

# Japan, South Korea normalize intelligence sharing agreement

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Japan and South Korea are rapidly moving to repair bilateral relations following recent years of trade and diplomatic disputes. The purpose is to increase coordination between the two governments and their militaries, both allies of the United States, in preparation for launching a war against China.

Seoul officially announced on March 21 that it had “normalized” a 2016 intelligence sharing agreement with Japan. Known as the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), it allows for the bilateral transfer of sensitive military information between South Korea and Japan, which have no formal military alliance.

South Korea’s right-wing President Yoon Suk-yeol pledged to normalize the agreement at a summit with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on March 16. Yoon’s predecessor, Moon Jae-in, nearly cancelled GSOMIA in November 2019 following disagreements with Tokyo over trade and historical issues. Under pressure from Washington, Moon agreed not to suspend GSOMIA, but tensions continued, raising fears among military planners that the agreement was not being fully utilized.

Yoon and Kishida presented their summit and its results as necessary to address the so-called North Korean “threat.” Yoon stated at a press conference following the summit, “We also agreed that in order to respond to the North’s nuclear and missile threats that are getting more sophisticated by the day, cooperation among South Korea, the United States and Japan, and between South Korea and Japan, is extremely important, and that we should continue to actively cooperate.”

In reality, Tokyo and Seoul are lining up behind Washington’s war preparations as the US builds a series of alliances throughout the Indo-Pacific region

aimed at China. US ambassador to South Korea Philip Goldberg praised the summit’s results in comments made March 20, stating, “We greatly value Korea’s commitment to promote trilateral and bilateral ties with Japan as witnessed in the ROK-Japan summit.”

The US considers Tokyo and Seoul’s bilateral relations and agreements like GSOMIA as key components of its military planning and the ballistic missile system it is building throughout East Asia. South Korea and Japan are being placed on the frontlines of a future US-instigated war while the war preparations are being consciously hidden from public view. Both the Yoon and Kishida governments, however, are promoting anti-Chinese sentiment.

The coordination of the vast military apparatus in East Asia requires close collaboration between Washington, Tokyo and Seoul. The US bases approximately 28,500 troops in South Korea as well as a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery. There are numerous air bases from which US aircraft are capable of launching strikes on China or Russia. South Korea has its own military of approximately 500,000 troops.

Japan also hosts numerous US bases and personnel, including approximately 56,000 troops, nearly half of which are in Okinawa Prefecture, neighbouring Taiwan. Japan also has two US X-band radar systems in the north and south of the country—vital components of US anti-ballistic missile systems.

On March 24, US Forces Korea announced it had carried out its first deployment training exercise of a THAAD “remote” launcher in South Korea. The drill took place during the massive US-South Korean Freedom Shield/Warrior Shield joint war games that ran for 11 days from March 13-23.

THAAD, which includes an AN/TPY-2 X-band radar

capable of spying deep into Chinese territory, is also being integrated with the US's Patriot missile system. These surface-to-air missiles are capable of attacking advanced aircraft and incoming missiles. The target is not North Korea's fleet of decades-old fighter jets, but Chinese fighters in the event of war.

Yoon's trip to Japan to meet Kishida was the first bilateral summit there in 12 years. In addition to Yoon's pledge to normalize GSOMIA, the two countries will resume reciprocal diplomatic visits. Seoul's Foreign Ministry stated that it is currently arranging for Prime Minister Kishida to visit Seoul later this year.

Kishida has also invited Yoon to the upcoming G7 summit set to begin on May 19 in Hiroshima. As the host nation, Japan can invite additional attendees. Undoubtedly in coordination with Washington, invitations have been extended to South Korea, Ukraine, India and Australia, among others. The basis for the invitations is the supposedly shared "universal values", a thinly veiled jab at China and Russia.

The Yoon administration paved the way for improved relations with Tokyo by announcing on March 6 that it would essentially nullify a 2018 South Korean Supreme Court decision against Japanese firms Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Nippon Steel that used forced labour during Japan's colonization of Korea from 1910 to 1945. The companies were ordered to pay compensation to 15 Korean plaintiffs or risk having their assets in South Korea seized. Since the original ruling, 12 of the plaintiffs have passed away, with their families representing their cases.

Japan responded in 2019 by imposing export restrictions on certain products to South Korea and removing the latter from a list of favoured trading partners. This led to the Moon administration nearly suspending GSOMIA. At the time, Moon and his Democratic Party of Korea (DP), currently the main opposition party, worked to whip up anti-Japanese sentiment to distract from worsening economic and social conditions domestically.

In nullifying the 2018 court decision, South Korea's Foreign Ministry announced that it would compensate the forced labour victims through a fund established domestically in 2014 without the involvement of Tokyo or the companies in the lawsuit.

The Democrats are continuing to resort to anti-

Japanese chauvinism to create a political scandal for the Yoon administration. The DP stated on March 24 that it would open a parliamentary investigation into the Yoon-Kishida summit. While President Yoon comes from the ruling People Power Party, the DP remains the largest party in the National Assembly with 169 seats of out 300.

Opposition to war and the right-wing agendas in Tokyo and Seoul cannot be fought for through appeals to nationalism or different factions of the bourgeoisie. Only the unity of Japanese and South Korean workers, as well as workers throughout China and globally, can halt the danger of a catastrophic war.



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