

# **On Japan, Abe, the legacy of WWII and the issue of the Yasukuni Shrine in Northeast Asia**

Thursday 5 September 2013, by [ABE Shinzo](#), [Kyodo News](#), [Mainichi Shimbun](#), [MIE Ayako](#), [MURAYAMA Tomiichi](#), [YOSHIDA Reiji](#) (Date first published: 15 August 2013).

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## **Abe renews peace pledge, does not mention wartime aggression in Asia**

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe renewed on Thursday his pledge to contribute to world peace at a ceremony marking the 68<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II, but did not mention Japan's wartime aggression in Asia, something Japanese premiers have done at the annual commemoration since 1994.

That was the year Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama expressed remorse over Japan's wartime aggression in Asia. Since then, successive Japanese prime ministers had touched on the issue in the speech they deliver at the government's annual ceremony, saying Japan inflicted "considerable damage and pain" on the people in Asian nations. Abe also mentioned it in 2007 while serving his first stint as premier.

Unlike past years' speeches at the commemoration, Abe also did not "pledge not to fight a war." Observers say the speech is expected to enrage China and South Korea.

At this year's commemoration, Abe said, "We face history with humility and engrave deeply in our hearts the lessons that we should learn."

"We will make contributions to lasting world peace to the greatest possible extent and spare no effort in working to bring about a world in which all people are able to live enriched lives," he said in the ceremony attended by Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and more than 4,000 relatives of the war dead.

**Kyodo News**, August 15, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130815p2g00m0dm084000c.html>

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**Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Sixty-Eighth Memorial Ceremony for the War Dead**

*The following is a provisional translation of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's speech provided by the office of the prime minister.*

In the gracious presence of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress and with the attendance of bereaved family members of the war dead and many distinguished representatives of all sectors of society, I hereby commence the annual Memorial Ceremony for the War Dead.

I deliver this address on behalf of the Government of Japan before the souls of those who fell on the battlefields thinking of their homeland and concerned about their families as well as the souls of those who perished amidst the destruction of the war and those who lost their lives in remote foreign countries during the aftermath of the war.

The peace and prosperity that we now enjoy have been built upon the sacrifices of you who gave up your precious lives while thinking of your beloved children and wives, praying for the happiness of the mothers and fathers you left behind, and wishing that the mountains and riversides of your hometowns would be lush with greenery. We will never forget this, even for a moment.

Words are entirely inadequate as we pray for peace and offer our thanks as we mourn the passing of these souls. I would now like to close my eyes for a moment and quietly bow my head, reflecting on this past.

Since the end of World War II, Japan has single-mindedly done its very best to follow a path of peace, placing value on freedom and democracy.

In order to transform the world into a better place, tomorrow even more so than today, Japan has been extending a hand of support to various countries and regions from not long after the war ended.

Domestically, we have arrived at the present day by helping each other out and overcoming socioeconomic changes and crises wrought by natural catastrophes any number of times.

We will carve out the future of this country as one full of hope, as we face history with humility and engrave deeply into our hearts the lessons that we should learn. We will make contributions to lasting world peace to the greatest possible extent and spare no effort in working to bring about a world in which all people are able to live enriched lives.

I will conclude my address by once again offering my heartfelt prayers for the repose of the souls of the war dead and for the good health of the members of their bereaved families.

**Shinzo Abe**

Prime Minister of Japan

August 15, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130815p2a00m0na001000c.html>

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## **Former PM Murayama warns against reviewing his 1995 war apology**

Former Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama has warned against reviewing his 1995 apology for Japan's wartime colonial rule and aggression, raising the alarm against Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's remarks suggesting a need to review the landmark statement.

"Successive prime ministers have also upheld the statement. If it were to be reviewed, Japan would be isolated," Murayama, now 89 years of age, said during a speech in Tokyo's Nagatacho district on July 1.

His 1995 statement, generally known as the "Murayama Statement," was released on Aug. 15 that year on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II. Part of the statement reads, "Japan, ... through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations."

Speaking at a meeting organized by a citizens group advocating against revising the Constitution's Article 96 on July 1, Murayama said, "The (1995) statement was formulated in the capacity of the Cabinet, in consultation with the Liberal Democratic Party. It is important for Japan to admit the facts as they are and build relationships of mutual trust (with Asian countries)."

