

Tensions in Northeast Asia: Yasukuni Shrine and military moves

Thursday 7 November 2013, by [Jiji Press](#), [Kyodo News](#) (Date first published: 30 October 2013).

Contents

- [Takeshima / Dokdo](#)
- [Okinawa and beyond](#)
- [Yasukuni](#)

62% of South Koreans regard Japan as a military threat: think tank poll

SEOUL — Over 60 percent of South Koreans regard Japan as a military threat, according to a recent survey by Seoul-based think tank Asan Institute for Policy Studies.

In the public opinion poll on foreign relations conducted by the think tank, 62 percent said they feel militarily threatened by Japan.

Japan got only 2.66 on a 10-point scale of favorableness, slightly higher than the 2.43 points given to North Korea.

The survey results released Tuesday likely reflect soured ties over territorial and historical issues as well as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's eagerness to allow Japan to exercise its right to collective defense, the think tank said.

But the survey also found that 58.1 percent of the respondents think the two neighboring Asian nations need to hold a summit and that 60.4 percent want a bilateral pact to protect military secrets, suggesting a majority of South Koreans think it necessary to cooperate with Japan.

A thousand adults were surveyed between Sept. 2 and 4.

Political ties between the nations remain mired at their lowest point in years.

South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se said Tuesday he sees "no light at the end of the tunnel" despite what he describes as President Park Geun-hye's efforts to improve relations.

Jiji Press, Kyodo News, October 30, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/10/30/national/62-of-south-koreans-regard-japan-as-a-military-threat-think-tank-poll/#.UnV66SdjbRY>

Japan to down intruding foreign drones if warnings ignored

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Japan plans to shoot down foreign drones that intrude into Japanese airspace if

warnings for them to leave are ignored, a source close to the government said Sunday.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe issued his approval on Oct. 11 when Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera briefed him on the plan, the source said.

The Defense Ministry has drawn up the plan as a Chinese military drone intruded into Japan's air defense identification zone on Sept. 9, approaching the disputed Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.

The plan is aimed at demonstrating Japan's readiness to respond to any acts that violate its sovereignty, according to the source.

But the government will continue deliberations on how to respond to possible intrusions by drones carrying weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear or biological weapons, as shooting them down could have serious consequences, the source said.

The existing rules for how Air Self-Defense Force fighters should respond to intrusions by manned aircraft mandate that pilots should first issue warnings. Pilots are required to down intruding aircraft if they pose a risk of damage or injury to Japanese nationals after ignoring such warnings.

Japan did not have clear rules for surveillance drones as such aircraft are seemingly unable to detect warnings to leave Japanese airspace, but after analyzing drones currently being developed by China, the Japanese government has determined that such aircraft are equipped with high-performance camera and radar, and are capable of detecting warnings.

Kyodo News, October 21, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131021p2g00m0dm027000c.html>

Takeshima / Dokdo

Japan's video campaign on Takeshima to continue despite Seoul's protests

Japan will continue its video propaganda campaign over a pair of South Korean-controlled islets in the Sea of Japan despite the protests and demands by Seoul that Tokyo's video on the subject be taken off a popular video-sharing website, the government said Wednesday.

"The government is doing what we must do regularly, from the viewpoint of promoting a more correct understanding of the situation surrounding our country," Foreign Ministry press secretary Kuni Sato said at a news conference, referring to a new YouTube video made by the ministry that features Japan's claims to the disputed islets, known as Takeshima in Japan and Dokdo in South Korea.

The ministry has uploaded a similar public relations video featuring Japan's administration of the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, whose ownership is disputed by China, which calls the uninhabited islets Diaoyu, and by Taiwan, which refers to them as Tiaooyutai.

In a statement earlier Wednesday, a spokesman for the South Korean Foreign Ministry protested the uploading of the video on Takeshima, and demanded that it be removed immediately, calling the clip

a “provocative act” that has prevented the soured bilateral relations from improving.

The South Korean Foreign Ministry later summoned an official of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul to lodge a protest over the video.

The 87-second video clip, made available on YouTube from Oct. 16, presents the Japanese government’s views on Takeshima in Japanese, saying the pair of rocky islets were unlawfully seized by South Korea.

