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# Computing the (Un)computable: A Computationally-Augmented Perspective on the Yasukuni Shrine Controversy

Ryan Muther

*Union College - Schenectady, NY*

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Computing the (Un)computable: A Computationally-Augmented Perspective on  
the Yasukuni Shrine Controversy

By  
Ryan G. Muther

Senior Project Submitted  
In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for  
Honors in the Departments of History and Computer Science

Departments of History and Computer Science  
Union College  
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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Computational methods have been used with increasing frequency in the social sciences and humanities, due to the availability of digital sources and computing power to study everything from changes in the meanings of words in Latin texts to the hoe knowledge was categorized in eighteen century encyclopedias. Recent trends in the fields of digital humanities and computational social science include statistical methods like machine learning, requiring large pre-tagged and annotated sets of documents which in turn necessitates a great deal of prior work to create data to use with such methods. This reliance on large corpora of annotated data limits the questions and topics one can investigate to those for which such resources already exist or where significant effort is available to make such annotations. With unannotated corpora, such as what one can gather from the internet automatically using web scraping, a significantly wider range of topics are able to be addressed with computational methods. Such data can be unstructured or semi-structured, like newspaper articles, movie reviews, or tweets. While the unannotated nature of the data does somewhat limit the methods of analyzing the data, a data-augmented approach to history using unannotated corpora is still useful. In this thesis, I study the utility of term frequency analysis and sentiment analysis methods to determine how useful these methods are as an aid to historical analysis. In particular, I am using these methods to understand and analyze changes in discourse one particular historical issue over time.

As a case study to understand how these methods can be useful to historians, I analyze attitudes toward the controversial Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, a memorial to soldiers killed fighting for Imperial Japan from 1868 to 1945 including 14 Class A war criminals enshrined in 1978, and study how and why the controversy arises and unfolds. Using this computationally-augmented study of the controversy, drawing on both standard historical methods and

computational tools, I shed light on interesting topics to look at in more detail using standard historical methods and reinforce my understanding of certain trends in the controversy concerning the shrine. To test the correctness of the computational methods, I draw upon my domain knowledge as a historian to verify that the computational methods produce results consistent with a broader historical understanding of the controversy.

Yasukuni Shrine is a complicated, multidimensional place. As a memorial to 2.4 million soldiers killed fighting for the nation of Japan,<sup>1</sup> it is a place of remembrance and veneration of fallen comrades-in-arms and family members as *kami*.<sup>2</sup> As a site of collective memory, it is a highly controversial symbol of Japan's ambivalent relationship with its past as it presents a narrative of Japanese victimization and triumphalism. Furthermore, some who are honored there were convicted as war criminals in the aftermath of World War II. The most controversial of those war criminals, the Class A war criminals who led Japan during the war were enshrined in 1978.

The shrine, rather than being controversial for its own sake, serves as a symbol of a larger historical issue: that of Japan's 'historical amnesia' concerning its wartime behavior and appears at different points in time alongside other issues in a similar vein. Internationally, since the emergence of Yasukuni as a controversial topic in the 1980s, the controversy has focused largely on the issues surrounding Japan's ambivalent acceptance of responsibility for the war and general lack of contrition. Domestically, the focus has expanded over time to include damage to Japan's international standing and economy in addition to the issues of memory epitomized by the shrine. While the specific objections made to the controversial visits do not change much

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<sup>1</sup> Ayako Mie, "Yasukuni: It's open to interpretation," *Japan Times*, February 3, 2014, Accessed: 3/15/16, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/02/03/reference/yasukuni-its-open-to-interpretation/#.VuhQWuIrLIU>.

<sup>2</sup> The term *kami* refers to a deity in the Shinto religion. While it could (and seems often to) be translated as "gods," such a translation, to my mind, would complicate matters. It's a different concept of "god" than the vernacular English meaning. As such, I choose to use the term "spirits" instead.

over time, the context of those objections changes. Yasukuni becomes a scapegoat for other issues in Japanese international relations.

