

# US, Japan, and South Korea boost military collaboration against China

Ben McGrath

15 December 2023

The national security advisors of the US, Japan, and South Korea met on December 9 in Seoul for discussions aimed at furthering their accelerating plans for war against China. Cooperation between the three governments has developed into a de facto trilateral military alliance that is escalating tensions in the Indo-Pacific region.

The talks involving the US national security advisor Jake Sullivan and his Japanese and South Korean counterparts, Takeo Akiba and Jo Tae-yong respectively, were ostensibly focused on North Korea, though they did little to conceal the real target of their discussions. The meeting was a follow-up to the Camp David war summit in August between US President Joe Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, and South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol, which Washington has stated “launched a new era of trilateral cooperation” in a White House statement released Saturday.

At the meeting in Seoul, the three sides drew up plans for holding joint military exercises over multiple years and for sharing military intelligence in real time. Bilateral and trilateral war games between the US, Japan, and South Korea have already become regular occurrences, staged on China’s doorstep. The US has also carried out several highly provocative visits to the Korean Peninsula this year involving nuclear-capable strategic assets, including B-52 bombers and an Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine.

The recent discussions also included implementation of the “commitment to consult,” which came out of the Camp David summit. It is a trilateral pledge to coordinate responses to and share information regarding supposed “threats” in the region. In practice, this means Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul have pledged to work in lockstep as part of the US-led war

drive against Beijing.

If there is not a formal military alliance at present, it is in large measure because of popular hostility in South Korea towards Tokyo as a result of crimes committed by Japanese imperialism during its colonization of Korea from 1910–1945, as well as widespread anti-war sentiment in both countries. These trilateral war plans are proceeding virtually entirely behind the backs of both populations.

This includes Washington’s attempts to goad Beijing into a war over Taiwan, just as it did with Russia over Ukraine. The White House statement on the security advisors’ meeting declared that the three “reaffirmed the fundamental importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Straits and underscored their commitment to freedom of navigation and to international law, including in the South China Sea and East China Sea.”

Not a major meeting involving the US and its principal allies goes by now without some reference to the Taiwan Strait. In doing so, Washington is undermining the “One China” policy which recognizes that Taiwan is a part of China and has governed cross-strait relations for decades. Beijing has made clear it will not allow Taiwan to declare formal independence, fearing that it would set a precedent for carving up Chinese territory and turning the island into a base for US imperialism.

Beijing asserts that it has some form of jurisdiction over the Taiwan Strait, which includes internal waters, its territorial sea (extending 12 nautical miles from the coast), and its exclusive economic zone (EEZ, extending 200 nautical miles from the coast). Under the “One China” policy, which the US, Japan, and South Korea all still nominally recognize, these territorial claims extend from both the mainland and Taiwan.

The US denies this, saying the strait constitutes

“international waters” and regularly sends warships through the waterway without acknowledging China’s claims. While nations are granted the right of passage through an EEZ, Washington is arrogating to itself the right to operate militarily in the strait supposedly to “defend peace and stability,” provocatively challenging Beijing’s jurisdiction and tacitly backing the conception that Taiwan is not a part of China. As a result, Washington has sharply increased tensions over Taiwan.

In addition, Sullivan, Akiba, and Jo agreed to expand cooperation on economic issues. According to the White House statement, the three national security advisors “discussed next steps in trilateral cooperation on economic security, including our supply chain early warning initiative, and on our efforts to align our three countries respective Indo-Pacific Strategies and capacity efforts throughout the region.”

The economic issues are not separate from the war drive. Washington is working to secure its supply chains and access to vital war materials, including strategic minerals and semiconductors. The US also wants to encourage countries to economically separate themselves from China, making them more willing to participate in a future war. This is part of Washington’s efforts to create a system of alliances in the Indo-Pacific, in which Japan and South Korea are playing leading roles.

Notably, South Korean President Yoon declared on Wednesday during a state visit to the Netherlands and summit with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte that the two countries would upgrade relations to that of a “semiconductor alliance,” making clear this was important for South Korea’s military needs.

The Netherlands is home to chipmaking equipment company ASML, which is the world’s only producer of the extreme ultraviolet (EUV) lithography machines necessary for manufacturing the most advanced chips. South Korea’s Samsung Electronics and SK hynix are both major ASML customers.

Yoon stated in an interview with AFP before the start of the trip that South Korea and the Netherlands shared the view that “the economy is now synonymous with security and vice versa.” Yoon added that this cooperation would extend to the US and Japan.

To further justify this agenda, Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul are also targeting Russia and North Korea

(DPRK) and last weekend “discussed the deepening partnership between the DPRK and Russia and agreed to work in close coordination to counter its destabilizing effects.” Washington and Seoul claim, with little evidence presented, that arms transfers from North Korea to Russia are taking place in exchange for Moscow’s assistance in developing ballistic missile technology.

If military collaboration between Moscow and Pyongyang is taking place, it is because the two have been pushed closer together as a result of US imperialism. Washington provoked a war with Russia in Ukraine and maintains a crippling economic blockade of North Korea. Significantly, the *Washington Post* revealed this month that at the start of the year South Korea began supplying large quantities of 155mm shells to Ukraine, surpassing all European countries combined in the amount provided.

The Yoon administration has made South Korea an active participant in the Ukraine war no less than it has lined up for war against China in league with US and Japanese imperialism.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**