

Exploring Foreign Relations Among the US, Japan & China

By Naoyuki Haraoka

The Far East is drawing growing attention today less as the locomotive of the global economy than for the rise in geopolitical risks. At the National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 2022, President Xi Jinping declared that reunification with Taiwan is a mission that the Chinese Communist Party must achieve. This has raised the specter of Chinese military aggression against Taiwan in the near future, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

This issue highlights the possible scenario of a Chinese attempt to reunite with Taiwan and how Japan, the United States and their allies could counter it. It would be an intrinsically complex game of national interests.

The Japan Economic Foundation (JEF) organized a research group early in 2022 to explore new foreign relations among the US, Japan and China in the midst of the new US-China power struggle over high technology and global hegemony. The research group was set to pursue win-win relations among the three for peace and the prosperity of the global economy. However, no sooner was this project started than Russia invaded Ukraine and concerns about China's aggression toward Taiwan drastically increased. So our research group readjusted its purpose to explore ways to avoid and mitigate this possible military conflict. Any solutions are complicated given the various options among security, foreign and economic policies.

The research group published its policy recommendations early in February 2023, which you will find at the top of our cover story. This is followed by a Roundtable discussion on

the issue with the participation of distinguished experts and members of the research project, including the head of the research, former Defense Minister Satoshi Morimoto.

The cover story also includes articles by the research group's four members on specific issues. Jun Nagashima, a national security expert, introduces the challenge for Japan's defense capabilities in the event of armed conflict between China and Taiwan. Japan will need to consolidate its efforts to enhance its defense capabilities to survive in a world of conflict.

Tomohiko Satake, a foreign policy expert, focuses on how alliance networks like the Quad and AUKUS will be important in mitigating the Taiwan crisis, while Shingo Ito, an expert on Japan-China economic relations, highlights the asymmetrical nature of their economic relationship by noting that Japanese trade and investment heavily depend upon China whereas Chinese trade and investment depend very little on Japan. This economic relationship is what makes Japan vulnerable to friction with China.

Finally, political science expert Natsuko Miyokawa presents her views on channels of communication between Taiwan and Japan, as a representative of the younger generation.

We hope these articles will offer insights into how best we can avoid a fatal catastrophe in the Far East.

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