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JAPAN-KOREA RELATIONS

## UNREALIZED OLYMPIC DIPLOMACY

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In the summer months of 2021, the big question for many observers was whether Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide and President Moon Jae-in would hold their first summit meeting during the Tokyo Olympic Games. Cautious hope was in the air, especially on the South Korean side. However, by the time the Olympics opened in late July, any such hope was dashed amid a series of unhelpful spats. Seoul and Tokyo decided that they would not gain much—at least not what they wanted from the other—by holding a summit this summer. With Suga’s [announcement](#) of his resignation as head of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) at the end of September, barring any sudden turn of events, his tenure as Japanese prime minister will be recorded as one that did not have a summit with a South Korean president.

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## No Olympic Summit

The Olympic Games can present unique opportunities for leaders to meet despite disagreements in politics. A recent example of this is the PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games in February 2018 when then Prime Minister Abe Shinzo attended the opening ceremony and held a meeting with President Moon. The 2018 Olympics also afforded a new opportunity for North Korea and the United States to engage, while the two Koreas marched together at the opening and closing ceremonies under the Unification Flag. Against the backdrop of stalled relations with Pyongyang, it seemed that Seoul's hope was to create similar momentum for dialogue with North Korea using the Tokyo Olympic Games. But it was not to be.

In May, before his departure to Washington, DC for a summit with US President Joe Biden, Moon expressed his desire to restore the peace process with North Korea. According to [South Korean media](#), South Korea's Director of National Intelligence Service Park Ji-won met with Suga in Tokyo, reportedly relaying Moon's message of wanting to improve relations with Japan. In early June, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) officially [confirmed](#) that North Korea would not participate due to "the world health crisis caused by COVID-19." This was the first time in 33 years that Pyongyang did not attend the Olympic Games; its last absence resulted from having boycotted the Seoul Olympics in 1988.

The debate over whether Moon would attend the Tokyo Olympics drew much attention this summer. In the end, however, there was no Olympic diplomacy, nor any breakthrough in the stalemate in bilateral ties between Seoul and Tokyo. Along with other issues, this outcome reflected disagreements over compensation for wartime forced laborers and the so-called "comfort women"—victims of Imperial Japan's wartime sexual slavery—which did not show a sign of narrowing.

Until mid-July, the South Korean government was leaning toward Moon visiting Tokyo to talk about these issues during a summit with Suga. The agenda might have also included a discussion of Japan's export restrictions placed on South Korean companies since 2019 and Japan's decision to release treated wastewater from the Fukushima plant into the Pacific Ocean. In early July, South Korea's Blue House official [said](#), "if we anticipate a South Korea-Japan

summit and something coming out of it, then we would be willing to consider a visit to Japan."

Japan's government views a summit with Moon as tied to its position that the South Korean government should first present concrete measures to address the issues of wartime forced laborers and the comfort women. When asked whether he would hold a summit with Moon if the South Korean leader visits Tokyo for the Olympics, Suga said it was "obvious that a respectful response should be accorded in diplomatic terms." During the same press conference, to explain a state of emergency for Tokyo due to COVID-19, Suga [said](#), "In order for these issues between Japan and South Korea to be resolved, it is important that South Korea responds responsibly."

Leading up to the South Korean announcement on July 19 that President Moon would not visit Tokyo, it was clear that the atmosphere surrounding discussions and coordination of meetings between the two leaders was not great. In early June, Moon and Suga had a brief encounter during the G7 summit in London, their first in-person interaction since Suga took office. However, [reports](#) from South Korean media cited South Korea's Foreign Ministry and other officials saying that Tokyo unilaterally canceled a pull-aside between Moon and Suga on the sidelines of G7. This was [countered](#) by Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Kato Katsunobu as "contrary to the facts." After the G7 summit, Suga reiterated his position and [said](#), "South Korea needs to point the way. I hope that Moon will exercise his leadership and clearly settle this problem." President Moon [wrote](#) on Facebook that the encounter with Suga was "a valuable occasion which may serve as a new beginning in Korea-Japan relations," and said it was "regrettable that it didn't lead to a summit."



