

In about a hundred words on the upcoming Trilateral Summit

On the sidelines of the May 2023 G7 summit in Japan, American President Joe Biden invited South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida for a meeting in Washington that will unfold this week at Camp David.

As global interests continue to converge and intensify in Asia, GLOBSEC asks experts; *What area of trilateral cooperation requires the most improvement?*



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The trilateral summit between Japan, South Korea and the United States marks the latest stage in the rebuilding of trust between Tokyo and Seoul and enhancing trilateral cooperation with Washington to buttress as rule-based order in the backdrop of Chinese militarism in the Indo-Pacific, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and North Korea's proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

For trilateral security cooperation to substantially deepen, a key area that requires improvement are Japan-South Korea security ties and the trust between each country's security forces after a South Korean naval destroyer targeted a fire control radar system toward a Japanese military surveillance aircraft in 2018. Still today, the South Korean navy has not assumed responsibility for the incident fomenting mistrust.



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On August 18, US President Joe Biden will host a summit with ROK President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. This will be the first standalone meeting between the three leaders, demonstrating the high priority being placed on strengthening trilateral cooperation to counter an increasingly complex geopolitical environment. The reproachment between Seoul and Tokyo since Yoon took office has enabled expanded trilateral security cooperation to take hold, but the biggest challenge remains how to make these gains sustainable past any of these leaders' respective terms. Early reporting suggests this issue will be taken up at the summit, with the potential establishment of a framework for annual trilateral meetings.



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Practice makes perfect and, if relations between Seoul and Tokyo can concretely stabilize, Washington should drive a process of organizing a series of preliminary live-fire and tabletop exercises in 2024. From joint freedom of navigation maneuvers to digitally defending critical infrastructure, there are no shortages of heightened security themes where repelling threats is best accomplished together, especially as geopolitics converges in Asia. Consequently, a series of diverse exercises would serve to enhance trilateral readiness and build interoperability. Most importantly, it could be the catalyst to aid historical rivals transition from confidence building measures to solidified allies with a view to tackling future expected and spontaneous policy challenges.