

Japan–South Korean Relations for a New Age

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Improvements to Relationship Starting in Earnest



Source: Prime Minister's Office of Japan website

https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/101_kishida/actions/202303/16korea.html

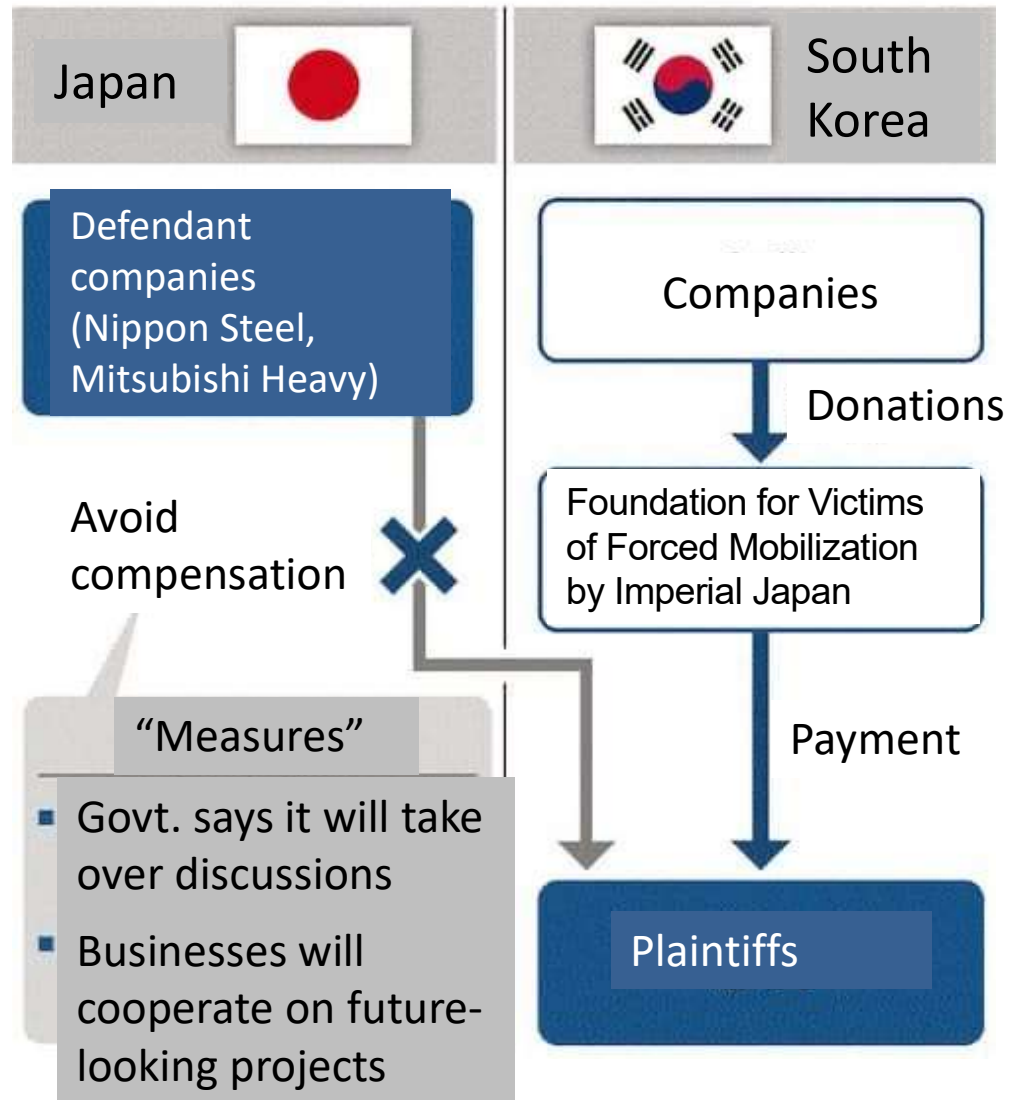
Steps Towards Improved Relationship

- 2022/4 Yoon administration sends delegation for policy talks
- 2022/5 Foreign Minister Hayashi visits ROK, attends President Yoon's inauguration
- 2022/7 Foreign Minister Park Jin visits Japan, Japan-ROK foreign minister summit
- 2022/8 President Yoon, 100th day in office press conference
"Find a solution without clashing with sovereignty issue Japan is concerned about"
- 2022/8 National Liberation Day speech
"When both countries move toward the future and the mission of the times, historical issues can also be solved"
- 2022/9 Japan-South Korea summit (New York)
- 2022/11 LDP Vice President Taro Aso visits ROK, meets with President Yoon
- 2022/11 South Korea joins Japan's international fleet review
- 2022/11 Japan-South Korea summit (Phnom Penh)
- 2023/3 March 1st Movement ceremony speech
"Japan is a partner who we share universal values with, and cooperate with on security, the economy, and issues at the global level."