Figure 1 South Korean President Moon Jae-in and Japanese Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide attend a plenary session of the G7 summit in Cornwall. Photo: Yonhap

In July, before the South Korean government had announced the final decision on Moon’s visit to Tokyo, Japanese media [cited](#) a source from the Prime Minister’s Office saying that Suga’s meeting with Moon would be kept to around 15 minutes—“cut short.” A South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs official, in a text message to Korean reporters, [said](#) that South Korea expresses “deep dismay over the content of discussions between our two countries’ diplomatic authorities recently being leaked unilaterally to the press.”

Announcement of the Blue House decision to not visit came after remarks by Deputy Chief of Mission at the Japanese Embassy in Seoul Soma Hirohisa. When asked by a South Korean reporter about the chances of a summit between Japan and South Korea during the Olympics, Soma reportedly [said](#), in a combination of Korean and English, that Moon was “masturbating” when it came to improving relations with Tokyo and that Japan “does not have the time to care so much about the relationship between the two countries as Korea thinks.”

Japanese Ambassador to Korea Aiboshi Koichi issued a statement that [reads](#), “I was told by Soma that it was true that he used the expression that has been reported in the news, but that this was never a statement about President Moon Jae-in and that Soma withdrew it after saying it, stating it was an inappropriate remark,” adding that it was “extremely inappropriate coming from a diplomat and I am very regretful for it.” South Korea’s First Vice Minister Choi Jong-kun summoned Aiboshi and strongly protested Soma’s remarks. Choi [said](#) in a statement that “we have asked the Japanese government to take

prompt and appropriate measure to prevent the recurrence of such an incident.” Japan’s Chief Secretary Kato Katsunobu said that “the remarks were very inappropriate.” Soma was ordered to return to Japan.

It appears that South Korea kept the door open for engagement with Japan. The South Korean press secretary’s announcement that Moon would not visit Japan [said](#), “As the Tokyo Olympics is a peaceful festival for all people around the world, we hope that Japan will host it safely and successfully.” In August, Moon’s speech on the occasion of the 76<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence from Japan’s colonial rule [signaled](#) a desire to overcome bilateral problems. He said that South Korea aims to tackle historical issues consistent with universal values and international standards.

Unsurprisingly, the Olympics became a site for contentious politics of symbolism. South Korea’s Olympic committee displayed the banner “I still have 12 battleships left” in the Olympic village accommodation center, words that depict the victory of Yi Sun-sin, a general in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Korea who fought and defeated invading Japanese forces during the Imjin War (1592–1598) launched by Japan’s then-ruler Hideyoshi Toyotomi. The IOC ruled that the banner was against Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter that stipulates “no kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas.” South Korea’s Olympic committee said that in return for the banner’s removal, the IOC promised that Japanese rising sun flags will be banned from Olympic event areas.

### Dispute over Dokdo/Takeshima Islands

The disputes over the Dokdo/Takeshima islets also found a place in the Tokyo Olympic Games. South Korea protested a map on the Tokyo Olympics’ website that presented the islands as part of Japanese history. In early June, South Korea’s Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and the Korean Sports and Olympic Committee sent a letter to IOC requesting its “active mediation.” South Korea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned the Deputy Chief of Mission at the Japanese Embassy Soma Hirohisa to lodge a protest. This row over an Olympic map on the Olympics website led some South Korean politicians to call for a boycott of the Tokyo Games. South Korea’s Foreign Ministry Spokesman Choi Yong-sam said that the

government was not considering a boycott over this issue.

Some believed the map infuriated the South Korean public because South Korea did not include the Dokdo/Takeshima islands in a flag of the Korean Peninsula, the Unification Flag, used in the opening ceremony in the 2018 PyeongChang Olympic Games. According to [Shawn Ho](#), the earlier version of the Unification Flag in the 2006 Winter Olympics in Italy and the 2007 Asian Winter Games in China included the islands as Korean territory. But the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang did not include the islands most likely in consideration of relations with Japan.

