

# Koizumi's Statement on the Sixtieth Anniversary: improving or inflaming relations with China and South Korea?

Yomiuri Shimbun

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By Yomiuri Shimbun

*[The rituals of apology and the rituals of pride continue on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of Japan's surrender, but with new twists in the context of Japan's election. The Prime Minister's two speeches on August 15 addressed, in turn, Japan's neighbors, particularly China and South Korea, and the LDP's rightwing supporters in the Japanese electorate. As Richard Parry observed in The London Times, in a statement approved by the Cabinet, the Prime Minister repeated "an unambiguous expression of 'deep remorse and heartfelt apology' for Japan's 'colonisation and aggression' during the war." But in a similarly worded speech on the same day at a ceremony at which Emperor Akihito also spoke, all reference to colonialism, aggression and apology were omitted. As discussed in the following article, the Prime Minister's speech began with this statement directed not only to Japan's neighbors but very much to a nationalist constituency at home: On the 60th anniversary of the end of the war, I reaffirm my determination that Japan must never again take the path to war, reflecting that the peace and prosperity we enjoy today are founded on the ultimate sacrifices of those who lost their lives for the war against their will." The Prime Minister chose not to visit Yasukuni Shrine, the*

*memorial to Japan's war dead and the national symbol of the bond between the emperor and the war, on the symbolically charged August 15 date. However, two other cabinet ministers and LDP Acting Secretary General Abe Shinzo, did visit. Abe is widely expected to succeed to the office when the Prime Minister retires next year.*

*Official statements related to the Anniversary can be found at a special Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs website set up to commemorate the Sixtieth Anniversary. Documents pertaining to war, apology, textbook controversies, the comfort women and other issues are presented in Japanese, English and in some cases Chinese:*

*<http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/postwar/index.html> Japan Focus.]*

Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro expressed anew Japan's remorse and apology for actions committed during World War II in his statement to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the war's end Monday, also stressing the country's forward-looking stance in apparent efforts to mend strained relations with China and South Korea.

Government sources said Koizumi's statement is "the government's basic guideline aimed at acknowledging the past and contributing to future peace and prosperity."

However, Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni Shrine remains a flashpoint and it is unclear if Koizumi's statement could lead to restored relations with Beijing and Seoul.

On Monday night, Koizumi said to reporters, "We shouldn't wage war again."

"The path that Japan has been following for 60 years since the end of the war is one in which we have been expressing remorse for the war and learning lessons from it," he added.

Drafting the statement began secretly about three months ago under the supervision of Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Futahashi Masahiro and with the help of officials of the Prime Minister's Office and the Foreign Ministry.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hosoda Hiroyuki prepared the way for the statement within the Liberal Democratic Party.

The statement used former Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi's statement in 1995 to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II as a base and also borrowed from Koizumi's speech made at the Asia-Africa Conference, or Bandung Conference, in Indonesia in April.

Because Koizumi expressed deep remorse for the war and made a sincere apology at the Bandung Conference, some LDP and government officials thought the word "apology" was not needed in Monday's statement.

However, Koizumi decided to issue a statement because if Japan had not issued one on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the war's end, the government might have sent a wrong message to the international community, including China and South Korea, that Japan is passive toward past problems.

A government official who was involved in drawing up the statement said, "A bureaucrat can't write such phrases as 'the peace and prosperity we now enjoy was achieved on the noble sacrifices of many who lost their lives

against their will in the war,' and 'In the last major war, more than 3 million compatriots laid down their lives on the battlefield and, falling victim to the ravages of war with their thoughts for their homeland and concern for their families.'"

The official implied those phrases were put in at Koizumi's instruction and have been used by Koizumi when he explains his visits to Yasukuni Shrine.

A senior LDP official said, "Koizumi seeks to evade opposition party attacks in the [Sept. 11] general election campaign by clarifying his basic stance toward stagnation in diplomacy with other Asian countries because of his visit to Yasukuni Shrine and with historical issues."

### Forward-looking stance

Koizumi told government officials who were drawing up the statement, "Historical recognition will follow Murayama's statement, but it also should stress the country's forward-looking stance that highlights what our country has achieved as a peace-loving country since the war, and that our country will continue to make contributions to the world."

According to government sources, Koizumi's statement copied phrases used in Murayama's statement such as "tremendous damage and pain" and "reflect most deeply and offer apologies from my heart."

Although Koizumi's statement dropped a phrase "following a mistaken national policy" that was in Murayama's statement, Hosoda explained, "It's a matter of transition of sentences and it [Koizumi's statement] does not avoid the phrase."

Koizumi's statement emphasized the country's international contributions such as official development assistance and peacekeeping operations.

Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Nakagawa Shoichi hailed the statement, saying, "It refers to nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the eradication of terrorism, and it presents a strong message that Japan will play an active role [in the world]."

## Diplomacy in Asia

Koizumi's statement also mentioned South Korea and China and called for improving relations with them. According to a senior government official, it was the first time for Koizumi to address the two countries in a statement.

New Komeito leader Kanzaki Takenori said Monday, "Although the Japan-U.S. relationship is important, relations with Asian countries, including China and South Korea, also are very important for our country."

"The prime minister probably understood this and that is why he included South Korea and China in his statement," he added.

The phrase "The postwar history of our nation

is indeed 60 years of peace where we have expressed our reflections on the war through action" was put in the statement out of consideration for China and South Korea who have criticized that Japan should show remorse for its history through action.

Foreign Minister Machimura Nobutaka said at a press conference Monday, "It's wrong to say that relations with China and South Korea are deteriorating because of problems over Yasukuni Shrine.

"It's important to build better relations with them by admitting differences in perspectives among us and overcoming them," he added.

However, Democratic Party of Japan leader Okada Katsuya said Koizumi must do more to build good relations with other Asian countries. "Can Japan, including the prime minister, carry out what is written in the statement?" Okada said. "The prime minister needs to work harder to do so."

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