**The Xi-Biden meeting**

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For obvious reasons, the much-anticipated summit between Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in San Francisco, is likely to work as a stabilizer for China-US relations.

Both leaders delved into a candid and comprehensive exchange of perspectives on strategic, overarching and directional facets shaping China-US relations. Their discussions extended beyond bilateral concerns, encompassing pivotal global issues concerning peace and development. The key feature of the summit was the agreement in which both sides committed to fostering and fortifying dialogue and collaboration across diverse domains.

The key points of the agreement include the initiation of official China-US government talks on artificial intelligence, the establishment of a task force dedicated to counter-narcotics cooperation, and the resumption of high-level military-to-military communication. This resurgence includes pivotal forums such as the China-US Defense Policy Coordination Talks and the China-US Military Maritime Consultative Agreement meetings. The commitment has further resulted in the establishment of a telephone hotline between two presidents. The two leaders have also pledged to facilitate a substantial surge in scheduled passenger flights early in the coming year, demonstrating a commitment to enhancing people-to-people connections. Moreover, they have expressed commitment to broaden exchanges in education, culture, sports and business, fostering a multifaceted relationship that transcends political boundaries.

This China-US summit has broadcast a reassuring and steady message to the global audience. This signal suggests a shared commitment from both China and the US to alleviate and stabilize their bilateral relations, actively seeking opportunities for collaboration. In addition to addressing specific issues, the meeting has propelled the enhancement of bilateral ties and laid the groundwork for the future trajectory of China-US relations. This summit has set the tone for a more cooperative and constructive engagement, marking a pivotal moment in the evolution of these crucial international ties.

However, the summit has yielded a series of outcomes that underscore the realization that neither Beijing nor Washington harbours unrealistic expectations for an immediate breakthrough or substantial improvement in their relations. Nevertheless, a shared acknowledgment exists on the advantages of maintaining tensions at their current level and preventing further deterioration.

As expected, the Taiwan issue dominated the four-hour long session between the two leaders. In addressing the Taiwan question during the summit with Biden, Xi underscored its paramount significance and sensitivity in China-US relations. China acknowledged the positive statements from the US during the Bali meeting, emphasizing the need for concrete actions to uphold its commitment of not endorsing Taiwan independence. Xi urged the US to cease arming Taiwan and lend support to China’s pursuit of peaceful reunification, asserting the inevitability of this reunification.

This candid appeal by the Chinese top leader represents a noteworthy and direct call for US support in China’s endeavours for ‘peaceful reunification’, conveying a significant message to both the US and the global audience. This underscores China’s plea for the US to refrain from arming Taiwan – a plea grounded in the broader context of maintaining a pathway towards peaceful resolution and reunification.

On the positive side, Biden again affirmed America’s commitment to the One-China policy. He expressed a welcoming stance towards dialogue between government agencies at different levels and emphasized the readiness to sustain open and candid communication with China. President Biden restated the American stance on the Taiwan question but alluded to a potential “toning down” from Washington on the matter.

This subtle adjustment in position stands out as a noteworthy facet of the meeting, hinting at a possible positive development. The nuanced shift in the US stance on the Taiwan question adds an interesting layer to the diplomatic discourse, providing space for interpretation and indicating a potential transformation in the diplomatic landscape.

The objective appears to foster mutual understanding, avert misperceptions, and adeptly navigate and manage differences between the two nations. With the US consistently voicing apprehensions about a prospective conflict in the Taiwan Straits, it becomes imperative to communicate a critical perspective from both sides. Factually speaking, over the past year, the US has adopted a palpably assertive stance towards Beijing – from the balloon episode and Nancy Pelosi’s controversial visit to trade restrictions on certain China businesses. Furthermore, in collaboration with its allies, the US initiated a blockade on the export of high-end chips and chip manufacturing tools to China, a move widely perceived as an attempt to stifle China’s progress in the high-tech domain. Simultaneously, military surveillance and provocations persist in the South China Sea, raising regional tensions.

Of even greater concern is America’s attempts to ‘Nato-ize’ the Indo-Pacific region, a development that poses a direct threat to regional peace and stability. These instances represent just a snapshot of the adversarial actions undertaken by the US against China in the year since the leaders convened in Bali, Indonesia in November 2022. Regrettably, these actions have precipitated a significant deterioration in the relationship between the two nations.

However, in response to the recent and somewhat unexpected display of goodwill from the US, China has reacted with appropriateness and positivity. This response is rooted in the hope that the US will exhibit less hostility in the future, allowing China to address its internal challenges within a more optimistic external environment. The summit between Xi and Biden in San Francisco occurred against the backdrop of a modest stabilization in US-China relations.

In their extensive communication, the two leaders broached a broad spectrum of global challenges, including the complexities of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the crisis in Ukraine, climate change, and the advent of artificial intelligence. Their discourse extended to charting a path for the coexistence of these major nations, elucidating the significant responsibilities shared by both China and the US.

The pivotal question now hinges on whether this summit can be deemed a significant milestone in the broader trajectory of bilateral relations. The real litmus test lies in whether both nations can sustain momentum and continue progressing. This juncture marks a critical moment in gauging the commitment of the involved parties to a constructive and enduring engagement.

American and Chinese policymakers face an essential truth: safeguarding their nations’ economic growth and national security requires steering away from relentless financial, economic, and military confrontations that could undermine each other’s stability. Post the Xi-Biden meeting, the onus lies on both presidents to inspire their respective policymakers and academia.

The focus should shift towards exploring incremental improvements in relations between the two largest economies and military superpowers, avoiding a catastrophic downward spiral. The shared responsibility of the presidents of both the US and China is to empower their respective teams to discover how they can peacefully coexist amidst our fragile shared climate and financial systems.

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