In mid-June, the South Korean military conducted annual drills surrounding the Dokdo/Takeshima islands. South Korea has conducted these exercises twice a year since 1986. Japanese Cabinet Secretary Kato said that they were “unacceptable and extremely regrettable,” calling for their halt. Many in South Korea speculated that Suga avoided meeting with Moon during the G7 summit because of the drills. Meanwhile, Japan’s Defense White Paper 2021 presented to a session of the Japanese Cabinet in July describes the Dokdo/Takeshima islands as “inherent parts of the territory of Japan.” South Korea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs protested Japan’s territorial claim over the islands and called for its withdrawal.

### Forced Laborers and “Comfort Women”

Disputes over wartime forced laborers and the comfort women continued along with court rulings in South Korea over the summer. On June 7, the Seoul Central District Court dismissed the claim by former Korean wartime forced laborers and their families in a suit against 16 Japanese companies. The defendants included Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd., Nippon Steel Corp., Mitsui E & S Holdings Co., ENEOS Corp., Sumitomo Metal Mining Co. and Mitsubishi Materials Corp. By June 9, over 200,000 people signed a petition with the Blue House calling for impeachment of Seoul District Court judge Kim Yang-ho. In a separate case, South Korea’s Supreme Court had ruled in October 2018 that Nippon Steel and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries pay damages to the plaintiffs.

On August 12, South Korean Suwon District Court Anyang branch approved the seizure of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries’ assets held in South Korea to pay for wartime forced labor. Chief

Cabinet Secretary Kato [responded](#), “If it’s liquidated, that would push Japan–South Korea relations into a serious situation. It must be avoided,” urging Seoul to “present a solution that is acceptable to Japan.” South Korea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it was in talks with Japan to find a “reasonable solution” in ways that would consider the victims’ legal rights.

On June 9, the Seoul District Court ordered the Japanese government to disclose the assets in South Korea to cover the legal fees of former comfort women. This order followed the Japanese government’s refusal to comply with an earlier court order on Jan. 8 to pay 100 million won (about \$90,000) each in a lawsuit filed by 12 plaintiffs citing state immunity. The trial had proceeded with the defendants in absentia.

July 14 marked the 1,500<sup>th</sup> Wednesday demonstration for comfort women; the first demonstration was in January 1992. In light of Level 4 social distancing measures in Seoul, it was conducted as a one-person demonstration, broadcast live on YouTube, calling for the Japanese government’s official apology and acceptance of full legal responsibility toward victims. The demonstration was organized by Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance for the Issues of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan along with 1,565 citizens from 14 countries.

Against the backdrop of these court rulings, Japan’s ways of remembering—and forgetting—involving the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) received public attention in South Korea. The UNESCO World Heritage Committee issued a report that the Tokyo Industrial Heritage Information Centre does not provide sufficient information about wartime forced laborers at the UNESCO World Heritage site Hashima Island in Japan. The conclusions of the Report of the UNESCO/ICOMOS mission to the Industrial Heritage Information Center section of the report WHC/21/44.COM/7B.Add.2 [reads](#): “The mission has therefore concluded that the interpretive measures to allow an understanding of [the large number of Koreans and others who worked at the industrial sites] brought against their will and forced to work are currently insufficient.” According to [Joongang Ilbo](#), a South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs official urged Japan to take appropriate measures.



## Dispute over Fukushima Waste Water



Figure 2 An aerial view of the tanks storing treated radioactive water at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. Photo: Kyodo via SCMP

In addition to disputes over history and territory, Japan's planned release of 1.25 million tons of treated wastewater from the Fukushima plant into the Pacific Ocean took space on the bilateral agenda, incurring strong protests from Seoul. In early May, during an in-person meeting between the foreign ministers of Japan and South Korea in London, Chung Eui-yong conveyed to Motegi Toshimitsu South Korea's deep concern about Japan's plan. In June, the Korean National Assembly adopted a resolution condemning Japan's plan, [stating](#) that it "strongly condemns the Japanese government's unilateral decision to release Fukushima's contaminated radioactive wastewater into the sea and urges the immediate withdrawal of that decision."

