

US, South Korean presidents agree to greater nuclear cooperation in further move towards war with China

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US President Joe Biden held a summit with South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol in Washington on Wednesday. The meeting was above all directed at China as the two sides deepen their collaboration in preparation for a US-led war in the Indo-Pacific. Yoon also addressed a joint session of Congress on Thursday alongside other discussions with administration officials.

Biden and Yoon met for the sixth time since the South Korean leader took office last May. Arriving on Monday for a six-day visit, Yoon traveled with a 122-person business delegation, representing major conglomerates including Samsung Electronics and Hyundai Motors Group.

The two leaders' central goal was to further expand their cooperation as part of the system of alliances Washington is building throughout the Indo-Pacific in order to surround and ultimately launch a war against China. These alliances include the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), comprising the US, Japan, Australia, and India; and the AUKUS pact made up of Australia, the United Kingdom, and the US.

Biden and Yoon agreed on what they called the Washington Declaration, which will establish a bilateral Nuclear Consultative Group (NCG). This group, according to the declaration, will "strengthen [US] extended deterrence" and allow the two sides to "discuss nuclear and strategic planning."

This includes "joint execution and planning for ROK [Republic of Korea] conventional support to US nuclear operations in a contingency and improve[d] combined exercises and training activities on the application of nuclear deterrence on the Korean Peninsula."

According to one anonymous US administration official who spoke to the media before the summit, the new consultative body will be modeled after the NATO Nuclear Planning Group (NPG). The NPG acts as the leading body for nuclear matters within NATO and reviews its nuclear policy and changes it as deemed necessary.

Just as the US and NATO have organized a war against Russia in Ukraine, such a consultative body in Asia is not a defensive response towards North Korea, as the allies claim, but aimed at planning for nuclear war against opponents of US hegemony.

In the future, the NCG could also include Japan. Last week, Yoon stated in an interview with Reuters that there would be no problem with Japan joining, but emphasized that Washington and Seoul should create the groundwork first. At the summit, Biden praised Yoon's decision to improve relations with Tokyo, "which opens the door to deeper trilateral cooperation on regional and economic security," according to an additional joint statement released after the meeting.

In addition, the Washington Declaration stated the US also plans to "further enhance the regular visibility of strategic assets" on the Korean Peninsula, including dispatching nuclear ballistic submarines (SSBN) in the near future, as well as holding new joint tabletop exercises to simulate the use of nuclear weapons.

Strategic assets refer to weaponry capable of carrying and delivering nuclear weapons. As a matter of policy, the US does not confirm or deny if these assets are carrying nuclear weapons, which further raises uncertainty and tensions.

While Biden claimed during a joint press conference after the summit that Washington would not be

stationing nuclear weapons in South Korea, Yoon made clear that this is exactly the direction in which the two allies are headed, stating that “the deployment of the United States’ strategic assets to the Korean Peninsula will be made constantly and routinely.”

In fact, Washington had already announced that it intends to deploy strategic assets to the Korean Peninsula on a *de facto* permanent basis. Last November, during a meeting between US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-seop, the latter stated that the US would deploy “strategic assets to the level equivalent to constant deployment through increasing the frequency and intensity of strategic asset deployment in and around the Korean peninsula.”

The deployment of the SSBN submarine as well as regularly dispatching other strategic assets including nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and B-52 bombers means Washington is following through on plans for this *de facto* deployment.

While Washington and Seoul couch these measures as a response to the so-called North Korean “threat,” they are meant to integrate war planning more efficiently between the two allies.

While attempting to avoid mentioning China, the joint statement made thinly-veiled references to this real target of US imperialism, declaring that Biden and Yoon “recognized the importance of maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific.”

Washington and its allies regularly accuse Beijing of unilaterally challenging the “free and open” navigation of the region. What the US really means is that it reserves to itself the right to send its naval and air forces anywhere it pleases to intimidate opponents and stoke military tensions. At the same time, the US accuses Beijing of violating the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, a convention which Washington itself refuses to sign.

The joint statement also declared, “The Presidents reiterated the importance of preserving peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait as an indispensable element of security and prosperity in the region.” This reference to Taiwan occurs as the US continues to chip away at the “One China” policy, which states that the island is part of China.

Since 1979, the US has recognized Beijing as the legitimate government of all of China by having no

formal diplomatic relations with Taipei. Beijing regards Taiwan as a renegade province and has regularly made clear that it considers a declaration of or recognition of Taipei’s independence as a red line for military action.

Under the previous Trump administration and continued by the Biden government, Washington has attacked the “One China” policy by holding high-level talks with Taipei officials, including a recent trip to the US by Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen. The US also provides Taiwan with massive amounts of military hardware while announcing in February that it would quadruple the number of US troops on the island.

The end goal is to goad Beijing into invading Taiwan, similar to the US/NATO-stoked war against Russia in Ukraine, while also turning Taiwan into a US base for future military operations in the region. As in Ukraine, this would have nothing to do with the defence of “democracy” or “human rights.” Instead, it would be aimed at inflicting a defeat on China, viewed as the chief economic threat to American imperialism, and securing direct control over the strategically decisive Eurasian landmass.



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