



## Japan, South Korea, U.S. Meet to Counter China, North Korea

On August 18, U.S. President Joe Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, and South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol made various pledges in a milestone Camp David gathering, including a yearly meeting, as well as strongly criticizing China and North Korea.

The gathering in Camp David, the presidential retreat where major American diplomatic accords have been created, led to a historic pledge that the three countries would coordinate on security policy.

The goal of the trilateral collaboration, according to a 15-paragraph-long statement named the Camp David Principles, was stated as promoting stability and peace in Asia-Pacific.

Moreover, the leaders issued a harsh joint statement about Beijing's pugilism in the South China Sea, where China has claimed territory that, based on international law, belongs to other countries.

"Regarding the dangerous and aggressive actions we recently witnessed by the People's Republic of China in support of its illegal maritime territorial claims in the South China Sea, we ... strongly oppose any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo in the Indo-Pacific waters," the statement said.

Furthermore, the statement referred to the importance of the Asean bloc of Southeast Asian countries, and said that Southeast Asian leaders ought to determine the region's destiny.

"Our commitment to the region includes our unwavering support for Asean centrality and unity and the Asean-led regional architecture," read the statement.

Notably, Japan and South Korea enjoyed a recent improvement of bilateral ties in light of China's increasing military activities as well as North Korea's provocative missile launches.

"We, the leaders of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States, commit our governments to consult trilaterally with one another, in an expeditious manner, to coordinate our responses to regional challenges, provocations and threats affecting our collective interests and security," Biden, Kishida, and Yoon proclaimed in one of several joint statements released after the summit.

"Through these consultations, we intend to share information, align our messaging and coordinate response actions," they said.

The three will also tackle "potential arms transfer in support of Russia's brutal war against Ukraine" by



AP Images  
Yoon Suk-yeol, Joe Biden, and Fumio Kishida at Camp David



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North Korea, Biden said.

Also, the trio of nations issued a set of shared principles highlighting respect for the rule of law and the globalist United Nations UN Charter, and pledged to act on “climate change.”

Besides, the agreement would facilitate a new three-way crisis hotline, yearly summits between their top leaders and officials, information exchange on North Korean missiles, and joint military drills.

Additionally, the agreement includes the establishment of an early-warning system to identify disturbances to supply chains, such as for semiconductors and other advanced technology. This system will notify nations of production shortages of goods such as batteries and critical minerals, Biden told reporters.

The summit was the first standalone meeting among the three countries and came about owing to a rapprochement spearheaded by Yoon and propelled by shared views of threats posed by China and North Korea.

Analysts said the ramifications of the agreement would be felt beyond the three countries.

Christopher Johnstone at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think-tank located in Washington, remarked, “It’s a powerful political statement, particularly for Japan and South Korea, that they’ve never made before. It’s not legally binding, not a treaty, but a significant statement of political intent.”

“One of the most significant things about this summit is the degree to which it focused on upholding a rules-based stable order in East Asia,” said Johnstone, a former official under the Biden and Obama administrations.

“Historically, the US, Japan, South Korea cooperation has been almost entirely about deterring North Korea challenges. But in the trilateral meeting, there was a far broader agenda that relates to development, secure supply chains, upholding the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and peace and stability in the South China Sea. It demonstrates that this trilateral relationship can contribute much more broadly to stability in the region and in South-east Asia.”

However, the agreement could also escalate regional tensions.

“Whether closer US-Japan-ROK security cooperation makes the region safer or not depends on the reaction of the potential adversaries of the three countries: North Korea and especially China,” said Dr. Denny Roy, senior fellow at the East-West Center, a Honolulu-based think-tank, using “ROK” when referring to South Korea’s official name, the Republic of Korea.

Dr. Roy questioned Beijing’s view that the most ideal scenario for regional peace was the lack of U.S. bases and military activity, permitting China to dominate the region to everyone’s mutual benefit.

“That is clearly not credible,” he stated.

“A better question is whether efforts to deter China will have the effect of pushing Beijing towards initiating a war to forestall what the Chinese see as tightening encirclement. My assessment is that strengthening the coalition that is hedging against possible aggressive Chinese behavior makes Beijing less likely to act aggressively,” he continued.

Unless, he said, Beijing surmises that the group is actively pressuring Taiwan toward independence, which could cause Beijing to declare war.



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The summit leaders' strong language on China is likely to incite a response from Beijing, which is a major trading partner for both South Korea and Japan.

Before the summit, China's reaction was hostile.

"Attempts to cobble together various exclusionary groupings and bring bloc confrontation and military blocs into the Asia-Pacific are not going to get support and will be met only with vigilance and opposition from regional countries," said Wang Wenbin, a spokesman for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing.

Analysts in Washington retorted against Beijing's description.

"We're far from a NATO-like organization in Asia," said Johnstone.

"What the US, Japan and South Korea did today was announce some significant, but still relatively modest, expansions in their defense, intelligence and economic security cooperation. But this is by no means a Nato-like architecture."

He elaborated: "All this is not happening because the Biden administration has magical diplomatic powers. It's fair to make the case that it's China's behavior that is driving a lot of this new cooperation that we're seeing, including in the trilateral relationship. And if China is concerned about that, it might look in the mirror."

Apart from the summit, the United States is relying on its long-term Pacific allies — Japan and Australia — to participate in "game-changing" defense collaboration after a new security agreement between Canberra and Tokyo.

The Reciprocal Access Agreement between Australia and Japan came into force on August 13. The goal is to reduce the burden of conducting joint military drills and training in each country by stepping down immigration control for troops and simplifying protocol for deploying weapons and ammunition.

The deal has a new significance in the Australian-Japanese strategic partnership, as Australia joins the United States as the only country to have such a deal with Japan.

According to the arrangement, Japan will deploy four F-35 fighter jets, three transport planes, and a refueling aircraft to Australia for mobile deployment training in late August, Japan's Air-Self Defense Force declared. Separately, Australia is poised to mobilize six F-35 fighters to Japan for combined training.



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