After Japan's decision in April, South Korea's approach included bringing the issue to the international stage. South Korean Minister of Health and Welfare Kwon Deok-chul, in his keynote speech for the 74th World Health Assembly, argued the international community should share information regarding public health threats, [making the case](#) that the release "should not happen without adequate prior discussions with interested parties."

Building on consultations with the two governments, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) international committee was formed. Made up of experts from 11 countries—including the United States, France, China, and South Korea—it will monitor the safety of water release at Fukushima Daiichi, while reviewing Japan's implementation of the plan. Japan and the IAEA have been working together to address the aftermath of the Fukushima Daiichi incident

in the last 10 years. IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi [said](#), "IAEA experts will be able to verify that the water discharge is conducted safely," noting that this is "of paramount importance to reassure people in Japan and elsewhere in the world, especially in neighboring countries, that the water poses no threat to them."

## North Korea and US–Japan–South Korea Cooperation

Washington has sought to tighten trilateral cooperation with Seoul and Tokyo on North Korea and other regional issues, but the link between Japan and South Korea has not grown stronger despite the Biden administration's diplomatic initiatives and expectations. In early May, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the Japanese foreign minister, and South Korea's foreign minister met on the sidelines of the G7. They discussed the recent US review of North Korea policy, aiming to deal with North Korea through a gradual approach using diplomacy, rather than the previous administration's attempt at a comprehensive deal between leaders. The Japanese and South Korean foreign ministers also met on the sidelines of the G7, but this yielded no progress.

In July, US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, South Korean Vice Foreign Minister Choi Jong-kun, and Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Mori Takeo met to discuss North Korea policy. The last such deputy–secretary level meeting was in October 2017. Sherman [said](#) that the US was "ready to engage with North Korea and they know that," sending the message that "we are together and shoulder-to-shoulder in our approach to this policy." They agreed to meet on a regular basis, exemplifying the Biden administration's approach to North Korea at the working level.



*Figure 3 South Korean Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Mori Takeo, South Korean First Vice Foreign Minister Choi Jong-kun, and US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman meet at the Iikura Guesthouse in Tokyo. Photo: AP*

### **Looking Ahead**

Until about 10 years ago, the inauguration of a new leader in Japan or in South Korea offered an opportunity to start bilateral ties, frayed over historical issues, anew. This time, however, the chances of a new Japanese leader bringing about a change in Japan's approach to South Korea seem dim. At least three developments point to the status quo for the remainder of 2021. First, who becomes the next leader of Japan will matter. There is concern that skepticism about bilateral relations runs deep among political leaders and in foreign policy circles in Japan.

Second, political leaders in both countries will take into account public sentiment and opinions. According to *Yomiuri Shimbun* and *Hankook Ilbo* surveys in May, 69% of Japanese respondents and 80% of South Korean respondents said that they could not trust the other. The poll also showed that 81% of Japanese respondents and 89% of South Korean respondents considered Seoul–Tokyo relations to be “bad.”

Third, a push for trilateral coordination between Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington toward North Korea policy may bring Japan and South Korea closer. As it stands, however, the Biden administration's emphasis on a “practical” approach and achievable goals toward Pyongyang's nuclear and missile development programs does not require Japan to consider major revisions to its existing stance on North Korea.

# CHRONOLOGY OF JAPAN-KOREA RELATIONS

## MAY – AUGUST 2021

**May 3, 2021:** South Korean Finance Minister Hong Nam-ki [solicits](#) cooperation among South Korea, China, and Japan for regional economic recovery and mitigation of emerging risks during ASEAN +3 virtual meeting.

**May 3, 2021:** US Secretary of State Antony Blinken [holds](#) separate bilateral talks with Japanese Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu and South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong at the G7 summit in London.

**May 5, 2021:** FM Motegi, FM Chung, and Secretary Blinken [hold](#) trilateral talks at G7 summit.

**May 12, 2021:** US Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines [meets](#) with South Korean counterpart Park Jie-won and Japanese counterpart Takizawa Hiroaki in Tokyo. Park and Takizawa hold bilateral talks in Tokyo.