As of Wednesday evening, it had been viewed more than 18,000 times.

Reiterating that the islets constitute an integral part of Japan’s territory both historically and under international law, the Foreign Ministry’s Sato said Japan will continue its efforts to carefully communicate its position internationally.

She added that the videos on the Takeshima and Senkaku islets will also be made available in 10 other languages, including English, Chinese, Arabic, Italian and Korean.

The ministry plans to create a similar video featuring Japan’s claims to the Russian-held islands off Hokkaido and one addressing the dispute over the renaming of the Sea of Japan, which South Korea calls the East Sea.

Kyodo News, October 23, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/10/23/national/japans-video-campaign-on-takeshima-to-continue-despite-seouls-protests/#.UnLkzSdjbRY>

Japan protests South Korean military drill on Takeshima

Japan lodged a protest Friday with to South Korea for holding a military exercise on a disputed islet cluster in the Sea of Japan claimed by Tokyo but controlled by Seoul.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said a landing drill by South Korean navy and coast guard personnel on the island group, called Takeshima by Japan and Dokdo by South Korea, violated Japanese sovereignty.

“It’s totally unacceptable and extremely regrettable,” Suga told a regular news conference, repeating his government’s claims that the islets are part of Japan’s territory historically and under international law. He said the Foreign Ministry lodged a protest both in Tokyo and Seoul.

Tensions between the countries have spiked since South Korean President Lee Myung-bak visited the islets last year.

South Korea has protested the Foreign Ministry’s posting of a YouTube video clip last week boasting Japan’s sovereignty over Takeshima as Tokyo steps up efforts to promote international awareness over the problem.

The issue stirs nationalism among South Koreans, as Japan’s takeover of the islets in 1905 came ahead of its colonial rule over the Korean Peninsula from 1910 to 1945.

AP, October 25, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/10/25/national/japan-protests-south-korean-military-drill-on-takeshima/#.UnL1kidjbRY->

Okinawa and beyond

Self-Defense Forces gear up for large-scale war games on remote isle

Warships, fighter jets and 34,000 troops are to take part in a huge exercise aimed at bolstering Japan's ability to defend remote islands amid the territorial dispute with China.

The war games, which will include live munitions, come as Tokyo steps up its global awareness campaign by posting videos it hopes will swing world opinion behind its claims to two archipelagos that are the focus of disputes with Beijing and Seoul.

The air-sea-land drill from Nov. 1 to 18 will involve amphibious landings on the uninhabited atoll of Okidaitojima, 400 km southeast of Okinawan Island, a Defense Ministry official said.

Live-fire exercises involving destroyers and F-2 fighter jets will also be conducted, he said.

The island is a considerable distance from the Japanese-controlled Senkaku Islands, which China also claims, and calls the Diaoyu.

However, defense chiefs are considering deploying short-range surface-to-ship missiles on Ishigaki Island, which lies 150 km from the Senkakus, the Asahi and Fuji TV networks said.

AFP-Jiji Press, October 24, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/10/24/national/self-defense-forces-gear-up-for-large-scale-war-games-on-remote-isle/#.UnLnJCdjbRY>

Yasukuni

Seoul blasts ruling on Yasukuni

SEOUL — The South Korean Foreign Ministry on Thursday blasted the refusal of a Japanese court to side with a group of South Koreans who want Korean names removed from the list of those formally enshrined at war-linked Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo.

"In short, a ruling that can never be understood has been delivered in Japan," spokesman Cho Tai Young said.

"It's deeply regrettable a ruling has been given that runs contrary to humanity and history," Cho

said.

The Tokyo High Court on Wednesday upheld a July 2011 lower court ruling that rejected the South Korean appeal on grounds that the plaintiffs must “show tolerance of others’ freedom of religion” even though their feelings were hurt by the enshrinement of their compatriots’ names at the Shinto facility.

“Enshrining at Yasukuni Shrine those Korean victims forced into labor against their will is an enormous encroachment on the honor and dignity of them and their families because the shrine glorifies Japan’s imperialistic aggression,” Cho said.