### **Historical Background**

During World War II, Yasukuni Shrine acted as a memorial to the war dead and honored their sacrifices for the Emperor. Tetsuya Takahashi, professor of philosophy at Tokyo University, asserts that the shrine created the myth that dying for the country was beautiful and, using this “alchemy of emotion,” transformed the sadness of the families of the soldiers into happiness.<sup>3</sup> He also notes that the shrine was a significant symbol for Japanese soldiers, who would often say “See you at Yasukuni” to their friends and family before leaving for war.<sup>4</sup> The Emperor played a large role at Yasukuni during the war, personally approving each enshrinement and being present at the ceremony at which the dead were formally enshrined.<sup>5</sup>

Before coming to a discussion of the Yasukuni controversy itself, some understanding of the main factors in the evolution of official Japanese war memory since the end of World War II, described by many scholars as ambivalent, is required. The earliest cause of the ambivalence was a combination factors stemming from Occupation decisions and policies. Firstly, the ambiguity of the Tokyo Trials (including, for example, the exemption from prosecution of Emperor Hirohito) contributed to Japanese reluctance to come to terms with their past. Secondly, the policy of “reverse course” implemented by the Occupation authorities, including the reinstatement of many wartime officials<sup>6</sup> and strict control over the development of the Japanese narrative of the war, emphasizing a US-centric image of the war which, as George Hicks notes in his study of Japanese war memory, “downplayed the Asian dimension” of the war

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<sup>3</sup> Ayako, “Yasukuni: It’s open to interpretation.”

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Takenaka, Akiko, “Enshrinement Politics: War Dead and War Criminals at Yasukuni Shrine,” *Asia Pacific Journal* 5, June 2007, <http://apjif.org/-akiko-takenaka/2443/article.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Hicks, George, *Japan’s War Memories*, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1997) 14.

further entrenched Japanese ambivalence regarding the war.<sup>7</sup> In addition to the Occupation policies, an avoidance of international discussion of the issues from the end of the war until the 1980s helped reinforce official Japanese ambivalence towards their country's actions during the war. Laura Hein and Mark Selden note in their study of citizenship and memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States that "Cold War priorities were another reason [the first being the reverse course policy] that the US protected Japan from Asian demands for reparation and punishment during and after the Occupation."<sup>8</sup> As such, official acknowledgement by the Japanese government of criticism of Japan's wartime conduct went unaddressed until the early 1980s during the waning years of the Cold War, resulting in a narrative of victimization that dominated the Japanese government's official position until very recently.

International controversy surrounding Japan's ambivalent relationship with its wartime conduct first occurred with the 1982 textbook uproar, which concerned the perceived whitewashing of the invasion of China by textbook regulation authorities in Japan. On 16 June 1982, the Ministry of Education published a sample of the screened texts for the next school year in all subjects.<sup>9</sup> After reviewing the screened textbooks, three major Japanese newspapers; the *Asahi*, *Mainichi*, and *Yomiuri* began to attack the textbook screening process for softening the language used to describe the invasion of China with scathing headlines like *Asahi*'s "further move to 'prewar' authority over textbooks" and "'Aggression' in China to 'Advance'" (a reference to one specific modification made).<sup>10</sup> The international outrage in reaction to the news reports started in China, but swiftly spread to other regions occupied by Japan in East and

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<sup>7</sup> Hicks, 8.

<sup>8</sup> Hein, Laura and Selden, Mark, *Censoring History: Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States*, (Armonk: East Gate, 2000) 11.

<sup>9</sup> Hicks, 45.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 45.

Southeast Asia during the war.<sup>11</sup> As a response to the controversy, Cabinet Chief Secretary Miyazawa Kiichi stated that “the opinion of surrounding countries will be considered in future textbooks.”<sup>12</sup> His statement represented the first movement by the government towards involvement in (and, indeed, acknowledgement of) an international debate concerning Japan’s past actions.