**May 14, 2021:** South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs [expresses](#) concern about the discharge of contaminated Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant water in press statement.

**May 20, 2021:** During a meeting with South Korean President Moon Jae-in, US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi [discusses](#) denuclearization of North Korea, climate change, the pandemic, and the US-ROK alliance on Capitol Hill. Pelosi also expressed a desire for justice for comfort women victims.

**May 25, 2021:** South Korean Minister of Health and Welfare Kwon Deok-chul [asks](#) for an increase in COVID-19 vaccine production and a close examination of Japan's plan to discharge Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant water into the ocean.

**May 26, 2021:** More than 60 South Korean organizations [announce](#) formation of Joint Action for Stopping the Ocean Release of Radioactive Water, a coalition advocating for withdrawal of Japan's decision to discharge nuclear power plant water into the ocean during a press conference at the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions Seoul office.

**June 1, 2021:** South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs calls in Japanese Deputy Ambassador Soma Hirohisa to [express](#) disapproval of the display of the Takeshima/Dokdo Islands as Japanese territory on the Tokyo Olympics Organizing Committee website.

**June 4, 2021:** South Korean Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Energy reports that 15% of South Korean materials and components imports between January and April 2021 came from Japanese.

**June 5, 2021:** Korean President Moon and Japanese Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide [have](#) their first in-person discussion, during the G7 summit in London, since Suga entered office.

**June 5, 2021:** *Yomiuri Shimbun* and *Hankook Ilbo* release survey showing that for the third year in a row more than 80% of respondents in Japan (81%) and South Korea (89%) indicate that ROK-Japan relations are "bad"; 69% of respondents in Japan indicated they could not trust South Korea and 80% of respondents in South Korea indicated they could not trust Japan.

**June 7, 2021:** Seoul District Court Judge Kim Yang-ho [dismisses](#) a lawsuit for compensation from 16 Japanese companies filed by 85 South Korean victims of forced labor.

**June 8, 2021:** International Olympic Committee [confirms](#) that North Korea will not participate in the Summer Olympics for the first time in 33 years.

**June 9, 2021:** Seoul Central District Court judge Nam Seong-woo [orders](#) government of Japan to disclose assets held in South Korea after Japanese government's refusal to comply with court order to pay 100 million won in lawsuit filed by 12 "comfort women."

**June 9, 2021:** A petition [filed](#) with the Blue House seeking impeachment of Seoul District Court judge Kim Yang-ho after dismissal of forced labor lawsuit accrues more than 200,000 signatures.

**June 15, 2021:** South Korean armed forces [hold](#) East Sea Territory Protection Exercise military drill near Liancourt Rocks. During a press conference, Japanese Cabinet Secretary Kato Katsunobo says, “This sort of drill is unacceptable and extremely regrettable.”

**June 21, 2021:** Director-General of the Japanese Ministry of Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Takehiro Funakoshi, South Korean Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Noh Kyu-duk, and US Special Representative for North Korea Sung Kim [discuss](#) denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula during a trilateral meeting in Seoul.

**June 27, 2021:** Korean Automobile Manufacturers Association report [shows](#) that in 2020, South Korea imported 46,000 US cars, surpassing Japanese car imports to become the second highest source of imported cars after Germany.

**June 29, 2021:** South Korea’s National Assembly Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee [passes](#) unanimous resolution requesting that the government of Japan work with the International Atomic Energy Agency and South Korea to confirm safety of plan to release treated Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant water into the Pacific Ocean.

**July 6, 2021:** Exhibition [opens](#) at Citizen’s Gallery Sakae and includes the comfort woman statue, “Statue of a Girl of Peace” in Nagoya, Japan.

**July 8, 2021:** During a COVID-19-related press conference in Tokyo, Japanese Prime Minister Suga [addresses](#) question about Japan-ROK summit during the Summer Olympics and says, it is “obvious that a respectful response should be accorded in diplomatic terms.”