With regards to a move to revise Article 96 to make it easier for the Diet to initiate constitutional amendments, Murayama said, "The move is intended to make it easier to change (the Constitution) so that those in power can do things their way. Their true intention lies in a 'departure from the postwar regime,'" referring to Abe's pet slogan during his first stint as prime minister.

*Mainichi Shimbun*, July 2, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130702p2a00m0na012000c.html>

### **Statement by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama (Aug. 15, 1995):**

#### **"On the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war's end"**

The world has seen fifty years elapse since the war came to an end. Now, when I remember the many people both at home and abroad who fell victim to war, my heart is overwhelmed by a flood of emotions.

The peace and prosperity of today were built as Japan overcame great difficulty to arise from a devastated land after defeat in the war. That achievement is something of which we are proud, and let me herein express my heartfelt admiration for the wisdom and untiring effort of each and every one of our citizens. Let me also express once again my profound gratitude for the indispensable support and assistance extended to Japan by the countries of the world, beginning with the United States of America. I am also delighted that we have been able to build the friendly relations which we enjoy today with the neighboring countries of the Asia-Pacific region, the United States and the countries of Europe.

Now that Japan has come to enjoy peace and abundance, we tend to overlook the pricelessness and blessings of peace. Our task is to convey to younger generations the horrors of war, so that we never repeat the errors in our history. I believe that, as we join hands, especially with the peoples of neighboring countries, to ensure true peace in the Asia-Pacific region -indeed, in the entire world- it is necessary, more than anything else, that we foster relations with all countries based on deep understanding and trust. Guided by this conviction, the Government has launched the Peace,

Friendship and Exchange Initiative, which consists of two parts promoting: support for historical research into relations in the modern era between Japan and the neighboring countries of Asia and elsewhere; and rapid expansion of exchanges with those countries. Furthermore, I will continue in all sincerity to do my utmost in efforts being made on the issues arisen from the war, in order to further strengthen the relations of trust between Japan and those countries.

Now, upon this historic occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war's end, we should bear in mind that we must look into the past to learn from the lessons of history, and ensure that we do not stray from the path to the peace and prosperity of human society in the future.

During a certain period in the not too distant past, Japan, following a mistaken national policy, advanced along the road to war, only to ensnare the Japanese people in a fateful crisis, and, through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations. In the hope that no such mistake be made in the future, I regard, in a spirit of humility, these irrefutable facts of history, and express here once again my feelings of deep remorse and state my heartfelt apology. Allow me also to express my feelings of profound mourning for all victims, both at home and abroad, of that history.

Building from our deep remorse on this occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the war, Japan must eliminate self-righteous nationalism, promote international coordination as a responsible member of the international community and, thereby, advance the principles of peace and democracy. At the same time, as the only country to have experienced the devastation of atomic bombing, Japan, with a view to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons, must actively strive to further global disarmament in areas such as the strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. It is my conviction that in this way alone can Japan atone for its past and lay to rest the spirits of those who perished.

It is said that one can rely on good faith. And so, at this time of remembrance, I declare to the people of Japan and abroad my intention to make good faith the foundation of our Government policy, and this is my vow.

\* <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/pm/murayama/9508.html>

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## **Abe aside, war apology stands: Suga**

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga on Thursday reaffirmed that the Cabinet of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe upholds the position set out by the 1995 apology issued by then-Prime Minister Tomiichii Murayama, which admits that Japan waged wars of aggression.

"Prime Minister Abe's comment yesterday is no different from his previous position," Suga said, a day after Abe nimbly avoided clarifying his opinion on whether Japan waged wars of aggression or forced the annexation of the Korean Peninsula, during a debate among the party leaders in Tokyo.

Abe responded that the interpretation of history should be left to historians and that he is not in position to cast judgment.

"As the prime minister said yesterday (Wednesday), the Abe administration has never denied the facts that Japan waged wars of aggression or colonized neighboring countries," Suga told a news conference Thursday, referring to the Cabinet.

At Wednesday's discussion, Abe was asked if it is a responsibility for politicians to cast judgment on this issue, as was done in 1985 by then-Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone. Abe said Nakasone never made such a comment.

Yet Nakasone did. In 1985, Nakasone said during a meeting of the Lower House Budget Committee that Japan waged a war of aggression against China, but not against the United States or the United Kingdom.

