

The Results and Implications of the 2022 Japan-China Summit

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While working at NARS, she obtained a doctorate of political science (Ph.D.) in August 2022 at HUFS GSIAS. The doctoral thesis analyzed the legislative process of Japan's administrative reform, economic policy, and foreign and security policies. She participated as a visiting researcher at the Asia Centre in Paris, France for a month, from October 24th to November 25th, 2022.

The findings, interpretations, and conclusions in this report express the researcher's opinions and do not necessarily reflect the views of NARS.

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This paper was analyzed based on the presentation of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Background

On November 17th 2022 local time, The Japan-China summit was held in Bangkok, Thailand on the occasion of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit. It was the first face-to-face summit between Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who took office in October 2022, and Chinese President Xi Jinping. The Japan-China summit was held about three years after Xi and former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met in Beijing in December 2019.

In particular, the meeting was held on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China.

The two leaders held a 45-minute meeting and agreed to closely communicate on all levels, including between the leaders, for the development of bilateral relations. The deteriorated relationship between Japan and China, worsened by episodes such as the Senkaku Islands contention (in Chinese Diaoyudao), a territorial dispute between China and Japan, and the problems surrounding Taiwan, remains difficult to improve.

Five-point Consensus

The leaders of Japan and China announced through the foreign ministries of each country that they had agreed to reach a Five-point Consensus on Stabilizing and Developing Bilateral Relations.

However, according to the announcements by each foreign ministry of the two countries, it can be seen that there are different contents among the five agreements.

To start with, the first agreement is largely non-disputed: the importance of China-Japan relations has not and will not change. According to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the teams of the two sides conducted consultations and reached a five-point common understanding on stabilizing and developing bilateral relations. They jointly abide by the principles of the four China-Japan documents, and act on the political consensus that the two countries should "be partners, not threats". Furthermore, they agree to step up high-level exchanges, dialogue and communication, keep enhancing political mutual trust, and work together to build a stable and constructive China-Japan relationship fit for the new era.

The contents of the first agreement of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs are similar: In October last year, in occasion of the 50th anniversary of the normalization of

relations, Prime Minister Kishida agreed on the establishment of "constructive and stable Japan-China relations". Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, exchanges between the two countries are steadily recovering. President Xi stated that Japan-China relations have broad common interests and potential for cooperation. The importance of Japan-China relations remains the same. He and Prime Minister Kishida will work together to build a Japan-China relationship to meet the demands of the new era.

Nevertheless, there is a difference between the two countries regarding the following second agreement. Japanese Prime Minister Kishida expressed serious concerns about the East China Sea situation, including the situation surrounding the Senkaku Islands, and China's military activities around Japan, such as the launch of ballistic missiles into Japan's waters, which entered the EEZ, in August this year. At the same time, Japan and China agreed to strengthen communication through the Japan-China Security Dialogue and the early operation of the hotline under the Japan-China Air Liaison Mechanism. In addition, Prime Minister Kishida reiterated the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, putting forward his proposal on their position on human rights and Japanese detainment cases in China, and urged the early abolition of restrictions on importing Japanese food.

On the other hand, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the second agreement decreed as follows: work towards an early new round of China-Japan High-level Economic Dialogue; step up cooperation in energy conservation, environmental protection, green development, health care, old-age care and other fields; and jointly foster a fair, non-discriminatory and predictable business environment for enterprises.

Third, Japanese Prime Minister Kishida expressed his hopes that China would make a positive contribution to the international community under the established international rules. The two leaders agreed to support cooperation in green economy, medical care, nursing care, and health care. At the same time, Prime Minister Kishida stated that it is important to ensure the legitimate business activities of Japanese companies by ensuring a transparent, predictable and fair business environment. The two leaders also agreed to reinvigorate national exchanges, including youth who will be responsible for the future of the two countries. The two leaders agreed to soon hold the Japan-China High-Level Economic Dialogue and the Japan-China High-Level Human-Cultural Exchange Dialogue.

The Chinese foreign ministry said that the third and fourth agreements state as follows. Concerning the third, there were positive comments on the commemorative events this year for the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan. A new meeting of the China-Japan high-level consultation mechanism on people-to-people and cultural exchanges will be held at an early date, and the two will actively carry out exchanges and communication between governments, political parties, legislatures, and localities, as well as among the young people. The fourth point sets to establish an early launch of a direct telephone line under the defense sector's maritime

and air liaison mechanism, further strengthen dialogue and communication between defense and maritime departments, and jointly abide to the four-point principled common understandings reached in 2014.

According to the fourth point of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japanese Prime Minister Kishida emphasized the need to act together as a responsible power on international issues such as climate change and development financing based on international rules. Regarding the situation in Ukraine, he called for China to play a responsible role in maintaining international peace and security. Moreover, Russia's suggestion of using nuclear weapons in Ukraine is extremely worrying, and the two leaders agreed that nuclear weapons should not be used and that nuclear war should not be waged. As for North Korea, Japanese Prime Minister Kishida mentioned serious concerns about the activation of nuclear and missile activities and said he hoped that China, including the Security Council, would play a role. He also called for understanding and support for an immediate resolution of the abduction issue and confirmed that the two leaders will continue to work closely together.

The last and fifth point said that the two leaders agreed to continue to communicate closely at all levels, including at the summit level. According to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they should jointly uphold the responsibility of maintaining international and regional peace and prosperity, scale up coordination and cooperation in international and regional affairs, and strive to tackle global challenges.

Implications for East Asia

It can be said that the two leaders' emphasis on the importance of bilateral relations and the need for cooperation is a very important achievement. It is meaningful that the two countries agreed to strengthen communication in the security sector, and to cooperate to benefit both in the green economy, such as environmental and energy saving, medical care, and healthcare sectors, and to resume dialogue between related ministers.

However, there is a difference in China's position, as it's believed that Japan should implement its own policy toward China, away from the influence of the U.S., while Japanese Prime Minister Kishida urged China to respond to North Korea's nuclear weapons program in the UN Security Council.

In addition, South Korea should carefully watch the outcome of the bilateral summit between China and Japan as it is in a position to improve Korea-China relations and Korea-Japan relations.

In conclusion, the two countries were able to communicate meaningfully, each side expressing their interests and points of view, to try and bridge the differences and overcome common concerns.