**July 9, 2021:** Citizen’s Gallery Sakae, [announces](#) temporary closure for duration of scheduled exhibit displaying comfort woman statue, “Statue of a Girl of Peace” in Nagoya.

**July 12, 2021:** United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee [releases](#) a report noting deficiencies in the Tokyo Industrial Heritage Information Centre’s provision of information about forced labor at the UNESCO World Heritage site Hashima (Gunkanjima) Island in Japan.

**July 13, 2021:** Japanese Ministry of Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi [presents](#) Defense of Japan 2021 White Paper to Japanese Cabinet. The White Paper refers to the Liancourt Rocks as “inherent parts of the territory of Japan.” During a press conference, South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Choi Young-sam says, “The government of the Republic of Korea strongly protests against the Japanese government’s reiteration of futile territorial claims over Dokdo.”

**July 14, 2021:** Demonstrators gather for the 1,500<sup>th</sup> Wednesday protest of unresolved comfort woman issues outside of the prior location of the Japanese embassy in Seoul.

**July 16, 2021:** Deputy Chief of Mission at the Japanese embassy in South Korea Soma Hirohisa [tells](#) South Korean news reporter that “President Moon is masturbating himself” in response to a question regarding potential ROK-Japan summit during the Tokyo Olympics.

**July 17, 2021:** South Korea Olympic committee [states](#) that banners referencing war between Korea and Japan that were deemed provocative by the International Olympic Committee have been removed from the Olympic village accommodation center after the IOC promised that Japanese rising sun flags will be banned from Olympic event areas.

**July 17, 2021:** South Korean First Vice Foreign Minister Choi Jong-kun [summons](#) Japanese Ambassador Aiboshi Koichi to express disapproval of remarks by Japanese Deputy Chief of Mission Soma about South Korean President Moon.

**July 19, 2021:** South Korean Press Secretary Park Soo-hyun [announces](#) that President Moon will not attend the Tokyo Olympics and states, “As the Tokyo Olympics is a peaceful festival for all people around the world, we hope that Japan will host it safely and successfully.”



**July 21, 2021:** US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman [meets](#) South Korean First Vice Foreign Minister Choi Jong-kun and Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Mori Takeo in Tokyo to discuss policy toward North Korea.

**July 22, 2021:** South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs [states](#) that the UNESCO World Heritage Committee adopts resolution indicating that the government of Japan has not provided sufficient acknowledgement of Korean forced labor victims at the information center for UNESCO World Heritage site Hashima (Gunkanjima) Island in Japan.

**July 23, 2021:** Gallup Korea opinion poll indicates that 66% of South Koreans have no interest in the Tokyo Summer Olympic games, and only 32% of South Koreans are interested.

**Aug. 2, 2021:** Japanese newspaper *Nikkei Shimbun* [reports](#) that Japanese Deputy Chief of Mission Soma has been recalled to Japan due to offensive remarks about President Moon.

**Aug. 12, 2021:** South Korean Suwon District Court Anyang branch [orders](#) seizure of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries assets held by South Korean manufacturer LS Mtron valued at 850 million won (\$725,000) in connection with forced labor compensation.

**Aug. 13, 2021:** South Korean Foreign Ministry Director-General for Asian and Pacific Affairs Lee Sang-ryol [summons](#) Japanese Deputy Chief of mission Naoki Kumagai to express disapproval of Japanese Defense Minister Kishi's Yasukuni Shrine visit.

**Aug. 15, 2021:** On the 76<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Korean independence from Japanese rule, President Moon [states](#) that his country always leaves the door open for dialogue with Japan.

**Aug. 19, 2021:** Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Kato [says](#) that liquification of Japanese assets “will be a very serious situation for Korea-Japan relations” and “should be avoided” in response to questions regarding seizure of Mitsubishi Heavy bonds.

**Aug. 30, 2021:** South Korean Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism Hwang Hee [holds](#) virtual trilateral talks with Japanese counterpart Koichi Hagiuda and Chinese counterpart Hu Heping to discuss cooperation during Covid-19 pandemic.

*This chronology was prepared by Patrice Francis, MA student at American University's School of International Service.*