Suga backed Abe's position that historical issues should not develop into political issues or strain diplomatic ties, but he repeated the leader's intention to issue a forward-looking statement on the historical issue when the timing is right.

Abe's rhetorical dancing on historical issues is plaguing his government, which has seen its high approval ratings dip from January to around 60 percent. In April, he told the Diet that he doesn't uphold all of the Murayama statement and claimed that the definition of aggression "can be viewed differently," depending on which side one is on.

Abe has also stated his intention to revisit the 1993 Kono Statement, which admitted the Japanese government played a role in forcing thousands of females into sexual servitude at wartime brothels set up by the military.

His comments caused an uproar in China and South Korea, where sentiment toward Japan has plunged over territorial disputes and strained bilateral ties.

Washington also voiced concern about Abe's take of history.

To defuse the tension, Suga in May reaffirmed that the revisionist Abe administration inherited the Murayama Statement upon taking office, just as past administrations did.

**Ayako Mie**, *Japan Times* Staff Writer, July 4, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/07/04/national/abe-aside-war-apology-stands-suga/#.UdteYKxjbRY>

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## **Seoul irked by stance**

SEOUL, Kyodo News — South Korea voiced disappointment Thursday with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's remarks that whether Japan invaded its neighbors in the past should be left to historians to judge.

"We find it deeply regrettable and disappointing the highest leader of the Japanese government holds such an easygoing perception of history," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement issued in response to remarks Abe made Wednesday during a debate with other party leaders a day before official campaigning commenced for the July 21 House of Councilors election.

At the debate, Abe said he is not in a position to define "invasion" or "aggression" because doing so could cause political and diplomatic problems.

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## **China voices opposition to Cabinet minister visits to Yasukuni**

BEIJING — The Chinese Foreign Ministry expressed opposition Tuesday to possible visits by members of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Cabinet to Yasukuni Shrine on Aug. 15, the anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II.

"China will never accept it," the ministry said in a statement, arguing that visits to the Shinto shrine by political leaders would mean Japan is denying its militaristic past and the invasion of parts of Asia.

Tomomi Inada, state minister in charge of administrative reform, is considering visiting the Tokyo shrine where high-ranking officials convicted of war crimes by an Allied tribunal are honored along with millions of war dead, sources close to her said earlier this month.

China and South Korea in particular regard the shrine as a symbol of Japan's past militarism.

Abe said again Tuesday that he will not restrict his Cabinet members from visiting the shrine.

As for himself, Abe has decided not to visit the shrine on the anniversary day out of consideration for already frayed relations with China and South Korea, according to government and ruling party sources.

In addition to facing up to its past, the Chinese statement urged Japan to "speak and act cautiously, and take concrete actions to win the trust of its neighboring countries in Asia and the international community."

**Kyodo News**, August 6, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/08/06/national/china-voices-opposition-to-cabinet-minister-visits-to-yasukuni/#.UgxC1NgSrlc>

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## **Suga rushes to smother LDP's latest brush fire over war**

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga was again forced to go into damage control mode Monday after the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's own policy chief said on NHK the previous day that President Shinzo Abe disagreed with the findings of the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal.

The tribunal, officially called the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, was held in 1946 to try Japan's political and military leaders for war crimes after Japan's surrender in World War II. The tribunal found Tokyo guilty of waging wars of aggression upon China and other countries during its bid to colonize Asia.

Suga brushed aside the controversial remarks made by policy chief Sanae Takaichi as her "private opinions." During a Sunday debate program on NHK, Takaichi had said she believes Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has "different opinions" about the war from the viewpoint of the Tribunal.

At a news conference Monday, Suga said that Abe's Cabinet, like its predecessors, accepts the judgement of the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal and that Takaichi's remarks were her private views.

"The prime minister has also clearly accepted (the Tribunal's ruling),"h Suga said.

The government's top spokesman also repeated that the Abe Cabinet upholds the unequivocal 1995 war apology issued by then Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama.

"The government's view has already been made clear," he said.

On NHK, Takaichi, a well-known rightwing conservative, questioned the Murayama statement, widely regarded as Japan's official apology for the war and its attempts to colonize Asia.

Murayama said Japan followed "a mistaken national policy" and "advanced along the road to war."

But Takaichi argued that Japan could have been turned into "a colony" because its access to natural resources was blocked at the time. She didn't elaborate, but was apparently discussing why Japan decided to go to war against the United States and other Western countries.

