



SASAKAWA USA
Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA

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New report details Japan's stance on a divided Korea

Historical, cultural and political roots impact Japanese view of possible reunification

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Although bilateral talks between North Korea and South Korea last weekend seemingly ended without much progress, the fact that the two governments are meeting at all is a step forward in a long and complicated history detailed in a new report from Sasakawa USA Fellow James Kendall.

[“Japan and Korean Unification: Ambivalence and Pragmatism – Finding the Least Bad Option”](#) details the historical, cultural and political roots of Japanese and Chinese relations with the peninsula and what role, if any, Japan might play in possible reunification.

“We will see that the Japanese experience with Korea has certain recurring themes throughout history, and that the themes build upon one another to produce a unique Japanese view of Korea,” states the report, which was published in the *International Journal of Korean Studies* Spring/Summer 2015 edition, recently made available online. “Taking this into account, the salient characteristic of Japan’s policy toward Korean unification is pragmatism.”

“Japan prizes stability on the peninsula and fears the possibility of a potentially hostile, possibly nuclear-armed, united country across the Korea Strait,” writes Kendall, the Fellow for Common Challenges at Sasakawa USA. “...The least bad policy option for Japan to pursue is maintenance of the status quo while endeavoring to rein in North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs as best it can. A divided Korea breaks the Korean ‘dagger aimed at the heart of Japan.’”

[Read the full report here.](#)

About James Kendall

James Kendall is the Fellow for Common Challenges at Sasakawa USA, specializing in topics including Asia-Pacific affairs; U.S. and Japanese foreign and defense policies; maritime security; U.S. basing in the Pacific; and U.S.-Japan cybersecurity policy. He can be reached via email at jkendall@spfusa.org. Read more of his research and analysis [here](#).



About Sasakawa USA

Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA is an independent American non-profit, non-partisan institution devoted to research, analysis and better understanding of the U.S.-Japan relationship. Research programs focus on security, diplomacy, economics, business, trade, technology and other matters of common concern. Education programs facilitate people-to-people exchange and dialogue on these issues with American and Japanese policymakers, influential citizens and the broader public.

Admiral Dennis Blair became Sasakawa USA's first American Chairman of the Board and CEO and recently refocused its mission and expanded its staff. As a result of these efforts, Sasakawa USA has become a major hub for information and commentary on U.S.-Japan affairs, building relationships between current and future leaders of both countries and offering a venue for dialogue and discussion.

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