The textbook uproar marks a turning point in the Yasukuni controversy as well. Prior to that point, controversy concerning Yasukuni was largely confined to Japan itself. Principally, the domestic debates at the time were concerned with the enshrinement of war criminals, with the last and most controversial among them being enshrined in 1978. After 1982, however, Yasukuni Shrine emerged as a point of contention in Japanese international relations due to the shrine visits by Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro. Domestically, his visits in 1982 and 1983 provoked domestic controversy due to the ambivalent status of his visits as official or private and his support for right wing groups in favor of state control of the shrine.<sup>13</sup> Internationally, these visits provoked no response. His later August 1985 visit, in contrast, caused an international controversy since his visit was unambiguously official and Nakasone was accompanied by the majority of his Cabinet.<sup>14</sup> While no formal complaints were lodged by the Chinese government, references were made to the visit in speeches by Chinese government officials warning against the actions by some in Japan to “revive militarism” and describing the visit as “hurt[ing] the feelings of the Chinese people.”<sup>15</sup> Curiously, the Shrine receded from the international scene as a controversy until the July 1996 visit by Prime Minister Hashimoto and the 2001-06 visits by

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<sup>11</sup> Hicks, 46-7.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>13</sup> Breen, John, *Yasukuni Shrine and the Struggle for Japan’s Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 29.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 30.



Prime Minister Koizumi, both of which provoked harsh international criticism. Many of the Prime Ministers whose visits spark controversy are from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Japan's nationalist conservative party which has been in power for most of the postwar period.

Yasukuni Shrine is contentious for many reasons. Some argue it presents a distorted view of the past which glorifies Japanese imperialism, while others see it as only right for Japanese to visit to mourn their war dead, criminals and all. The place itself presents a very particular narrative of World War II, which emphasizes Japanese suffering while downplaying the war's aggressive nature. However, it is also evident that that may not have always been the case prior to the enshrinement of the war criminals. The shrine's link with postwar right-wing nationalist revisionism, and with that some of its controversial nature, seems to have resulted from government involvement in the enshrinement of the war criminals, official visits by government officials, or external factors like the textbook controversies.

### **Historical Literature Review**

Scholarly inquiry concerning Yasukuni is wide-ranging, exploring many facets of the controversy. Japanese historian Akihiko Tanaka, in his 2008 essay published in *East Asia's Haunted Present: Historical Memories and the Resurgence of Nationalism*, views the controversy as the result of contention between four different views of the shrine: the symbolism of the shrine to the families of those enshrined there, the unconstitutional endorsement of the Shinto religion through official visits, the justification of Japanese wartime aggression, and the repudiation of the Tokyo Trial view of history which vilified Japan.<sup>16</sup> In John Breen's 2008

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<sup>16</sup> Akihiko Tanaka, "Yasukuni Shrine and Japan's International Relations," in *East Asia's Haunted Present: Historical Memories and the Resurgence of Nationalism*, Tsuyoshi Hasegawa and Kazuhiko Togo, ed. (Westport: Praeger, 2008), 129.

overview of the Yasukuni issue entitled *Yasukuni Shrine and the Struggle for Japan's Past*, several scholars look at the controversy from different angles. American historian Caroline Rose asserts that the shrine was used to support domestic policy goals in both Japan and China, prolonging the controversy and preventing genuine dialog concerning the historical issues that still plague the region.<sup>17</sup> Japanese historian Takahashi Tetsuya describes the international controversy as largely stemming from the presence of Class A war criminals in the shrine.<sup>18</sup> This reductionist view of the situation, he argues, further contributes to Japan's victimization narrative as it places blame for the war exclusively on the war criminals, allowing other aspects of Japan's wartime behavior glorified by the shrine to remain unexamined.<sup>19</sup> Phillip Seaton views the Yasukuni controversy as an extension of a larger issue of how to remember and commemorate Japan's twentieth-century wars within Japan, rather than as a purely international dispute between Japan and its neighbors.<sup>20</sup> To study the controversy, Seaton uses a variety of Japanese media sources, from large media conglomerates like *Asahi Shimbun* to smaller regional papers, focusing on responses to Prime Minister Koizumi's visits from 2001-06.<sup>21</sup> Finally, Akiko Takenaka, in her 2015 book *Yasukuni Shrine: History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar*, concentrates on lawsuits for the removal of names from the shrine as part of a larger study of war memorialization as a whole.<sup>22</sup> She asserts that the recent controversies stemmed from the discrepancies between how politicians defend their visits, describing them as for

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<sup>17</sup> Caroline Rose "Stalemate: The Yasukuni Shrine Problem in Sino-Japanese Relations," in *Yasukuni the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past*, ed. John Breen, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 46.