Suga, apparently worried about diplomatic repercussions from Takaichi's remarks, talked to her by phone Monday afternoon and explained the government's stance on history issues.

Later in the day, a senior political official urged the government and the LDP, which is enjoying high support ratings, to keep a low profile on history issues because the Upper House election is drawing near.

Many conservative lawmakers argue that Japan waged wars of self-defense, not aggression, during the 1930s and 40s and refuse to accept the ruling of the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal.

Abe himself created a scene late last month by arguing that the definition of the word "aggression" has not been firmly established either by academics or the international community.

On Friday, Suga made it clear that Abe's Cabinet upholds the Murayama statement in its entirety, including the admission that Japan waged wars of aggression.

**Reiji Yoshida**, *Japan Time* Staff Writer, May 14, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/05/14/national/suga-rushes-to-smother-ldps-latest-brush-fire-over-war/#.UZqjL9iz640>

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## **Abe says he never denied Japan's invasion of China**

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said Wednesday he has never denied that Japan invaded China in the past, while indicating he will follow the 1995 statement issued by then Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama that apologized for Japan's wartime aggression in Asia.

Abe told a parliamentary committee session that Japan "deeply regrets having inflicted great damage and suffering" on both China and the Korean Peninsula, in comments seen as an apparent move to allay concerns among Asian neighbors over his recent remarks that seemingly gloss over Japan's wartime conduct.

Abe added his Cabinet has “never denied Japan’s invasion or colonial occupation.”

Abe also made clear that the views of Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto — who provoked criticism by saying that sexual servitude by women for Japanese soldiers during World War II was “necessary” — are “completely different” from his.

The premier earlier claimed in parliament that the definition of the word “invasion” differs from country to country and that the word has no established definition. The remarks angered China and South Korea which suffered under Japanese wartime brutality.

On the so-called Murayama statement which admits Japan invaded and occupied other countries, Abe said his Cabinet “takes the position of carrying it on.”

In April, he said his Cabinet would not necessarily adopt the statement in its entirety.

Japan’s key ally, the United States, has also shown concerns, with the research arm of the U.S. Congress saying in a report that Abe is known as a “strong nationalist” whose policies may affect stability in Asia and damage U.S. interests.

Abe told the Diet committee session Wednesday he is reluctant to express his views on history in parliament, as doing so would cause diplomatic and political problems. “It should be left up to historians,” he said.

Referring to Hashimoto’s comments made this week, Abe said, “I want to say clearly that they differ completely from my, the Abe Cabinet’s and the Liberal Democratic Party’s stance.”

**Kyodo News**, May 15, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130515p2g00m0dm063000c.html>

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### **Hashimoto backs Abe’s perception of wartime history**

OSAKA (Kyodo) — Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto, who co-heads the opposition Japan Restoration Party, indicated Monday he backs Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s view on Japan’s wartime aggression, saying the word “invasion” has “no academic definition.”

Hashimoto endorsed the prime minister’s suggestion last month that what constitutes an “invasion” really depends on the point of view of individual countries. Abe’s remarks angered China and South Korea, which suffered from Japan’s wartime aggression.

Nonetheless, the mayor told reporters at Osaka City Hall that Japan needs to “reflect on and apologize for the massive pain and damage it inflicted on neighboring countries” during World War II.

On the issue of women who were forced into sexual slavery for the Japanese military during the war, euphemistically referred to as “comfort women” in Japan, Hashimoto said he believes the system to recruit women into sexual servitude was “necessary for a group of brave soldiers who were exalted in the line of fire.”

**Kyodo News**, May 14, 2013

### **Abe's comments on history raise concern in U.S.**

WASHINGTON (Kyodo) — The U.S. Congressional Research Service has noted that comments and actions by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on historical issues “have raised concern that Tokyo could upset regional relations in ways that hurt U.S. interests.”

In its May 1 report, the research arm of Congress said Abe is known as a “strong nationalist” and that his approach to issues relating to wartime sex slaves, history textbooks and visits to a war-linked shrine in Tokyo “will be closely monitored” not just by China and South Korea but also by the United States.

The report said that if Abe revises a 1993 government statement on the issue of the so-called “comfort women,” it “would be sure to degrade Tokyo’s relations with South Korea and other countries.”

The 1993 statement acknowledged the Japanese military’s responsibility for forced recruitment of Korean women into sexual servitude and apologized to these women.