Efforts to Solve the Wartime Labor Dispute

- Avoided cash liquidation of seized Japanese company assets
- 2022/7-9 Public-private councils (held 4 times)
- Visits to plaintiffs by Foreign Minister Park Jin
- 2023/1 Announced solution proposal at open forum/Rejected by plaintiffs
- 2023/3 Foreign Minister Park Jin announces plan
- Compensation by 3rd party Foundation for Victims of Forced Mobilization by Imperial Japan
→Gallup poll: 35% in favor, 59% opposed
- Calls for Japan to take “sincere measures” (apologize and donate funds)

Diagram of Solution to Wartime Labor Issue



Source: Nikkei website <https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGKKZO69036280X00C23A3MM8000/>

Situation in South Korea after Japan-South Korea Summit

- Plaintiffs reject proposal, move for further legal action
- Harsh public opinion in ROK: 30% approve, 60+% against
- Opposition party's "shameful diplomacy with Japan" campaign
- President Yoon: "Antagonistic nationalism and enticing anti-Japanese sentiment must not be used for domestic politics" (3/21 State Council of South Korea)
- Different definition of "sincere measures" between Japan/ROK
- Important 2024 South Korean general election

Holistic Escape from Vicious Cycle



Source: Prime Minister's Office of Japan website

https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/101_kishida/actions/202303/16korea.html

Japan-South Korea Summit/Joint Press Conference (2023/3)

- Japan approves of South Korea's solution for wartime laborers
- "...the Government of Japan takes up in its entirety the position of previous cabinets on the recognition of the history"
- Restart shuttle diplomacy, Security Dialogue, and Vice-Ministerial Strategic Dialogue
- Start Japan-South Korea consultations on economic security
- Reconsider export controls for South Korea (3 categories)
- Full normalization of GSOMIA
- Future Partnership Fund established by economic organizations
- Advance Japan-ROK and Japan-ROK-U.S. security coordination
- No plan to call for reimbursement

Renewed Activity in Japan-US-ROK Security Cooperation

- 8/8-14 10/4 Japan-US-ROK missile defense exercise
- 9/30 Japan-US-ROK anti-submarine exercise
- More discussion at all levels between Japan-US-ROK
 - 9/1 Director meeting
 - 9/22 Minister meeting
 - Joint statement
 - 10/20 Top officers meeting
 - 10/26 Vice ministers dialogue



Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting Joint Statement (2022/11)

- “...work together to close gaps in the international sanctions regime”
- Support ROK’s “Audacious Initiative,” “The path to dialogue remains open”
- Reaffirmed U.S. commitment to extended deterrence
- “...the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait”
- Cooperate in Indo-Pacific Strategies, economic security

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan website
https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/a_o/na2/page1_001404.html



Becoming a Partner Providing Global Public Goods



Source: Prime Minister's Office of Japan website

https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/101_kishida/actions/202303/16korea.html

Trends in Yoon Administration's Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

- Aim to be a “Global Pivotal State” (GPS)
- Increased emphasis on cooperation with liberal democracies
- 2022/5 US-South Korea Summit
→ 2023/4 Planned state visit to US, 70th anniversary of alliance
- 2022/6 President Yoon attended NATO summit as observer → Decided to open Mission to NATO (Japan opened one in 2018)
- 2022/12 Announced Strategy for a Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous Indo-Pacific₂

North Korean Policy Focused on Defense and Deterrence

- “Audacious Initiative” (Provide incentives for denuclearization)
- 2022/7 Appointed Ambassador-at-large on North Korean Human Rights
- 2022/11 “Denuclearized, peaceful, and prosperous Korean Peninsula”
- US-ROK increased extended deterrence/“Three-Axis System”
- US-ROK(-Japan) joint exercises
- Increased support for nuclear armament in South Korea and the (unstable?) position of the Yoon administration
 - Independently possessing nuclear weapons/Bringing back US tactical nuclear weapons/Sharing nuclear weapons

Keio University Lecture: Message to the Youth of Japan and South Korea



- There is a special meaning to the neighboring countries of Japan and South Korea being liberal democratic states with shared universal values such as freedom, human rights, and the rule of law. Both countries trying to demonstrate leadership towards shared goals of peace and prosperity of international society through cooperation and collaboration.
- For active exchange and communication between the youth in both countries, civilian leaders needed to work together. As a politician with a position of responsibility in South Korea, he called for the young generations of both countries to be courageous when working towards a bright future.

Future Issues and Outlook

- Engaging in shuttle diplomacy: Prime Minister Kishida visiting South Korea
- Increased activity in channels between politicians, and building trust
- Support for human and intellectual exchange in the post-pandemic era
- Increased Japan-US-ROK cooperation and comprehensive policy towards North Korea
- Cooperation on economic security: Return to whitelist
- Japan-ROK security cooperation: Exploring foreign and defense ministers dialogue (2+2)
- Cooperation on Indo-Pacific strategies: Initiatives to share strategies