The plaintiffs are nine relatives of deceased servicemen and civilian employees who were employed by the Imperial Japanese military during its 1910-1945 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula, and an 88-year-old former civilian employee who is enshrined there as a “spirit of the war dead” despite still being alive.

Kyodo News, October 24, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/10/24/national/seoul-blasts-ruling-on-yasukuni/#.UnLo5SdjbRY>

Abe sends offering to Yasukuni Shrine, refrains from visiting

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe sent an offering to the war-linked Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo for its annual autumn festival starting Thursday but refrained from visiting amid frayed ties with China and South Korea.

Abe paid 50,000 yen (\$500) as prime minister for a “masakaki” tree offering traditionally used in Shinto rituals, according to people close to him and the shrine, which honors Class-A World War II criminals along with the war dead.

The money was paid by Wednesday and the decoration placed at the altar Thursday, the first day of the four-day festival through Sunday.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said on a television program it is natural to pay respect to those who died for a country and that the prime minister decided not to visit from “a broad perspective.”

Still, the government’s top spokesman did not completely rule out a future visit by Abe, saying that his desire to do so “has not changed at all.”

Abe apparently treaded carefully to avoid further exacerbating ties with China and South Korea, which regard the shrine as a symbol of Japan’s past militarism, while also taking heed of his conservative support base.

China’s reaction this time has been relatively calm and less pointed than the last time Abe made a masakaki offering, with the official Xinhua News Agency and the state-owned China Central Television reporting the news matter-of-factly.

But South Korea lashed out at Abe and expressed “deep concerns and regrets.”

“Our government can’t help but express deep concerns and regrets over Prime Minister Shinzo Abe sending an offering to Yasukuni Shrine which glorifies past war aggression and enshrines war criminals,” South Korea’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Cho Tai Young said at a press briefing.

During the shrine’s spring festival in April, Abe offered a masakaki under the title of prime minister, and on Aug. 15, the anniversary of Japan’s surrender in World War II, he paid fees for a ritual as president of the Liberal Democratic Party, also with his own money.

Abe, who returned to power last December after his first one-year stint between 2006 and 2007, has not visited the shrine as premier and refused to say whether and when he would do so out of concern it would “develop into a political and diplomatic issue.”

Abe has taken the position that members of his Cabinet should decide for themselves whether to visit.

Among Cabinet members, health minister Norihisa Tamura also paid out of his own pocket and presented an offering Thursday, people close to him said. Two Cabinet ministers are seen likely to visit by Sunday.

The prime minister’s past ritual offerings and visits to the controversial shrine by Cabinet members have previously drawn sharp criticism from China and South Korea, with whose leaders he has yet to hold summit talks.

Prospects appear slim for a trilateral summit, which had been held annually from 2008 to 2011, before the end of the year. The summit, due to be hosted by Seoul this year, has been delayed indefinitely.

Japan and China have been at loggerheads over the Japanese-controlled Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, which China claims as Diaoyu. Since the Japanese government purchased three of the five uninhabited islands in September last year from their private Japanese owner to put them under state control, Chinese patrol ships have continued to enter waters near the chain to challenge Japan’s control.

Abe has reiterated that Japan will not make concessions on sovereignty, but added, “The door to dialogue is always open.”

Abe is aiming to rework the country’s defense posture to better respond to security threats, while his goals of bolstering the capabilities of the Self-Defense Forces and amending the pacifist Constitution raised the alarm of countries like China.

Mainichi Shimbun, October 17, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131017p2g00m0dm043000c.html>

China reacts calmly to Japan PM’s ritual offering to Yasukuni

BEIJING (Kyodo) — China reacted relatively calmly Thursday to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s latest ritual offering to the war-linked Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo for its annual autumn festival.

Both the official Xinhua News Agency and state-owned China Central Television treated matter-of-

factly Abe's offering as prime minister of a "masakaki" tree traditionally used in Shinto rituals to the shrine that is seen by Japan's Asian neighbors as a symbol of its past militarism.