Although before becoming prime minister, Abe had suggested revising the statement, his government said this week that it will not revise its stance on the “comfort women” issue.

The report also noted that visits to the Yasukuni Shrine last month by more than 170 Japanese lawmakers, including four Cabinet ministers, also drew protests from China and South Korea.

The shrine is seen by Japan’s neighbors as glorifying Japanese militarism, in part because it enshrines people convicted as Class-A criminals by the Tokyo war crime tribunal, as well as millions of Japan’s war dead.

**Kyodo News**, May 9, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130509p2g00m0dm066000c.html>

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### **Suga: Abe not in denial over “wars of aggression” stance**

Facing criticism and questions both at home and abroad numerous times in recent weeks, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga tried Friday to clarify, albeit indirectly, the government position that Japan waged wars of aggression in the 1930s and 1940s.

In expressing official views, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Suga had rigidly avoided the term “aggression,” raising concerns they may be trying to water down the official government position regarding the wars Japan waged in Asia.

But during a news conference Friday, Suga admitted Abe’s Cabinet “has inherited the position of past Cabinets,” including the admission that Japan waged wars of aggression.

"I don't think the Abe Cabinet has ever denied the fact of aggression," Suga said.

When asked their view on the wars, Abe and Suga have always quoted key parts of the 1995 apology issued by then Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama admitting Japan "caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries," and they had "feelings of deep remorse."

But until Friday's news conference, neither Abe nor Suga had expressly taken the position of Murayama's 1995 statement that Japan had waged wars of aggression.

The pair's lack of clarity raised speculation that they may share the view of nationalistic politicians and voters who maintain that Japan fought wars of self-defense, not of aggression. Many are considered strong supporters of Abe.

The Murayama statement has been widely regarded as the key government apology for the wars Japan prosecuted and for its colonial rule of parts of Asia.

But in late April, Abe told the Diet that he does not uphold all of the Murayama statement, and claimed what is described as aggression "can be viewed differently," depending on which side one is on. A big stir erupted when South Korean media reported that Abe sought to deny that Japan had waged wars of aggression.

Washington also reportedly conveyed its concerns over Abe's stance on history, and major Japanese newspapers in the past few days ran articles on Abe's recent controversial remarks on how he discussed the aggression issue.

Suga, Abe's right-hand man, has meanwhile been trying to contain the historical fallout, particularly after South Korea and the United States reacted strongly.

Since being inaugurated in December, Abe has tried to keep a low profile in terms of history and instead focus on domestic economic issues, repeatedly calling China and South Korea key partners.

But he also often maintained an ambiguous stance toward sensitive historical issues, apparently to placate nationalistic voters and lawmakers while avoiding diplomatic fallout.

During a Diet session Friday shortly before the press conference, Suga, quoting key phrases from the Murayama statement, even repeated Japan's apology to other parts of Asia.

"During a certain period in the not too distant past, Japan caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations. I regard, in a spirit of humility, such facts of history, and express here once again my feelings of deep remorse and state my heartfelt apology," Suga quoted the statement as saying.

But Suga never mentioned "aggression," drawing a harsh rebuke from Katsuya Okada of the Democratic Party of Japan, the main opposition force.

"You never mention the words 'colonial rule' nor 'aggression.' This is very significant and different from past Cabinets," Okada said, noting people naturally assume the Abe Cabinet will not admit that Japan waged wars of aggression.

After being grilled by Okada, Suga, during the news conference later that day, suddenly admitted that Abe's Cabinet upholds Murayama's admission that Japan waged wars of aggression.

Administration officials appear to be worried that the Abe camp may suffer in the July Upper House

election unless he concedes that Japan waged wars of aggression.

**Reiji Yoshida**, *Japan Times* Staff Writer, May 11, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/05/11/national/suga-abe-not-in-denial-over-wars-of-aggression-stance/#.UZH17EpOj1U>

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## Yasukuni Shrine

### **3 Japanese ministers visit Yasukuni Shrine, upsetting Asian neighbors**

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Three of the 18 ministers in Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Cabinet paid their respects at the war-linked Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo on Thursday, triggering criticism from China and South Korea that endured Japan's wartime brutality.

Keiji Furuya, state minister in charge of North Korea's past abductions of Japanese nationals, Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Yoshitaka Shindo, and administrative reform minister Tomomi Inada visited Yasukuni, where convicted Class-A war criminals are enshrined along with Japan's war dead.

