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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

# JAPAN

## *Digest*

November 2022

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### **Japan-China bilateral summit in Bangkok**

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Chinese President Xi Jinping held a bilateral summit on the side-lines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Bangkok. During the discussion, Kishida underscored that both countries shoulder the responsibility to ensure “security and peace of this region and the wider international community.” Thus it is vitally important to “develop a relationship that will be stable and constructive”. Meanwhile, President Xi Jinping has reportedly stressed that on Taiwan, China will not accept interference in its internal affairs. Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi has confirmed that a defence hotline between Japanese and Chinese defence authorities is expected to start operating from spring 2023. This is expected to “play an extremely important role in building confidence and avoiding unexpected contingencies”. It is important to note that it was in 2018 that both sides launched the Maritime and Aerial Communication Mechanism with the objective of avoiding accidental clashes at sea and in the air. However, not much progress has been made on the hotline. Japan has raised concerns with repeated instances of Chinese intrusions around the contested Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.

### **Japan-US-South Korea Summit**

On November 13, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, US President Joseph Biden and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol held a trilateral summit in Phnom Penh on the side-lines of the ASEAN-related meetings. They condemned North Korea’s

unprecedented number of ballistic missile launches in 2022, including multiple ICBM launches, as well as Pyongyang’s conventional military action that posed a grave threat to the peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and beyond. The leaders underscored that Pyongyang’s “nuclear test would be met with a strong and resolute response from the international community”. They stressed that all three will coordinate sanctions and work together to reduce the gaps in the international sanctions regime. They also decided to strengthen deterrence. President Biden reiterated that Washington’s commitment to defend Japan and South Korea “is ironclad and backed by the full range of capabilities, including nuclear”. Earlier in September, South Korea, the United States and Japan staged trilateral anti-submarine exercises for the first time in five years in the middle of tension over North Korea’s series of missile tests.

Separately on the same day, Japan-South Korea bilateral meeting was held. Japanese Prime Minister Kishida and South Korean President Yoon strongly condemned Pyongyang’s provocations “as a grave and imminent threat to the regional security including Japan and the ROK, and a clear and serious challenge to the international community”. They agreed to work closely together bilaterally and trilaterally with the US including on boosting deterrence.

### **Prime Minister Kishida attends ASEAN related summits**

On November 12, the 25<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-Japan Summit was held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. During the meeting, Prime Minister Kishida expressed serious concern over unilateral attempts to change the status

quo by force in the East and South China Seas as well as economic coercion. He also referred to the significance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. Prime Minister stress that Japan is a strong advocate of ASEAN unity and centrality, and supports the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) which shares fundamental principles with Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). In this regard, there are eighty-nine concrete cooperation projects. Japan is eager to host a commemorative summit in Tokyo in December 2023 as next year would mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. Concerns over the rising energy and food prices triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine also featured in the discussions. On the same day, the 25<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Plus Three (Japan-China-Republic of Korea) Summit was also hosted. Prime Minister Kishida conveyed Japan's intent to increasingly support initiatives, including in new areas such as digital economy and resilient agriculture, based on the new ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Work Plan starting in 2023. On November 13, Kishida attended the 17th East Asia Summit (EAS) where he focussed on the security challenges including in East and South China Seas, situation in Ukraine, Myanmar and threats emanating from North Korea.

### **APEC Summit**

On November 17, Prime Minister Kishida visited Bangkok to participate in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Meeting. On the side-lines, he held meetings with Gabriel Boric Font, President of Chile, Prayut Chan-ocha, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of Thailand, and Xi Jinping,

President of the People's Republic of China. Discussions in the APEC meeting acknowledged that the war in Ukraine has adverse impact on the global economy, with inflation and reduced growth, food and energy insecurity, supply chain disruptions and financial risks. Leaders stressed that while APEC is not the forum to resolve security issues, security issues can have significant consequences for the global economy. Furthermore, leaders underscored that APEC will advance regional economic integration through Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) agenda which contributes to high standards. There was discussion on energising cross-border travel and ensuring vaccination certificates are honoured by member economies. Besides, Bangkok Goals on the Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) Economy was adopted which codifies sustainability into the APEC agenda.

### **G20 Bali Summit**

G20 summit was an opportunity for Prime Minister Kishida to actively communicate Japan's stances on key issues including energy and food security and also global health in the backdrop of Russian aggression against Ukraine. Japan strongly condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine. It also underscored that Moscow's nuclear threat is absolutely unacceptable. G20 Bali Leaders' Declaration stated that: "the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is inadmissible. The peaceful resolution of conflicts, efforts to address crises, as well as diplomacy and dialogue, are vital. Today's era must not be of war". Japan has remained keen on incorporating the strongest possible wording with regard to the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.