship, which meets the demands of this modern era.<sup>7</sup>

While Mr. Takeo Akiba, Japan's National Security Advisor in his remarks reiterated and maintained Japan's position on Taiwan that peace and stability in Taiwan Strait is essential for regional stability.<sup>8</sup> Few days back, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mr. Wang Wenbin in a press conference categorically said that China does not accept Japan's claims of EEZ stating that the two countries have yet to define the boundaries in relevant waters.<sup>9</sup> The Japanese National Security Advisor however, in his remarks at the political dialogue protested over China's firing of ballistic missiles during its military drills, out of which five fell in Japanese claimed Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).<sup>10</sup> In addition to the confusion over this economic zone, the Japanese side expressed apprehensions over

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<sup>3</sup> "China, Japan hold 9<sup>th</sup> high-level political dialogue," August 18, 2022, [http://www.china.org.cn/world/2022-08/18/content\\_78377100.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/world/2022-08/18/content_78377100.htm)

<sup>4</sup> "The 9th China-Japan High-level Political Dialogue is Held in Tianjin," August 18, 2022 [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/202208/t20220821\\_10747206.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202208/t20220821_10747206.html)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> "The 9th China-Japan High-level Political Dialogue is Held in Tianjin," August 18, 2022 [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/202208/t20220821\\_10747206.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202208/t20220821_10747206.html)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> "Japan security adviser held talks with China's top diplomat Yang on Wednesday –Jiji," August 18, 2022 <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-security-adviser-held-talks-with-chinas-foreign-minister-yang-wednesday-2022-08-17/>

<sup>9</sup> "Japan and China vow to continue dialogue despite Taiwan tensions," August 18, 2022 <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/08/18/national/politics-diplomacy/china-japan-officials-meet/>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

China's coast guard ships in Japanese waters (around the Tokyo controlled and Beijing claimed Senkaku Islands), showing no signs of discontinuing intrusions and interventions.<sup>11</sup> Mr. Takeo Akiba also reverberated with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in reproving and protesting Beijing's recent show of maritime assertiveness and military might.<sup>12</sup>

In his comments the Chinese official Mr. Yang Yiechi had almost said the same thing but with a contrasting perspective. He stressed that the Taiwan question is very important and it affects the political foundation of China-Japan relations and the basic principles of good faith and trust between the two countries.<sup>13</sup> This clearly indicates that Japan will have to distance itself from the American narrative and provocations towards China, which will only contribute in creating more political divide and instability in the region.

Despite differing views on certain issues, the overall tone of the dialogue was optimistic. Both sides also had an exchange of views on regional and international issues of mutual importance and concern particularly the situation in Ukraine after the Russian invasion and North Korea. The two sides agreed that the dialogue was timely, candid, comprehensive and constructive, with some useful consensus reached. There was an agreement that the two sides will continue to maintain dialogue and communication. In the seven-hour long meeting it was also agreed upon that the misapprehensions between Tokyo and Beijing should be resolved solely by the two states without any involvement from the West.<sup>14</sup> However, the Chinese side repeatedly asserted that the foundation of China-Japan relations rests on the 'Taiwan question', basic trust, political foundation of ties and on good faith between the two states.<sup>15</sup>

All in all, both sides affirmed that there is a need to have multi-layered communication, in-person talks and dialogues to improve the bilateral ties.<sup>16</sup> Along with this, the diplomatic ties, economic linkages and strategic communications between the two states should be strengthened.

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<sup>11</sup> Japan and China vow to continue dialogue despite Taiwan tensions," August 18, 2022  
<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/08/18/national/politics-diplomacy/china-japan-officials-meet/>

<sup>12</sup> High-Ranked Japan and China Officials hold seven-hour talks," August 18, 2022  
<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/rest-of-world/high-ranked-japan-and-china-officials-hold-seven-hour-talks/articleshow/93635302.cms>

<sup>13</sup> "China, Japan officials meet amid Taiwan tensions," August 18, 2022  
<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/china-japan-officials-meet-amid-taiwan-tensions/articleshow/93634027.cms>

<sup>14</sup> "Japan and China vow to continue dialogue despite Taiwan tensions," August 18, 2022  
<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/08/18/national/politics-diplomacy/china-japan-officials-meet/>

<sup>15</sup> "Taiwan question bears on basic trust, political foundation of ties, China tells Japan at high-level dialogue," August 18, 2022  
<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202208/1273351.shtml>

<sup>16</sup> Japan and China vow to continue dialogue despite Taiwan tensions," August 18, 2022

**Conclusion**

In the middle of shifting power structures as the two sides struggle to bring an equilibrium in their relationship by dialogue, engagement and mutual respect there certainly will be multiple challenges in maintaining the right balance. Tokyo unquestionably will have to show a certain amount of disengagement and disentanglement from the American narrative on China and accept Taiwan as a part of Chinese territory only then it can enjoy a robust relationship with Beijing. Concisely, the ninth China-Japan Security dialogue offers a necessary course of action, guidelines and a mechanism to work on improving China-Japan ties through exchange of views, which must later be followed by viable plans and actions.