"It is not something for other countries to criticize or interfere with," Furuya said after paying his respects, revealing that he wrote his name and title of state minister in the register book.

The Chinese government summoned Japan's ambassador to protest the same day after the ministers visited the Shinto shrine, while South Korea's Foreign Ministry issued a statement criticizing their visits.

The visits came on the anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II in 1945. Neighboring countries, most notably China and South Korea, view Yasukuni as a symbol of Japan's past militarism and criticize visits to the shrine by lawmakers as glossing over wartime history.

Shindo told reporters at Yasukuni that he visited the shrine as a "private person," not as a state minister, adding he had not consulted with Abe before making the visit.

A few ministers had indicated they would visit Yasukuni on the anniversary. Abe had said he would not instruct his Cabinet members on whether they should visit the shrine.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga tried to play down concerns about the repercussions of the visits, saying it was up to each minister.

"When Cabinet ministers visit there in a private capacity, it comes down to freedom of religious beliefs," Suga said. "The government should not step in."

A cross-party group of around 90 lawmakers, a much bigger number than in recent years, also visited the Shinto shrine. Sanae Takaichi, policy chief of Abe's Liberal Democratic Party, Democratic Party of Japan lawmaker Yuichiro Hata and Takeo Hiranuma, deputy head of the Japan Restoration Party, were among them.

"Everywhere in the world, people mourn the loss of those who died for their countries and pay

respect," Takaichi told reporters.

Other lawmakers who visited the shrine on Thursday included Shintaro Ishihara, co-head of the Japan Restoration Party, and LDP Youth Division director Shinjiro Koizumi, whose father Junichiro Koizumi drew the ire of China and South Korea for visiting the shrine when he was prime minister.

Abe himself chose to send a ritual offering rather than to visit the shrine on Thursday, apparently to avoid further straining ties with Beijing and Seoul, which have already been damaged by territorial rows and disputes over wartime history.

**Kyodo News**, August 15, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130815p2g00m0dm026000c.html>

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### **Abe seeks to mend ties with neighbors by not visiting war-linked shrine**

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe decided not to visit the war-linked Yasukuni Shrine on Thursday, the anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II, showing some restraint in an effort to help mend ties with China and South Korea, victims of its past militarism.

But Abe paid for a ritual offering to the Shinto shrine in Tokyo, which enshrines convicted war criminals along with Japan's war dead, while two of his Cabinet ministers visited it in a move that triggered an outcry from China.

Abe told reporters that he would not say whether he would visit Yasukuni. But an aide of his said earlier that he delivered to the shrine Abe's message of regret at "being unable to make a visit today."

Abe arranged for the aide to take a monetary offering to the shrine. He made the offering as president of the Liberal Democratic Party rather than as prime minister, said the aide, Koichi Hagiuda, who is an LDP lawmaker.

"I wanted to express my appreciation and respect to the spirits of those who lost their lives in fighting for the state," Abe said, explaining the reason for his offering. "I will not say when or whether I might visit. Doing so would only develop into political and diplomatic problems."

Making the ritual offering instead of visiting in person was an apparent gesture to Abe's conservative supporters in Japan.

Yasukuni, dedicated to 2.5 million mostly Japanese soldiers killed in past wars including convicted Class-A war criminals from WWII, is seen by neighboring countries as a symbol of Japan's past militarism and previous visits to the shrine by Japanese political leaders have strained relations.

A visit by Abe would be certain to further fuel tensions with Beijing and Seoul, as relations are already strained by territorial rows as well as disagreements over history.

To mark the 68<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Japan's surrender, Abe visited the Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery in Tokyo, where he laid flowers for unidentified Japanese who died overseas in WWII.

He then joined a government-sponsored memorial service along with Emperor Akihito and Empress

Michiko. In his address, Abe pledged that Japan will continue to work for world peace.

But he raised some eyebrows by omitting a reference that past prime ministers have used in their speeches since 1994 to Japan's recollection of having caused damage to other Asian countries in the war. He also did not make clear the country's pledge to renounce wars.

Such a perceived shift to the right in Japanese politics under the leadership of Abe, who is pushing to revise the pacifist Constitution to enhance the country's defense capabilities, has unnerved neighboring countries.

