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The United States-Japan-South Korea Defence Ministers' Summit in Singapore

The defence ministers of the United States, Japan and South Korea met in Singapore on the sidelines of the 21st Shangri-La security dialogue (May 31-June 2, 2024) and held bilateral and trilateral discussions between them. South Korea and Japan agreed to prevent the 2018 kind of [maritime incident](#) when a Japanese patrol aircraft came close to a South Korean warship. During this event in Singapore the Defence Secretary of the United States Lloyd Austin expressed America's [reluctance to provide support](#) to South Korea build nuclear-powered submarines. In the plenary session of the Shangri-La dialogue the South Korean defence minister [criticised](#) Russia for using North Korean weapons against Ukraine. Also, the United States, South Korea and Japan agreed to begin a [trilateral military exercise](#) in multiple domains from 2024 onwards and which would be named as "Freedom Edge." This would include military exercises in the sea, air, underwater and the cyberspace. The three-day trilateral exercise [began](#) in the last week of June.

North Korean "Trash Balloons" in South Korea

North Korea provoked South Korea by [sending](#) hundreds of balloons carrying excrement and trash to the Gyeonggi, North Chungcheong, North Gyeongsang provinces and Seoul metropolitan area of South Korea across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). This North Korean belligerence was allegedly in response to the anti-

regime [propaganda leaflets](#) sent by the South Korean activists to North Korea. The North Korean Defence Vice-minister Kim Kang Il claimed that his country sent about 3,500 balloons carrying 15 tonnes of [waste materials](#) to South Korea in between May 28 to June 2, 2024. However, North Korean regime assured that it would [stop sending](#) these balloons if the South Korean activists also refrain from similar hostile activities against Pyongyang. In response to the North Korean provocations, South Korean Government pledged to [suspend 2018 military agreement](#) with North Korea and restart military activities near the inter-Korean border. The anti-North Korean regime [propaganda broadcast](#) through loudspeakers from South Korea was also resumed.

South Korea's "K-Silk Road Initiative" in Central Asia

The South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol made a visit to the three nations of the Central Asia, namely Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan during June 10-15, 2024. On his trip to Ashgabat, President Yoon met with Turkmenistan President Serdar Berdimuhamedow and discussed [cooperation in wide ranging issues](#) related to trade, construction, exploration of gas resources, etc. It was reported that the South Korean companies have been targeting over US\$6 billion in [business deals](#) in Turkmenistan. During his second leg of the visit to the Central Asian region, President Yoon set his foot in Kazakhstan where he aimed to enhance bilateral cooperation in [mineral resources and infrastructure development](#). Several South Korean companies [signed deals with](#)

[Kazakhstan](#), mainly with regards to the exploration of mineral resources such as rare earth metals, titanium, uranium, etc. In Uzbekistan trip of President Yoon, the South Korean company manufacturing the high-speed train or the KTX was able to [clinch a deal](#) of exporting them to this Central Asian country. Also, South Korea and Uzbekistan agreed to [further deepen](#) their special strategic partnership and increase cooperation in the supply chain of the critical minerals.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's Visit to North Korea

After days of speculations, the Kremlin [confirmed the visit](#) of Russian President Vladimir Putin to North Korea. It was expected that his [visit to North Korea](#) is to enhance military cooperation between the two countries. This was the first visit by President Putin to North Korea in almost 24 years. On the other hand, the United

States and South Korea [raised alarms](#) regarding the possible military exchanges between Moscow and Pyongyang in the backdrop of ongoing war in Ukraine. There are suspicions that North Korea may also be [seeking technologies](#) related to building nuclear-powered submarines and cooperation in the development of its space program and ballistic missiles from Russia. It was also reported that both North Korea and Russia were exploring [alternative mechanisms](#) for trade and commerce, so as to avoid US-dominated international financial system. On his visit to Pyongyang on June 19, 2024 Putin received a grand welcome and he thanked North Korean leader Kim Jong-un for consistently [supporting Moscow](#) on the issue of conflict in Ukraine. Both countries [elevated their relationship](#) to a “comprehensive strategic partnership” which included mutual assistance in case of an external aggression.