

China, Japan Reach Crucial Agreement

by Mike Billington

Nov. 7—China and Japan, following intense backchannel talks, and on the eve of the APEC Summit in Beijing on Nov. 10-11, signed an historic, measured agreement to renew diplomatic meetings and strategic cooperation, while also announcing that there will be a private meeting of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on the sidelines of the Summit.

On Nov. 7, Shotaro Yachi, head of Japan's National Security Council, met with China's State Councilor Yang Jiechi at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, where they hammered out a four-point agreement. While Prime Minister Abe has repeatedly appealed for a meeting with President Xi, China has insisted on preconditions, the most important being that Japan acknowledge that there is a viable question of sovereignty over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands (Japan has insisted there is no issue—that only Japan's claim is legitimate), and that Abe and other high-level Japanese officials stop visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, which honors Japanese war dead, including several condemned war criminals.

The four points diplomatically subsume these two issues. One point reads (in Xinhua's version): "The two sides have acknowledged that different positions exist between them regarding the tensions which have emerged in recent years over the Diaoyu Islands and some waters in the East China Sea, and agreed to prevent the situation from aggravating through dialogue and consultation and establish crisis management mechanisms to avoid contingencies." The statement does not explicitly acknowl-

edge China's claim to sovereignty, but the intention is clear.

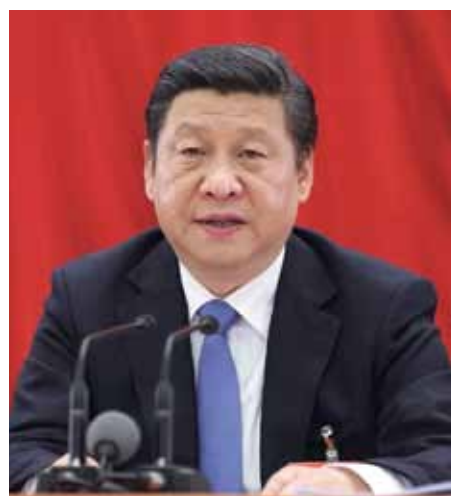
Will It Hold?

When Deng Xiaoping established relations with Japan in 1972, he made the decision that the issue of sovereignty over the islands should be put off to the future in order to move forward in the relationship. This was disrupted when Shintaro Ishihara, then the virulently anti-China right-wing Mayor of Tokyo, purchased the contested islands from another owner, threatening to provoke a crisis. The government panicked and nationalized the islands, making the situation even worse, and the tension over sovereignty has festered ever since.

The present agreement is an attempt to return to the earlier policy, putting the issue of sovereignty aside while the two nations cooperate in a peaceful manner.

A second point in the agreement addresses the Yasukuni Shrine without naming it: "In the spirit of 'facing history squarely and looking forward to the future,' the two sides have reached some agreement on overcoming political obstacles in the bilateral relations." The implication, although not explicit, is that Abe and other leading officials will not ignore the historical sensitivities of China (and Korea) by visiting the Yasukuni Shrine, or take other actions which attempt to ignore the war crimes from World War II. The fact that it says that only "some" agreement was reached, demonstrates the tenuous nature of the deal.

The other two points say that the two nations will



UN/Cia Pak

On the eve of the APEC Summit in Beijing, China and Japan have signed an historic agreement to renew ties; there will also be private meeting of Prime Minister Abe (l) and President Xi on the sidelines of the Summit.

return to honoring the four previous agreements for cooperation between them, and to “gradually resume political, diplomatic, and security dialogue through various multilateral and bilateral channels, and to make efforts to build political mutual trust.”

The four previous agreements refer to the China-Japan Joint Statement of 1972, the China-Japan Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1978, the China-Japan Joint Declaration of 1998, and a joint statement on “advancing strategic and mutually-beneficial relations in a comprehensive way” that was signed in 2008.

Several sources said to *EIR* and other press that the diplomatic wording of the four-point agreement was aimed at avoiding a backlash from more conservative layers on each side’s domestic front. A Japanese source told *EIR* that the death in October of the top right-wing advisor to Abe, Hisahiko Okazaki, together with the recognition in Japan that Obama’s influence is severely waning, and the strong dependence of Japan’s economy on relations with China, give this agreement a good chance of success.

There will be wringing of hands at the White House (and at the other neoconservative haunts), as Obama, already weakened as President after the repudiation by the voters (and by most of his own party) in the Nov. 4 election process, is beginning his Asian tour after Japan, his key ally in confronting China, has signed a deal to end its part in the confrontation. To add to Obama’s grief, his other would-be ally, the Philippines, has seen the handwriting on the wall, joining China’s Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank as one of 21 founding members (against heavy pressure from Washington), while leading Philippine statesmen are demanding a restoration of ties with China.

Japan-U.S. Defense Pact

On the same day that China and Japan announced the agreement to end their escalating confrontation, a confrontation which has been largely stoked by the White House and the neo-con thinktanks in Washington, Japan’s *Asahi Shimbun* announced that Japan’s final report on new guidelines for Japan-U.S. defense cooperation, which was scheduled to be completed by



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A precondition set by China for the meeting between the two heads of state, is that Japanese officials not visit the Yasukuni Shrine, which honors Japanese war dead, among whom are condemned war criminals.

the end of the year, has been postponed until next Spring, at the earliest.

Asahi reports that this is due to the fact that “discussions have not progressed within the ruling coalition over legislation that would implement the changes made by the Abe Cabinet in early July on the government’s interpretation of the pacifist Constitution regarding the exercise of the right to collective self-defense.” “Collective self-defense” is Abe’s euphemism for remilitarization and the intention to join the U.S. in a war on China (or other nations), contrary to Japan’s Constitutional prohibition against waging external war.

Asahi points to Komeito, the Buddhist party in a coalition with Abe’s Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), as the source of the problem in getting the “reinterpretation” passed, but it is also true that many LDP officials and members of Parliament oppose Abe’s re-militarization policy. The Parliament has balked at passing Abe’s reinterpretation, putting off any vote until at least the Spring, after local elections, but it’s far from certain that it will be approved at all.

If Obama is successfully removed from office in the U.S., Abe’s remilitarization will likely die on the vine, along with Obama’s war plan. If Obama remains, he and the Republican warhawks will move to crush this new China-Japan agreement, aid Japan’s remilitarization, and proceed to war.

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