Japan's prime ministers have not visited Yasukuni since 2006 when Junichiro Koizumi made a visit on the Aug. 15 anniversary. Koizumi kept visiting the shrine every year in office between 2001 and 2006, making it impossible for Japan to hold summits with China and South Korea.

Abe did not visit the shrine during his first stint as premier in 2006 to 2007 in an effort to improve the ties damaged by Koizumi. But he later described his omission as "extremely regrettable" and after taking office for the second time last December expressed his eagerness to visit Yasukuni.

**Kyodo News**, August 15, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130815p2g00m0dm044000c.html>

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### **China blames Japan for Yasukuni visits on war anniversary**

BEIJING (Kyodo) — The Chinese government summoned Japan's ambassador for a protest Thursday after two ministers in Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Cabinet visited the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, seen in China as a symbol of Japan's past militarism.

In a meeting with Ambassador Masato Kitera, Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin conveyed China's "strong protest and severe condemnation" of the shrine visits on the 68<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The statement said that no matter in what form or capacity Japanese leaders visit the war-linked shrine, it is essentially an attempt to "deny and beautify" Japan's history of militarism and invasion of its Asian neighbors.

During the meeting at the ministry that lasted about 45 minutes, Kitera, however, said his 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.

Kitera also told Liu that Japan has been following the path of "a peaceful country" since the end of the war and regards its relations with China as "one of the most important ones," according to the embassy.

It is very rare for the Chinese government to summon a Japanese ambassador for ministerial-level Yasukuni visits.

Some experts view Abe's decision to refrain from touching on Japan's reflection of having caused damage to other Asian countries in the war in a government-sponsored memorial service as more problematic.

Since 1994, all Japanese prime ministers, including Abe himself during his first term in 2006-2007, have also pledged to renounce wars at an annual ceremony on the anniversary day. But this time Abe did not.

Li Wei, director of the Institute of Japanese Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told Kyodo News that Abe is insensitive to the feelings of countries that were victims of Japan's wartime aggression.

"I think it is wrong to think that his decision not to visit the Yasukuni Shrine is enough," Li said. "The premier's historical and world views are fundamental problems and it would be very difficult to mend bilateral relations."

Xinhua also dispatched a commentary, titled "Irresponsible attitudes toward history jeopardize Japan's future," in which it said that Abe's "nod to the ministers' visits and their recent provocative remarks signals that the current Japanese government has gone too far on the right-leaning road, raising fears among Japan's neighbors about a dangerous revival of its militarist past."

The commentary concluded by saying, "On this special day, Japan must reflect upon its history of aggression, sincerely apologize to the victims of its militarist past, and thus work to secure a peaceful future for the country itself and the region at large."

Over the past weeks, Chinese media have repeatedly warned that the Japanese government is increasingly becoming "right-leaning," such as by refusing to face up squarely to Japan's wartime history and making efforts to amend the pacifist Constitution.

**Kyodo News**, August 15, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130815p2g00m0dm078000c.html>

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### **Abe: Ministers can visit Yasukuni**

HIROSHIMA — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe again declined comment Tuesday on whether he will visit the war-linked Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo on a World War II anniversary next week, but added he would not tell his ministers not to go.

"I will not respond (to the question about) whether I will visit" the shrine on the Aug. 15 anniversary of Japan's surrender in the war, Abe told a press conference in Hiroshima, amid prospects that any such visits would trigger fierce criticism from neighboring countries, most notably China and South Korea.

"Whether Cabinet ministers will visit (Yasukuni) in their private capacity is an issue of their belief. So they are free" to go, he added. "I will not request my ministers to visit or not to visit (the shrine). I should not do that."

Government and ruling party sources said last week that Abe will refrain from visiting Yasukuni on the anniversary to avoid worsening relations with China and South Korea that are already plagued by territorial rows as well as divergent perceptions of Japan's wartime aggression in Asia.

**Kyodo News**, August 6, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/08/06/national/abe-ministers-can-visit-yasukuni/#.Ugw48dgS>

## **S. Korea, China have 'misperceptions' about Yasukuni: Abe**

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said Tuesday that the contentious Yasukuni Shrine is “a quiet commemorative place” and “misperceptions” remain about it amid criticism from South Korea and China to recent visits to the war-linked shrine by his Cabinet ministers.

Abe, often seen as a nationalist both at home and abroad, sounded negative about building a new war memorial — national but secular — just to distract attention from the Yasukuni Shrine.

