

# US, Japan, and South Korea hold trilateral summit in preparation for war with China

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US President Joe Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, and South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol held a trilateral summit at Camp David, Maryland near Washington DC on Friday. It was the first stand-alone meeting between leaders from the three countries, not held on the sidelines of a larger, multilateral gathering. It above all marks another escalation in the US preparations for war against China.

For Washington, the summit represents a significant step towards consolidating its regional alliances directly on Beijing's doorstep. Through a set of documents released on Friday, the US, Japan, and South Korea pledged to deepen their cooperation by holding annual joint military exercises; further developing and increasing military intelligence sharing; and improving communication between their leaders, which US officials previously stated would include a three-way hotline.

The documents are called the "Commitment to Consult" and the "Camp David Principles" as well as a joint statement dubbed "The Spirit of Camp David." A US official speaking to the media on Thursday stated that the goal was to create a "common security framework" in the region.

Through the joint statement, the three leaders sought to justify the buildup to war, denouncing Beijing for its supposed "unlawful maritime claims" in the South China Sea as well as "unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the waters of the Indo-Pacific." It continued, "In particular, we steadfastly oppose the militarization of reclaimed features; the dangerous use of coast guard and maritime militia vessels; and coercive activities."

The three also continued to whip up tensions regarding Taiwan, which the US is attempting to exploit to goad Beijing into war. Biden, Kishida, and

Yoon claimed to "reaffirm the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait." In reality, the statement again calls into question the "One China" policy, while attacking Beijing for responding to increasing US-led provocations, including military maneuvers around Taiwan, high-level diplomatic visits, and massive weapon sales.

The inclusion of such remarks on Taiwan in joint statements have only become commonplace in recent years, highlighting their provocative nature. A May 2021 statement between Biden and former South Korean President Moon Jae-in was the first between the two countries to mention the island. Similarly, an April 2021 statement between Biden and former Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga was the first to reference the island since 1969.

In addition, Washington and its allies are stepping up their economic warfare against China. The joint statement announced that the three sides "are now cooperating trilaterally on supply chain resilience, particularly on semiconductors and batteries." The US aim is to cripple China economically while ensuring that it has access to key items like semiconductors, which have significant military applications. South Korea and Japan are both significant producers of these chips.

China responded to the summit stating that it opposed the creation of a "mini NATO" alliance in the region. China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a press briefing on Friday, "Attempts to form various exclusive groups and cliques and to bring bloc confrontation into the Asia-Pacific region are unpopular and will definitely spark vigilance and opposition in the countries of the region."

The US-led war drive is aimed at subordinating China, which Washington views as its chief economic

competitor. The US has long sought to bring its two primary allies in Northeast Asia together to further these plans, conscious that it would be unable to wage war without doing so. This is in addition to alliances such as the AUKUS agreement between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the US; and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad), comprised of the US, Japan, Australia, and India.

Unresolved historical tensions, stemming from Japan's brutal colonization of Korea between 1910 and 1945, had been preventing this: including a 2018 Supreme Court decision in South Korea finding Japanese firms Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Nippon Steel liable for using forced labor during the colonial period.

However, since Yoon came to power in South Korea in May 2022, Seoul has made a concerted turn towards Tokyo. This past March, Seoul announced that it would essentially nullify the court decision while also "normalizing" an intelligence sharing agreement with Japan, known as the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA). This has paved the way for the rapid improvement of diplomatic relations between the two.

In little more than a year, Biden, Kishida, and Yoon have met four times, including meeting on the sidelines of the G7 summit in May in Japan. It was also the 13th trilateral meeting overall between the three countries since 1994. While Biden gushed over the fact that Friday's meeting was the first stand-alone summit between the countries' leaders and the first at Camp David during his presidency, none of the three leaders acknowledged the historical disputes or the atrocities committed by Japan.

The importance Washington has placed on its two allies working together is highlighted by the large numbers of military personnel and equipment stationed in each country. Japan and South Korea host numerous US bases and approximately 56,000 and 28,500 US soldiers respectively. Sophisticated military equipment includes a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery in South Korea and X-band radar systems deployed in the north and south of Japan, which comprise important aspects of Washington's anti-ballistic missile system in the Indo-Pacific, targeting China.

The focus on intelligence sharing at the summit as

well as the pledge to "enhance" this ballistic missile system will drastically increase the militarization of the region and the danger of nuclear war. In April, the US and South Korea launched the so-called Nuclear Consultative Group (NCG), which increases Seoul's participation in planning for the use of US nuclear weapons. The NCG, which does not yet include Japan, is modeled after a similar body that decides nuclear policy within NATO.

Three-way collaboration will be furthered by the "Commitment to Consult," in which Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul will "consult trilaterally with each other, in an expeditious manner, to coordinate our responses to regional challenges, provocations, and threats affecting our collective interests and security." The three leaders have pledged to "share information, align our messaging, and coordinate response actions" to supposed threats in the region.

Christopher Johnstone, a Japan specialist at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, told the media prior to the summit that such language, while not rising to the level of the NATO alliance, "would be a big deal, and important symbol that these alliances are coming together."

That a NATO-styled alliance is even being raised is an indication of the growing danger of war in the Indo-Pacific region. Such a conflict would ultimately result in the use of nuclear weapons and wholesale destruction around the planet.



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