The reporting was markedly different than on Aug. 15, the 68th anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II, when although Abe refrained from visiting the shrine in person he made a monetary offering in his position as head of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

Later, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying stopped short of directly commenting on either Abe's latest offering or his decision not to visit the shrine that honors Japanese leaders convicted as war criminals by an Allied tribunal along with millions of war dead.

Hua, at a regular press conference, reiterated China's frequent comments on Japan, saying she wants "the Japanese side to face squarely to and honestly reflect its history of aggression, respect the feelings of the people of China and other Asian victimized countries, and properly handle relevant issues."

Past visits to the Shinto shrine by Japanese political leaders have outraged countries that were victims of Japanese aggression, especially China and South Korea.

Kyodo News, October 17, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131017p2g00m0dm078000c.html>

S. Korea blasts Abe's ritual offering to war-linked Yasukuni shrine

SEOUL (Kyodo) — South Korea on Thursday blasted Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's latest ritual offering to the war-linked Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, for its annual autumn festival.

"Our government can't help but express deep concerns and regrets over Prime Minister Shinzo Abe sending an offering to Yasukuni Shrine which glorifies past war aggression and enshrines war criminals," South Korea's Foreign Ministry spokesman Cho Tai Young told a press briefing.

The remarks came after Abe sent an offering to the shrine in his capacity of prime minister earlier Thursday. The prime minister refrained, however, from visiting the site amid frayed ties with China and South Korea.

"We once again urge Japanese politicians to do a humble reflection on the past history to receive trust from neighboring countries and the international community," Cho said.

Abe paid 50,000 yen (about \$500) for a "masakaki" tree offering traditionally used in Shinto rituals, according to sources close to the prime minister and the shrine.

The money was paid by Wednesday and the decoration placed at the altar Thursday, the first day of the four-day festival through Sunday.

China and South Korea, both victims of Japan's military aggression, have protested the visits as hurtful, given that the shrine is the symbol of Japan's past militarism and honors Class-A war criminals along with the war dead.

Kyodo News, October 17, 2013

Japan minister, 157 lawmakers visit war-linked Yasukuni

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Japan's internal affairs minister and a cross-party group of 157 lawmakers visited the war-linked Yasukuni Shrine on Friday during the annual autumn festival, drawing criticism from China and South Korea with which Japan has frayed ties.

On his first visit to the Shinto shrine in Tokyo since Aug. 15, the anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II, Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Yoshitaka Shindo made an offering paid with his own money.

"I visited here in a private capacity to pay homage to those who died in the war and to pray for peace," Shindo said. "I don't think it'll develop into a diplomatic issue."

Past visits by prime ministers and Cabinet members to Yasukuni, which enshrines convicted Class-A war criminals along with the war dead, have angered China and South Korea, both of which suffered Japan's wartime aggression.

In Beijing, the Chinese Foreign Ministry summoned Japanese Ambassador Masato Kitera over the shrine visits.

During a 40-minute meeting, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin conveyed to the ambassador China's position on the shrine, according to the Japanese Embassy in Beijing.

A South Korean government official in Seoul criticized the visits, saying, "Japanese politicians should not visit Yasukuni Shrine, which justifies Japan's history of aggression."

South Korea's ruling Saenuri Party issued a statement calling the shrine visits "an attempt to glorify (Japan's) history of aggression."

"The number of Cabinet ministers visiting Yasukuni Shrine sharply increased since the inauguration of Prime Minister (Shinzo) Abe and we can never hide deep concerns about Japan's moving to the far-right," it said.

Abe, often seen as right-leaning, refrained from making a visit to the shrine and instead sent a "masakaki" tree offering Thursday, in an apparent bid to avoid aggravating ties with Beijing and Seoul and to lay the groundwork for future summit talks.

With no official summit talks with the two countries having taken place since he assumed office in December, Abe has refused to say when or whether he would visit Yasukuni out of concern that it would develop into "a political and diplomatic issue."

But his government has taken the position that Cabinet ministers should decide for themselves whether to go based on their own beliefs.

"We leave it up to each individual to decide whether they will visit the shrine or not. It comes down to freedom of religion," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said at a press conference.

Friday's visit of 157 lawmakers promoting visits to the shrine is close to the recent record of 168 — nearly a quarter of Japan's 722 parliamentarians — at the spring festival in April.

