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Digest

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Developments in China-Japan Relations

On the side lines of the Munich Security Conference, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi met with Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs Wang Yi. China and Japan marked the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations in 2022, and 2023 marks the 45th anniversary of the signing of the China-Japan Treaty of Peace and Friendship. During the discussions on February 18, Wang Yi stressed that ‘the right way for the two countries to get along is to learn from history and create a bright future’. Furthermore, it was suggested that Japan should take ‘stock of experience and lessons, steer clear of internal and external disruptions, and work in the same direction with China, so as to ensure that China-Japan relations move forward steadily on the right track’. China emphasised that ‘unilateralism, decoupling and severing industrial and supply chains are not in the interests of any party’.

Subsequently on February 22, China-Japan Security Dialogue was held during which Tokyo reiterated its grave concerns about developments in the East China Sea, including the Senkaku Islands, and Beijing’s military activity near Japan that includes joint exercises with Moscow. Japan has reconfirmed its position with reference to the significance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. Both sides agreed to continue coordination in order to begin operations of the “Hotline between Japanese and Chinese Defence

Authorities” under the “Maritime and Aerial Communication Mechanism between Defence Authorities of Japan and China” this year.

They further agreed to reinforce communications utilizing the dialogue frameworks, for instance, the China-Japan High-Level Consultation on Maritime Affairs. Additionally, there was exchange of views on other pressing issues including the launch of ICBM by North Korea and developments in Ukraine.

India-Japan Dharma Guardian hosted in Camp Imazu

The 4th edition of India-Japan Dharma Guardian exercise was conducted at Camp Imazu from 17 February to 2 March. The focus is on platoon level joint training operations in jungle and semi urban/urban terrain. From the Indian Army side, Garhwal Rifles Regiment participated in the exercise. The aim is to share experiences and best practices in tactics, techniques and procedures of conducting tactical operations under a UN mandate, and augment interoperability in planning and execution between the two sides. At this edition of Exercise Dharma Guardian, the priority was to engage in joint planning, joint tactical drills, basics of establishing integrated surveillance grids, including employment of aerial assets. The previous edition of Dharma Guardian was conducted at the Foreign Training Node in Karnataka between 27 February and 10 March, 2022.

Chip 4 meeting held

With the aim of securing stable supply of semiconductors, the US, Japan, South

Korea and Taiwan held the maiden meeting of senior officials under Washington-led Chip 4 framework. On February 16, officials from industry organizations participated in the discussion focussing on ways to preserve supply chain resilience amid natural disasters, and other contingencies. The objective is to ease Chinese involvement. These four nations host world's leading chipmakers and suppliers of relevant materials and equipment.

In September 2022, Washington organised a preliminary meeting of the group following the global chip shortage caused by the pandemic. Additionally, there are apprehensions regarding a Taiwan contingency, and what could unfold in case Beijing attempts to take Taiwan. Meanwhile, the US has already imposed some export control measures on high-end semiconductors and chip technologies that China could use to improve its military systems.

Fresh support for Ukraine

In 2023, as G7 President and a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Japan is preparing to drive international efforts supporting Ukraine in its fight against Russia's invasion, and advance a free and open international order based on the rule of law. In this context, Japan has committed a fresh financial support of \$5.5 billion to Ukraine just before the 1st anniversary of Russia's invasion. Tokyo has previously extended Kiev financial support worth \$600 million in addition to a few million dollars' of emergency humanitarian assistance.

Prime Minister Kishida stated that 'we have decided to provide additional financial support worth \$5.5 billion for the country, which remains in need of support for people deprived of the foundations of their livelihoods in the war and the reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure'.

Separately, G7 leaders met on the eve of the first anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine with the aim of reaffirming their 'unwavering support for Ukraine for as long as it takes.' They further committed to 'intensifying diplomatic, financial and military support for Ukraine, increasing the costs for Russia and those supporting its war effort, and continuing to counter the negative impacts of the war on the rest of the world, particularly on the most vulnerable people.'

US-Japan-South Korea joint naval drill

After Pyongyang fired a long-range missile into Japan's EEZ off Hokkaido, US-Japan-South Korea conducted a joint naval drill. North Korea has also reportedly sent two short-range ballistic missiles into the Sea of Japan and threatened to turn the Pacific into a 'firing range.' Japanese MSDF Aegis destroyer joined American and South Korean destroyers in the Sea of Japan for the naval drill. The objective is to accelerate trilateral cooperation between the three navies in the middle of mounting regional security challenges. This trilateral exercise comes after both Japan and South Korea agreed that the neighbours would benefit from keeping close communication at all diplomatic levels in order to advance their bilateral ties.