

# China 'still a player' on North Korea, despite Trump-Kim talks, Japanese official says

Peace and stability in Asia will top agenda at upcoming summit between Beijing, Tokyo and Seoul, former foreign minister says.



China still has a significant role to play on the North Korea nuclear issue, regardless of the planned talks between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, according to a former Japanese foreign minister.

The subject of Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions, as well as regional infrastructure development, is likely to be high on the agenda at an upcoming summit between China, South Korea and Japan, which is expected to be held in early May in Tokyo, Fumio Kishida told the *South China Morning Post*.

The meeting, which will be attended by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, comes amid some easing of tensions on the Korean Peninsula, as a result of talks between the two Koreas and the planned dialogue between Kim and Trump.

When Washington and Pyongyang agreed to the leaders' talks, it triggered concerns that Beijing's role as a mediator between the two would be diminished.



Relations between the restive state and China, its sole ally and economic patron, have deteriorated sharply in recent years, with Kim and Chinese President Xi Jinping still yet to hold official visits.

However, Kishida said that as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, and North Korea's main trading partner, China retained considerable leverage over Pyongyang.

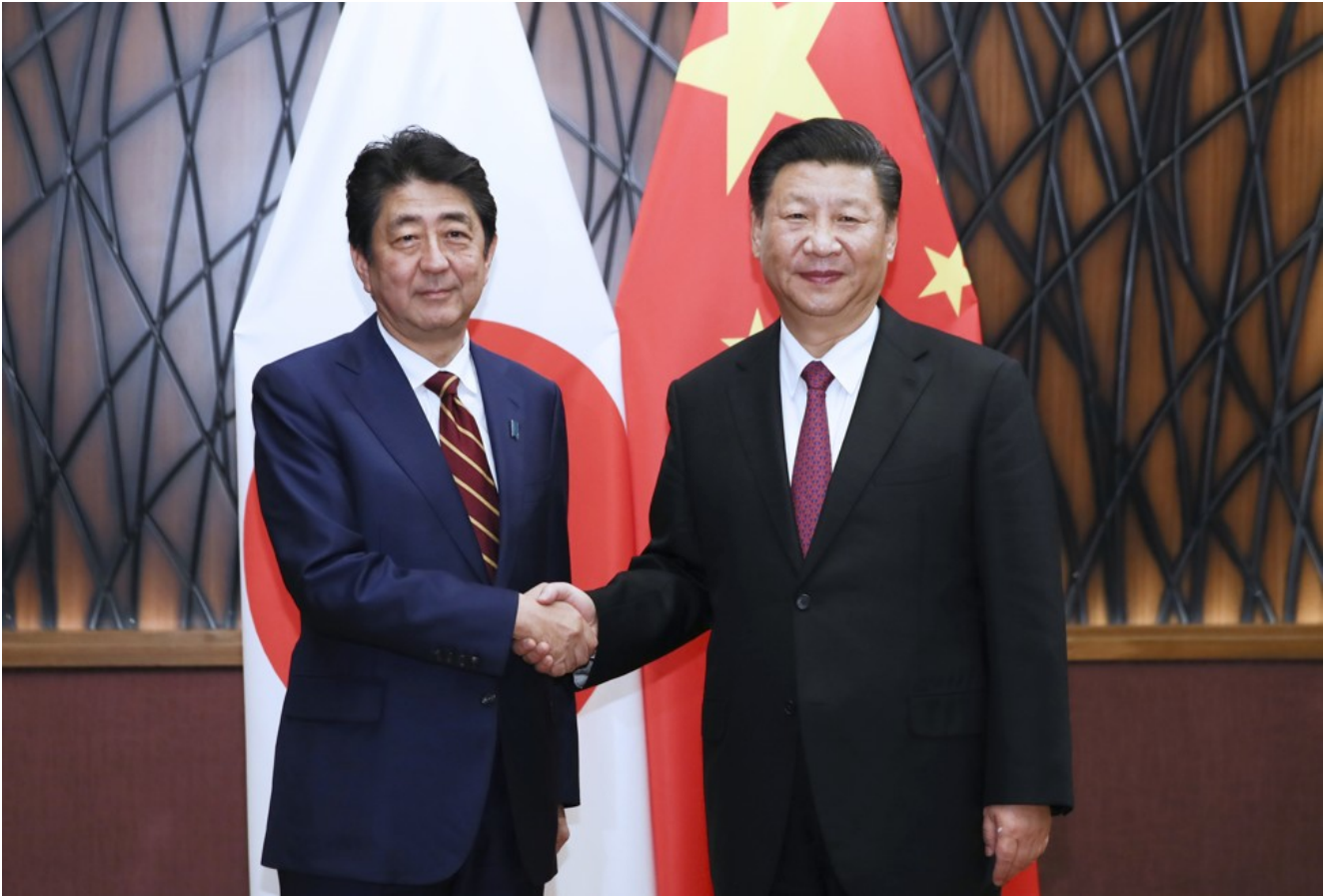
"The most important item on the agenda [for the trilateral summit] is peace and stability in Asia, including the North Korea issue. This is the area where the three countries have to work together," he said on the sidelines of an investment conference last week. "China's influence over North Korea remains quite significant."

China can take little credit for North Korea breakthroughs

The move by China, which accounts for more than 90 per cent of North Korea's foreign trade, to ban imports of textiles and seafood, and exports of oil products from its secretive neighbour in compliance with United Nations sanctions was welcomed, Kishida said.

"China is taking proactive measures to implement the decisions of the United Nations. We welcome those efforts," he said. "To solve the North Korea issue,

China has to work together with the rest of the world.”



The China-Japan-South Korea summit was last held in November 2015, but was subsequently suspended as ties between the three countries deteriorated amid territorial disputes, grievances related to the second world war, Seoul's deployment of a US-led anti-missile defence system, and a change of administration in South Korea.

Japan 'pushes for summit' with China and South Korea this year

Relations between China and Japan have since improved, and Xi met Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on the fringes of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Vietnam in November. A week later, Abe met Li at a regional summit in Manila.

Japanese officials said they hoped Abe and Xi could arrange reciprocal visits to one another's countries after the trilateral summit.

Another agenda item for the upcoming summit will be infrastructure development in developing nations, Japanese diplomatic and trade sources said.

North Korea: fearing diplomatic sidelines, Japan explores possible meeting

between Shinzo Abe and Kim Jong-un

Kishida said that China and Japan should cooperate to meet the region's infrastructure requirements, but he expressed concerns about Xi's pet "Belt and Road Initiative" and the Beijing-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank due to their lack of transparency. Japan is not directly involved in either.

"We want to monitor and pay attention to whether the AIIB actually complies with global standards in terms of governance," he said. "We will consider what Japan can do to contribute based on that observation."

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Source: <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2138938/china-still-player-north-korea-despite-trump-kim-talks>

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