Japan has seen an increase in the number of conservative lawmakers after recent elections for both the lower and upper houses.

"We should continue visiting the shrine. That is the only way to avoid turning this into a diplomatic issue," said Sanae Takaichi, policy chief of Abe's Liberal Democratic Party.

Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato was one of the members who visited the shrine but said there is no change in Japan's diplomatic position.

"The government will continue to strengthen ties with neighboring countries from a broad perspective while making sure these issues (such as Yasukuni) will not affect our relations as a whole," Kato told reporters.

The cross-party group headed by LDP upper house lawmaker Hidehisa Otsuji visited the shrine during the spring and autumn festivals and on the anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II.

Kyodo News, October 18, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131018p2g00m0dm040000c.html>

China summons Japan's ambassador over Yasukuni visits

BEIJING (Kyodo) — The Chinese government summoned Japan's ambassador on Friday to issue a protest after a minister in Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Cabinet and about 160 lawmakers visited the war-linked Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo.

Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin summoned Japanese Ambassador Masato Kitera to express "strong condemnation" of the visits, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said at a regular press conference.

The shrine is seen in China and some other Asian countries as a symbol of Japan's past militarism as it honors Japanese leaders convicted as war criminals by an Allied tribunal along with millions of war dead.

"The issue of Yasukuni Shrine is an issue about whether Japan can correctly view its history and respect the feelings of people of victimized countries, including China," Hua said.

She said a Japanese Cabinet member's visit to the shrine is "a blatant attempt to whitewash" the history of Japan's past militarism and "challenge the outcomes of the war and post-war international order."

During a meeting at the Chinese Foreign Ministry that lasted about 40 minutes, Kitera told Liu that the Japanese government is not in a position to make comments on Japanese political leaders' actions made in their private capacity, according to the Japanese Embassy in Beijing.

On Aug. 15, Kitera was also summoned by Liu after Shindo and one other Japanese minister visited the shrine on the occasion of the anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II.

Kyodo News, October 18, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131018p2g00m0dm086000c.html>

U.S. official urges more regional dialogue over Yasukuni visit

WASHINGTON (Kyodo) — A U.S. State Department spokeswoman on Friday urged Japan to engage in dialogue with its neighbors in connection with visits to the war-related Yasukuni Shrine by lawmakers including a Cabinet member.

Jen Psaki told reporters the United States has been encouraging Japan to “continue to work with its neighbors to resolve concerns over history in an amicable way, through dialogue.”

Psaki said Washington hopes for amicable settlement of the history-related issues involving Japan and its neighbors including China and South Korea, as the United States has “an interest in regional peace.”

Japanese internal affairs minister Yoshitaka Shindo, a veteran politician close to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and some 160 other lawmakers visited the Shinto shrine in Tokyo on Friday.

The move drew criticism from the neighboring countries which suffered under Japan before and during World War II.

Seoul and Beijing have asked Japanese leaders to refrain from paying homage at the shrine, as it honors convicted Japanese Class-A war criminals along with the war dead.

Kyodo News, October 19, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131019p2g00m0dm020000c.html>

Abe’s younger brother, a senior vice foreign minister, visits Yasukuni Shrine

Senior Vice Foreign Minister Nobuo Kishi, the younger brother of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, visited controversial Yasukuni Shrine on Saturday for its annual autumn festival.

After paying homage at the shrine, Kishi told reporters he entered his name in the register book with his official title, as a member of the House of Representatives.

He said his visit to four-day festival, which runs through Sunday, would not impact Japan’s relations with neighboring countries and that he had not conferred with Abe about the trip.

The shrine for some Asian countries symbolizes Japan’s militarism and aggression in the last century because it honors convicted Class-A war criminals along with the nation’s war dead.

Abe told reporters later in the day, “I said in the past that it was extremely regrettable I could not visit the shrine during my previous stint (as prime minister from 2006 to 2007), and I still have the same feeling.”

Kyodo News, October 19, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/10/19/national/abes-younger-brother-a-senior-vice-foreign-minister-visits-yasukuni-shrine/#.UnIbxSdjbRY>
