



Biden, Xi Meet in Indonesia

Andrzej Dąbrowski, Marcin Przychodniak

The leaders of the U.S. and China met on the sidelines of the G20 summit on the Indonesian island of Bali. President Joe Biden and Chairman Xi Jinping's primary goal was to ease tensions between the two countries. Although there has been no significant change in the relationship between the states, a revival of high-level direct communication and sectoral dialogue may help reduce the risk of conflict over Taiwan. The parties agreed to return to talks suspended after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, including discussions on combating climate change, and they agreed that U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken would visit Beijing to continue the talks.

What were the circumstances and main purpose of the meeting?

Biden and Xi had the opportunity to meet shortly after the [U.S. midterm elections](#) in which the Democratic Party, against expectations, managed to retain control of the Senate, and after the October [Congress of the Chinese Communist Party](#), during which Xi consolidated power. Therefore, the leaders had strong mandates to hold talks and try to reduce tensions in mutual relations, which spiked due to, among other things, Biden's recent declarations on the U.S. readiness to defend Taiwan in the event of aggression and [Chinese provocations in the waters around the island in August 2022](#). Both sides wanted to present themselves as the main economic and military powers responsible for the stability of the international order. The meeting was aimed at showing the ability of both governments to maintain dialogue at the highest level, even in the face of disagreement on key issues, such as relations with Taiwan, the Russian aggression against Ukraine, or [U.S. restrictions on technology exports to China](#).

What will be the impact of the meeting on China's position on the war in Ukraine?

In the Chinese statement after the conversation, in contrast to the American one, there was no mention of a joint

declaration of the presidents about the lack of consent to the use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine. This indicates that China, although opposed to a possible nuclear escalation, did not want to distance itself from its Russian partner and deepen its isolation. The Chinese leader was to emphasise the complexity of the conflict, which is in line with China's position so far. In Xi's opinion, the key is to avoid any escalation and confrontation between the powers. Therefore, he expressed hope that negotiations between the Russian Federation and Ukraine will resume. He also called for a comprehensive dialogue between the U.S., NATO, the EU and Russia. This position is a signal to Russia that it can count on further political support from China. This may result in an extension of hostilities.

What will be the impact of the meeting on tensions in the Indo-Pacific?

Although the meeting of the leaders will lead to some reduction in tensions in U.S.-China relations, it will not ease the situation in the Indo-Pacific. Both sides reiterated their position on Taiwan and their different approach to the "One China" policy. The conclusions of the meeting will not significantly affect the efforts of the armed forces of either country to strengthen the capabilities to conduct operations in the Indo-Pacific area. This applies in particular to the U.S., which in [the latest National Defence Strategy](#) indicates that

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the competition with China is a priority issue for American security policy. However, the top-level meeting may lead to the activation of communication channels between the powers, and thus reduce the risk of an accidental escalation, for example, in the event of a military incident near Taiwan.

What was the political significance of the meeting for President Biden?

For the Biden administration, containing China's political and economic ambitions remains a key foreign policy issue, along with supporting Ukraine in the fight against the Russian invasion and efforts to curb climate change. For the U.S. president, the most important thing in the meeting with Xi [was to communicate Biden's attachment to this policy and to emphasise the cross-party consensus in the U.S. regarding the willingness to defend Taiwan](#). The American president also wanted to warn the Chinese authorities about the consequences of military and economic support for Russia's actions against Ukraine. For Biden's domestic politics, the meeting with Xi was an opportunity to present a firm stance towards China while also expressing the willingness to cooperate on global challenges such as climate change. Biden wanted to emphasise to Xi, and also to some

politicians of his own party, that the U.S. East Asia policy has not been neglected as a result of U.S. involvement in supporting Ukraine militarily and containing Russia.

What was the significance of the meeting for Xi Jinping?

The high-level meeting with the U.S. president on the occasion of the G20 summit was an opportunity to promote a conciliatory image of China in relations with the United States. It allowed Xi and other Chinese officials to refer to the American narrative about the rivalry being between democracy and authoritarianism, pointing to China's different view of it, but without antagonising mutual relations. In addition to the American declaration of respecting the interests of China with regard to Taiwan, it was also important for Xi to resume a number of sectoral dialogues (e.g., on climate) and the functioning of bilateral working groups. The result of this process will probably also be a visit by the U.S. Secretary of State to China in the near future. In Xi's view, the final step in the process of re-normalising relations should be at least the easing of U.S. sanctions against China, including those targeting the semiconductor sector.