

China seen as military threat by 88% of Japanese, 72% of South Koreans

However, poll finds majority in both countries see no end in sight for sour relations between Seoul, Tokyo



Pedestrians in Tokyo (AP Photo)

TAIPEI (Taiwan News) — Nearly 90 percent of Japanese and over 70 percent of South Koreans view China's expanding military influence in the region as a threat, according to the results of a poll conducted jointly in the two countries last month.

The poll, carried out in Japan by the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper and in South Korea by Hankook Ilbo, surveyed adults on the state of Japan-Seoul relations and ongoing points of contention between the two countries. Respondents were also asked to assess their country's relationship with China, North Korea, and the U.S.

Asked about their country's relationship with China, 61 percent of Japanese and 48 percent of South Koreans said it's "rather bad," with 17 percent of Japanese and 10 percent of Koreans describing it as "very bad."

Nevertheless, only a minority in either country wish to scale back their economic relationship with China, their shared largest export partner. On this point, 48 percent of Japanese and 33 percent of Koreans said to "leave it as is," while 23 and 42 percent of Japanese and Koreans, respectively, said economic ties with China should be strengthened.

When asked whether China's growing military pressure on nations in the East and South China seas poses a threat to their country, 88 percent of Japanese and 72 percent of Koreans responded that they believe it does.

A smaller majority also said their government should be "in tune" with the U.S. as

Washington increases pressure on Beijing over security, diplomatic, and human rights disputes. On this question, 59 percent of Japanese and 64 percent of Koreans are in agreement.

A large majority in Japan (81 percent) and South Korea (80 percent) called Xi Jinping (习近平) “unreliable,” suggesting the Chinese leader is viewed as only slightly more reliable than North Korea’s Kim Jong-un.

However, the poll also found that approximately the same number of Japanese and South Koreans view each others’ presidents with as much suspicion as they do Chairman Xi. In addition, over 80 percent on either side believe their country’s relationship with the other is either “rather bad” or very “bad.”

Poll respondents were also asked about the historical issues driving the diplomatic schism between the two nations, including Korean “comfort women” being forced into prostitution by the Empire of Japan during World War II. A majority of Japanese (59 percent) and Koreans (79 percent) do not think it’s necessary to “go further on the issue of historical awareness” to mend the relationship and expressed pessimism that it would improve in the future, with 73 percent of Japanese and 58 percent of Koreans forecasting “no change.”

The poll was conducted by landline and used the random digit dialing (RDD) survey method to reach landline and mobile phones. It collected responses from 1,063 Japanese over the age of 18 from May 21-23 and 1,000 South Korean adults on May 21 and 22.

Source: <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4218535>

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