



# Press Release

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## **ASAN Public Opinion Poll on Korea-Japan Relations 'Still Aiming for the Summit'**

- With more than two months having passed since Prime Minister Abe Shinzō's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, public opinion in Korea towards improving relations with Japan has somewhat increased. While in mid-October 61.8% stated support for improved relations with Japan, in a survey conducted February 23-25 that number rose to 68.3%. A majority (62.8%) of the public remained in favor of President Park playing a leading role in improving the relationship. This was an increase from 57.8% at the end of December.
- Attitudes towards a summit with Japan also improved. Following the December 26, 2013 Yasukuni visit, 49.5% were in favor of such a summit. In the February 23-25 survey, 54.9% were in support. There was a relatively wide variation across age cohorts. While those in their 20s (69.7%) were the most supportive of a summit, those in their 60s (44.7%) were the least supportive. However, overall support for is far off the support shown in mid-October when 67.6% stated support for a Korea-Japan summit.
- Among those that supported such a summit, a slim majority (50.9%) expected its aim to be resolving long-held historical disagreements. However, the Korean government insists on postponing the summit until Japan properly recognizes its past. Just 19.5% thought a summit should aim to expand economic ties, and 10.0% wanted to see efforts to strengthen the Korea-Japan-U.S. alliance.
- Interestingly, the prospect of Japan taking further provocative actions that recall these historical disagreements did not erode support for a summit as sharply as expected. Even with hypothetical future Yasukuni visits, the public was evenly divided on the need to pursue a summit, with 46.6% in support and 47.6% opposed. Like past results, it was those in their 20s who remained the most supportive. In fact, it was the only age cohort in which a majority remained in favor of pursuing a summit, with 57.9% stating as such.

- Of course, sovereignty issues related to Dokdo continue to plague the relationship. However, even if Japan continues to claim the islets, the public remains split on a Korea-Japan summit. While 44.8% think a summit should still be pursued, 50.0% disagreed. Again, it was Korea's youth which most favored the continued pursuit with slim majorities of those in their 20s (51.0%) and thirties (50.2%) in support.
- Continued U.S. support for Japan's expanded security role in Northeast Asia also poses a problem in terms of Korean public opinion toward the United States. A majority of all age cohorts, and 60.6% overall, disapproved of U.S. support for Japan's expanded security role.
- This may lead to increased support among the Korean public for security cooperation with China. When asked, 79.3% of respondents said that such cooperation would be necessary, with relatively little variation across age cohorts. However, this should not be interpreted as unbridled support for a closer relationship with China. If China continues its rise, 61.7% favored security cooperation with Japan, again with little variation across age cohorts.

\*For further inquiries about the survey, please contact Dr. Kim Jiyeon ([jiyeon@asaninst.org](mailto:jiyeon@asaninst.org)) or Mr. Karl Friedhoff ([klf@asaninst.org](mailto:klf@asaninst.org)).

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