“There are a number of misconceptions (about the shrine). If you go there, you’ll see right away if it’s a symbol of militarism,” Abe told the upper house budget committee. “It is a quiet commemorative place.”

Tensions heightened between Japan and South Korea as well as China as four Cabinet ministers, including Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Taro Aso, in April visited the Shinto shrine in Tokyo that honors convicted war criminals along with the war dead.

Abe has endorsed the visits and emphasized “it’s free to pay visits in a private capacity,” when asked by an opposition lawmaker at the committee if the visits would violate the constitutional separation of religion and politics.

To avert criticism from South Korea and China, a government advisory panel in 2002 proposed the idea of constructing a new facility. But the project has never been realized amid divided opinions even within the Liberal Democratic Party.

Abe told the budget committee that such a new facility should be a place that can win public respect, while noting that family members visit the Yasukuni Shrine so that they can “connect (with the war dead) on a spiritual level.”

“Without such connections, nobody would visit a (new) facility even if it is nicely built,” Abe added.

**Kyodo News**, May 14, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130514p2g00m0dm088000c.html>

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## **Park urges Japanese politicians to show 'brave leadership' on history**

SEOUL (Kyodo) — South Korean President Park Geun Hye on Thursday urged Japanese politicians to show “brave leadership” in resolving issues arising from Japan’s 1910-1945 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula.

“I urge Japanese politicians to show brave leadership in healing wounds of the past, and that’s how Japan could become a partner for a genuine cooperation,” Park said in a speech delivered in a ceremony marking when Japan’s occupation came to an end.

Park also called on the Japanese government to take “responsible and sincere measures for those who are living with sufferings and wounds arisen from the past history,” apparently referring to so-called “comfort women” who were forced into sexual servitude by the Japanese military before and during World War II.

She said Japan is an important neighbor which South Korea could work together with to establish peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia, but “recent situations surrounding issues of the past history make the future of the two countries dark.”

“It would be difficult to build trust needed to move into the future without being courageous in looking squarely into the past and having the attitude of being considerate of others’ sufferings.”

Earlier Thursday, two of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s Cabinet ministers visited the war-linked Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo on the 68<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Japan’s surrender in WWII.

South Korea views Yasukuni, which is dedicated to 2.5 million mostly Japanese soldiers killed in past wars including convicted Class-A war criminals from WWII, as a symbol of Japanese past militarism, and previous visits to the Shinto shrine by Japanese political leaders have strained relations.

**Kyodo News**, August 15, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130815p2g00m0dm079000c.html>

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## **Japan yet to dispose of arsenic from wartime chemical weapons in China**

SHANGHAI — Japan has yet to dispose of arsenic residue from chemical weapons its Imperial army abandoned in China at the end of World War II, a source close to bilateral relations said Wednesday, noting there are calls for the toxin to be sent to Japan.

The arsenic comes from arms that were destroyed in a chemical weapons disposal project in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, from October 2010 to June 2012, the source said, adding the chemical agent also has yet to be eradicated.

The arsenic residue is being temporarily stored in airtight plastic containers in an area in Nanjing controlled by the Chinese military, but it could leak into the soil and cause health risks if hit by floods, the source said.

One option for permanent disposal would be to bury the arsenic in a sealed underground site, but the two governments have yet to agree to this.

Japan started the disposal project in accordance with a bilateral accord in July 1999 whereby it would provide money, technology and facilities to dispose of the weapons.

The Abandoned Chemical Weapons Office of the Cabinet Office said roughly 35,000 chemical weapons had been blown up in Nanjing, and the chemical agents inside them had been detoxified. But the arsenic, as an element, remains and cannot disintegrate any further.

There are thus calls in China to send the residue to Japan, the source said.

But Tsukasa Hirota, deputy chief of the office, said it is Ågmore importantÅh to speed up efforts to

dispose of the abandoned chemical weapons than the arsenic residue, indicating a final method of arsenic disposal is not in the offing.

Japan has retrieved some 50,000 chemical weapons in various parts of China, including Nanjing.

The biggest concentration of abandoned chemical weapons is in Haerbaling in Jilin province, where 300,000 to 400,000 arms remain buried.

**Kyodo News**, August 15, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/08/15/national/japan-yet-to-dispose-of-arsenic-from-wartime-chemical-weapons-in-china/#.UhNPYX9jbRY>

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