



How to deal with China

A Dialogue between European and Japanese experts on China

Date and Time

Thursday, 4 April 2024, 1 pm to 4 pm

Venue

Hotel Grand Arc Hanzomon, Room Fuji
1-1 Hayabusacho, Chiyoda City, Tokyo 102-0092

Co-Organisers

GAS, Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, University of Tokyo
German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ Tokyo), Max Weber Foundation
Japan Association of Corporate Executives (Keizai Doyukai)

Programme

- 13:00 Introduction by Franz Waldenberger (DIJ Tokyo)
- 13:10 Keynotes by Hans van Ess (LMU Munich) and Mats Lennart Harborn (Traton China Group)
- 13:40 Comments by Shigeto Sonoda (University of Tokyo), Osamu Mogi (Kikkoman Corporation), Junichiro Ikeda (Mitsui O.S.K. Lines)
- 14:00 Open discussion, moderated by Tetsushi Takahashi (Nikkei)
- 14:50 Closing remarks
- 15:00 Networking reception
- 16:00 End

Language: English-Japanese, simultaneous interpretation.

The impressive rise of China has had a major impact on the world economy in terms of the level and the structure of trade and investment flows. There has been a strong belief or hope that China's economic development and its increasing integration into the world economy would also spur political reforms at home towards a more inclusive and democratic society. Privatization of state companies, burgeoning entrepreneurship and the opening up of the Communist Party to entrepreneurs pointed in that direction. However, recent trends seem to refute these expectations. Under Xi Jinping's leadership, the Communist Party has redefined its ideological stance propagated as socialism with Chinese characteristics, strengthened

regulations towards state surveillance, upgraded its military power, and moved away from the original “one country, two systems” approach on Hong Kong while upholding its claims against Taiwan. Internationally, supported by extensive infrastructure initiatives, it is positioning itself as new global power, a leader of the Global South and a challenger of US hegemony. At the same time, China also faces many issues at home, such as regional disparities, widening income gaps, environmental pollution, climate change, demographic change and a real estate bubble. The strong centralization of power does by itself neither ensure a monolithic structure nor political stability or immunity against popular discontent, as China’s history demonstrates. There are tensions between the military and the Party, among regions and the regions and the center.

Given China’s indisputable economic and geopolitical importance, China cannot be ignored, passed or de-coupled. It is at the same time a partner, a competitor as well as an ideological and possible military opponent in the evolving multipolar world order. When dealing with China, how should we sort these different relational aspects? How should we balance the advantages of economic integration with political and economic security concerns? How can we maintain a constructive exchange without jeopardizing our own interests? Naturally, there will be more than one answer to these questions. They will depend not only on the depth of our knowledge about China, but also from where – both geographically and ideologically – we look at China. With this in mind, it is important that we listen to experts with diverse backgrounds. This conference brings together European and Japanese experts on China with backgrounds in business and academia to discuss and weigh diverse perspectives, experiences, and recommendations for a sound China strategy.

Speakers

Hans van Ess is professor for Chinese Studies at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, LMU (since 1998). He served as Vice President of the University in charge of teaching and learning (2007-2009), international affairs (2013-2019), and research (2019-). From 2015 to 2023, he was President of the Max Weber Foundation, a German government funded organization, which entertains eleven German research institutes abroad, including the German Institute for Japanese Studies in Tokyo. Since 2020, he is member of the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur. Hans van Ess’ research covers Chinese history and Chinese philosophy, but he is also a well-sought speaker and consultant on contemporary China. Before embarking on an academic career, he worked as area manager in the Asia Pacific Business Association in Hamburg from 1992 to 1995. He frequently visits China and is Honorary Fellow of Sun Zhongshan University Guangzhou (2014-) and of United International College Zhuhai (2019-). His numerous publications comprise ten monographs including a German book whose title translates as “The 101 most important questions. China” (C.H. Beck, 3rd edition 2020) and which introduces China to a wider public German audience.

Mats Lennart Harborn holds a bachelor of arts degree granted by Lund University majoring in Oriental Studies and Business Administration in Sweden. He was previously the Commercial Counsellor at the Swedish Embassy in China. Mr. Harborn re-joined Scania in 2004. He served successively as the Managing Director of Scania China Representative office as well as of Scania Sales (China) Co., Ltd. and the Executive Director of Scania China Strategic Office. Mats Harborn was the president of Scania China Group from May 2020 until December 2023. Since January 2024 he has been the Chief Representative of Traton China Group. In addition, Mr. Harborn has been actively involved in Sino-European trade and business relations. He was previously the President of the European Chamber of Commerce in China, Chairman of Swedish Chamber of Commerce in China and the Chairman China Commercial Vehicles Board of European Automobile Manufacturers' Association (ACEA). Mats Harborn has spent 31 years working and living in China, speaks mandarin and is an active lecturer on China matters.

Junichiro Ikeda is Chairman of the Board of Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, Ltd. Before assuming his current post in April 2021, he had served as the President of Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, Ltd since June 2015. In April 2018 he played a central role in establishing Ocean Network Express Pte. Ltd., which integrated the container shipping businesses of MOL, NYK and K-line. From June 2013 to June 2015 he had served as Director, Senior Managing Executive Officer of MOL, mainly supervising the entire Containership Business, including Port Projects and Logistics. He joined Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, Ltd. in April 1979, and started his career in the Container Operation Division. Following his return to Japan from London, U.K., where he had been involved in the Containership Business for all Europe, he held a number of managerial positions in the Human Resources Division, Corporate Planning Division, and the Containership Business. He had also served as President of the Japanese Ship Owners' Association from June 2021 to June 2023, promoting fair and free business activities in the shipping industry and contributing to the healthy development of Japanese shipping. He graduated from the Faculty of Law, Tokyo University, in March 1979.

Osamu Mogi is Representative Director, Senior Executive Corporate Officer, and Head of the International Operations Division at Kikkoman Corporation. He received degrees from Keio University (BA, 1990) and the University of WI – Milwaukee (MBA, 1993) before joining Price Waterhouse LLP (Chicago Office) in 1993 and Kikkoman Corporation in 1996. He is a co-chair of the Globalization Promotion Committee at Keizai Doyukai (Japan Association of Corporate Executives) where he promotes Japan-UK, Japan-US, and Japan-Germany exchanges.

Shigeto Sonoda is a professor at the University of Tokyo. After his 19 years' service for private universities, he returned to his alma mater in 2009 where he was appointed as professor at the Interfaculty Initiative for Information Studies and the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia. His special interest is in globalization of Asia in comparative perspectives. His latest publications (all in Japanese) include *Sino-Japan Relations, 2001-2022* (ed. with Akio Takahara, Tomoo Marukawa, and Shin Kawashima, 2023), *Global Views of China* (ed. with Yu Xie, 2021) and *National Sentiments in Asia* (2020). Sonoda has been serving as director for the Beijing Center for Japanese Studies at Beijing Foreign Studies University in China since 2018.

Moderator

Tetsushi Takahashi is a member of the editorial board at Nikkei. He graduated from the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Law, Keio University in 1993 and joined Nikkei. He was responsible for covering Ministry of Finance, Bank of Japan, Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, the Prime Minister's Office, and the Liberal Democratic Party in the economic and political news departments. From 2003 for one year, he studied Chinese at Peking University. He has a total of more than 10 years of expatriate experience in Greater China, including two years in Hong Kong before its return to China. From 2017 for four years, he served as the China Bureau chief based in Beijing, overseeing Nikkei's China coverage. After returning to Japan, he served as the editor for policy news unit for two years and has held his current role since April 2023. He is responsible for editorials on China's economy, trade policy, and economic security.