

Japanese, South Korean leaders meet ahead of G7 summit in Hiroshima

Ben McGrath
8 May 2023

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida met with South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol in Seoul on Sunday. The two leaders continue to develop cooperation as part of the US-led build-up to war with China. Kishida's two-day visit comes less than two months after meeting with Yoon in Tokyo and is the first bilateral trip to South Korea by a Japanese prime minister in 12 years.

While not releasing a joint statement, the two leaders used the opportunity to justify closer military collaboration by denouncing North Korea as “a serious threat to the peace and security not only of South Korea and Japan, but the entire world.” In a reference to China and Russia, Kishida claimed, “The international situation surrounding us is making cooperation between Japan and South Korea increasingly essential.”

While the ostensible target is North Korea, Tokyo and Seoul are working in unison with the US in preparation for war with China. Yoon stated on Sunday, “In a situation where liberal democracy, which has served as a foundation for the international community's peace and prosperity, is under threat, South Korea and Japan, which share universal values, will have to cooperate through sturdier solidarity.”

The claim that South Korea and Japan share “universal values” is meant to contrast the developing war alliances in the Asia-Pacific region to China and Russia, which are routinely accused of upsetting the “international order.” In reality, the US, backed by its allies, have sharply raised tensions in the region with Beijing, most notably over Taiwan, challenging the “One China” policy and risking war over the island.

Kishida's “working visit” to Seoul comes shortly before Japan will host the G7 summit in Hiroshima from May 19 to 21, which is placing heavy emphasis on the US/NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and

plans for stoking conflict with China. With Japan inviting South Korea, the goal of the Kishida-Yoon summit, in part, was undoubtedly to ensure the two were on the same page ahead of the three-day meeting.

In addition to the G7 members and South Korea, other invited participants include India, Australia, Brazil, Vietnam, and Indonesia. Australia, in particular, as a member of both the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the US, Japan, Australia, and India) and the AUKUS pact (Australia, the United Kingdom, and the US), has been one of the most aggressive in whipping up tensions with China.

Furthermore, Tokyo and Seoul are improving relations as part of these war efforts. The US considers collaboration between Tokyo and Seoul as crucial, in particular in the construction of its anti-ballistic missile system in the region, which includes a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery in South Korea and radar systems in Japan.

However, in recent years, Japanese and South Korean ties have been strained due to trade disputes and a court case involving Korean victims of forced labor under the Japanese colonial government that controlled Korea from 1910 to 1945. In 2018, the South Korean Supreme Court ordered Japanese firms Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Nippon Steel to compensate victims.

Yoon paved the way for the thaw in bilateral relations in March when his government announced it would compensate the forced labor victims from a domestic fund without any involvement from Tokyo or the companies. Meeting Kishida in Tokyo that month, Yoon then agreed to “normalize” an intelligence sharing pact known as the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA). Alongside Washington, Tokyo and Seoul have also agreed to regularly hold trilateral missile and anti-submarine

drills.

Yoon and Kishida also discussed the former's recent trip to Washington and his summit with US President Joe Biden. On April 26, the two presidents announced the so-called "Washington Declaration," which increases cooperation and planning between the US and South Korea over the US nuclear arsenal, establishing the bilateral Nuclear Consultative Group (NCG). The NCG is modeled after NATO's Nuclear Planning Group, the leading body for issues involving nuclear weapons within the alliance.

Yoon had previously stated he did not foresee any problems with Japan joining the group in the future. He reiterated this statement on Sunday, saying he did not rule out Tokyo's participation. Yoon stated that "the Washington Declaration has not been finalized and we must continue discussion to fill in the details of joint planning and execution. Once the discussion gets on track and Japan is ready to cooperate with the US on this matter, we can cooperate (with Japan) at any time."

In addition, as part of the Washington Declaration, the US intends to shortly dispatch an Ohio-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine to South Korea. In line with established practice, Washington has not confirmed or denied whether the submarine will be carrying nuclear weapons when it arrives. Nor has the US announced a date for the submarine's arrival. Yoon and Biden agreed that this type of deployments will be conducted on an even more frequent basis in the future, sharply raising tensions and the danger of nuclear war.

Japan's involvement, either through increased submarine and missile drills or through Tokyo's joining of the NCG, means that the only country to have two atomic bombs used against it would further develop its role in the deployment of US nuclear weapons in the region. It is noteworthy that Japan's former prime minister and anti-China hawk Shinzo Abe initiated debate in Japan in February 2022 over the possible hosting of US nuclear weapons.

By hosting the G7 summit in Hiroshima, Tokyo is turning this reality on its head. According to the summit's website, the government chose Hiroshima as its location in order to show G7's "strong determination to categorically deny military aggressions, any threats of nuclear weapons, as well as

attempts to overthrow the international order." It claims that "the leaders of the G7 will get acquainted with the realities of the nuclear weapon use and share their desire for peace. Japan hopes that it will solidify steps toward achieving a world without nuclear weapons."

Tokyo is hypocritically exploiting US imperialism's monstrous crime of dropping an atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945 to cover up new crimes being prepared by US and Japanese imperialism and their allies like South Korea. The Kishida-Yoon summit as well as the upcoming G7 summit will only result in the closer collaboration for stepping up the war against Russia and the planned conflict with China, both of which could lead to a nuclear conflagration.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact