



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on January 11, 2023

Asian Powers Seek European Help to Counter Regional Threats

SINGAPORE — Amid the rising bellicosity of China’s Communist regime, the Ukraine-Russia crisis that saw Russia showcase its military prowess, and the historic number of provocative missile tests from North Korea, various Asian powers like Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have been courting European efforts to counter regional threats.

On Monday, January 9, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida met with French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris as he began a weeklong tour of G7 nations such as Italy, Britain, Canada, and the U.S.



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Addressing reporters at a joint press conference, Kishida alluded to France as “a leading partner” in the bid to attain a free and open Indo-Pacific, and indicated Japan’s plan to conduct joint military drills with France. “As unilateral attempts to change by force the status quo in the East and South China Seas intensify and the security environment becomes increasingly tense, we wish to continue to cooperate with France,” he said, according to AFP.

Both Kishida and Macron agreed to cooperate to have a successful G7 summit in Hiroshima later this year, and Kishida’s visit to France was in preparation for the summit in May in the western Japan city, which was devastated by a U.S. atomic bomb in August 1945.

As a lawmaker representing Hiroshima, Kishida indicated his desire for a world without nuclear weapons at the G7 gathering, with concerns that Russia may use a nuclear device against Ukraine.

According to a Japanese Foreign Ministry official, Kishida told Macron that he will reflect the G7’s “strong commitment” to resist efforts to alter the status quo by force, threats, or the use of nuclear arms, and ensure a free and open international order, and Macron indicated he would “collaborate for the success” of the G7 summit.

In what seemed to be a reference to China’s rising military ambitions in the Asia-Pacific region, both leaders reiterated the importance of ensuring peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

Friction between the communist regime in Beijing and self-ruled democratic Taiwan has been rising, particularly after U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the third-highest-ranking official in the nation, visited the island in August 2022.

Fears have been mounting that Taiwan may become a military hotbed in the region, with Beijing hoping to reunite the island with the mainland, by force if necessary. Taiwan routinely dismisses Beijing’s claims, asserting that it will guard its freedoms and democracy. China and Taiwan have been governed under two distinct political systems since they split in 1949 after a civil war.

As France has overseas territories in the Pacific region like New Caledonia, the country has a vested interest in ensuring regional stability. Japan has been operating a consular office in Noumea, the capital



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of New Caledonia, since January, with Macron commending the opening of the office.

Macron maintained France's support for Japan in the Indo-Pacific, and admitted that North Korea's provocative nuclear and missile development program is a threat to regional security. "Japan can count on our unfailing support to face flagrant breaches to international law from Pyongyang," he told reporters.

Kishida said that the G7 nations would continue to support Kyiv and enforce strict sanctions against Russia to push Moscow to cease its activities in Ukraine. "The G7, faced with the Russian aggression, will rally to continue and reinforce strict sanctions against Russia and keep up strong support for Ukraine," he stated. Macron assured Kishida that both countries will work together to tackle the global repercussions of the Ukraine crisis, particularly in energy and food security matters.

Both leaders also pledged to boost bilateral cooperation in nuclear and renewable energy, car manufacturing, and defense.

Japan is worried about its own susceptibility amid an expanding Chinese military presence directed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and in December 2022 labeled China as Japan's "greatest challenge." The island nation is hoping to have the ability to counterattack, a move generally perceived as a shift in the nation's defense policy.

On January 2 this year, Japan's defense ministry [said](#) that it had to scramble fighter jets, and dispatched aircraft and warships for two weeks to monitor the CCP's Liaoning aircraft carrier and five warships that conducted naval maneuvers and flight operations over the Pacific Ocean.

The ministry added that it kept tabs on the operations following the sailing of Chinese military ships between the main Okinawa island and Miyakojima island into the Western Pacific from the East China Sea on December 16.

Japan is not the only Asian power to be concerned about a bellicose China.

In neighboring Taiwan, President Tsai Ing-wen on January 9 urged Germany to ensure "regional order" during a meeting with senior German lawmakers who were visiting the island on [a trip that Beijing](#) has slammed. Taiwan's Western democratic allies have expressed their support for the island amid escalating Chinese pugilism, such as [war games conducted by the communist state near the island in August 2022](#).

Tsai said to the visiting lawmakers that in light of "authoritarian expansionism," democracies must unite. "Starting next year, Taiwan's mandatory military service will be extended to one year. This will bolster our defense capabilities and demonstrate our determination to defend our homeland and safeguard democracy," she said, alluding to a government announcement last month. "We look forward to Taiwan, Germany and other democratic partners jointly maintaining the regional order and prosperity."

Although Germany has no formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan, Berlin is adopting a new strategy to recalibrate its relations with China and to decrease its reliance on the communist superpower.

For instance, Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, the head of Germany's parliamentary defense committee, told Tsai that Germany and Taiwan are friends. "That's the reason why we come to your country, to your wonderful island, to say (to) the world that we stand close together as democratic states."

Strack-Zimmermann, a member of the Free Democrats, Chancellor Olaf Scholz's junior coalition



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partner, also discussed Russian actions in Ukraine, saying they were a wake-up call for the whole world. China voiced anger at the visit, with its Foreign Ministry referring to Germany's World War II past. "We want to point out that the root cause of the Taiwan issue stems precisely from the law of the jungle, hegemony, colonialism and militarism that were once rampant in the world. China was deeply impacted by that. Germany has a deep and tragic historical lesson in that," Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin fulminated.

Also jumping on the bandwagon to counter regional Chinese, Russian, and North Korean threats is South Korea.

Last year, former officials remarked that closer relations with the European Union (EU) were necessary amid the rising tensions between China and the U.S., and South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol had said that he planned to deploy a team of special envoys to the EU prior to taking office in May 2022.

The Ukraine crisis and the importance of tackling "Moscow's direct threat to the rules-based international order" further make EU-South Korea cooperation vital, the former officials said in a report released by the Brussels School of Governance. "Cooperation between Seoul and Brussels can help mitigate the most negative effects of Sino-American competition and ensure that the United States does not turn on its allies but rather cooperates with them," claimed the report's authors, who include former EU and South Korean envoys.

Yoon has vowed to make South Korea a bigger player on the global stage, including by expanding "the breadth of diplomacy in the EU and throughout Asia."

South Korea-Europe cooperation had previously been sidelined by both sides' relations with the U.S. However, greater collaboration could bolster both sides' strategic value to Washington and Beijing, said Kim Chang-beom, a former South Korean ambassador to the EU. "It would give additional maneuvering room for South Korea in its dealings with the policy dilemma arising from the rising competition," he told Reuters.



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