<sup>18</sup> Tetsuya Takahashi "Legacies of Empire: The Yasukuni Shrine Controversy," in *Yasukuni the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past*, ed. John Breen, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 111.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>20</sup> Phillip Seaton, "Pledge Fulfilled: Prime Minister Koizumi, Yasukuni, and the Japanese Media," in *Yasukuni the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past*, ed. John Breen, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 163.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Akiko Takenaka, *Yasukuni Shrine: History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar*, (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2015), 134.

peaceful purposes, while critics see the visits as an act of affirmation of the Asia-Pacific War.<sup>23</sup>

My work involves using media sources from Japan, China, Korea, and the United States to study how the controversy evolves over time, paying particular attention to the importance of the prime ministerial visits.

### **Related Computational Work**

This thesis is related to previous work in the field of computational textual analysis. In 2009, Horton et al. applied machine learning techniques to categorize the topic of entries in Diderot's *Encyclopédie* in order to understand how knowledge was ordered and classified in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>24</sup> In 2011, David Bamman and Gregory Crane created and evaluated a method of determining word sense variation using a variety of machine learning methods on corpus of two millennia worth of Latin texts.<sup>25</sup> Their work included analysis not only of how the sense of a particular word changed over time, but also how the word used to express a particular sense changed. To accomplish this, they created a sense inventory for Latin based on an alignment of Latin texts and their English translations, necessitating significant prior work. In another case, also in 2011, Cohen et al. created a system that allowed historians to access and analyze the trial records from the Old Bailey (the central court of England and Wales) from 1674 to 1913.<sup>26</sup> The project, entitled Data Mining with Criminal Intent, aimed to “discover what tools and infrastructure would enable the ‘ordinary working historian’ to integrate text mining into her or

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<sup>23</sup> Takenaka, 135.

<sup>24</sup> Russell Horton, Robert Morrissey, Mark Olsen, Glenn Roe, and Robert Voyer, “Mining Eighteenth Century Ontologies: Machine Learning and Knowledge Classification in the *Encyclopédie*,” *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 3, 2009, accessed: 2/14/16, <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/3/2/000044/000044.html>.

<sup>25</sup> David Bamman and Gregory Crane, “Measuring historical word sense variation,” in *Proceedings of the 11th annual international ACM/IEEE joint conference on Digital libraries*, (New York, ACM, 2011,) 1-10.

<sup>26</sup> Dan Cohen et al, “Data Mining with Criminal Intent,” Final white paper, 2011.

his day-to-day work.”<sup>27</sup> As with Bamman and Crane, the methods they used often involved machine learning, this time as a means of navigating the data beyond simple keyword searches.

The second area of research that this work draws heavily on is sentiment analysis. Sentiment analysis methods generally fall into (or between, as some hybrid approaches exist) two categories: machine learning and lexical analysis. In machine learning, annotated documents (for which the polarity of the document are already known) are used to train automated classifiers, as done by Pang, Lee, and Vaithyanathan in 2002 when they applied sentiment analysis to a corpus of film reviews using several different machine learning methods, and a variety of features extracted from the documents.<sup>28</sup> They concluded that sentiment categorization was a more difficult task than the topic categorization. Using lexical methods, a set of sentiment bearing words are associated with sentiment values, and the text is processed by parsing it and applying a set of rules to determine the sentiment of the document given the sentiment values of the known sections, as done by Turney, also in 2002.<sup>29</sup> Turney uses an unsupervised learning method using pointwise mutual information (what the presence of one word tells us about the likelihood of another word appearing) to determine the sentiment values of words in a phrase, and the phrases are then averaged to create a document-level sentiment value. From the groundwork laid by those two projects, later work focused on improving and broadening the domains to which sentiment analysis is applied. For instance, while the two above projects focus on sentiment analysis of film reviews, research has also been done on sentiment analysis in newspaper articles<sup>30</sup> and blog corpora.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Bo Pang et al., “Thumbs up? Sentiment classification using machine learning techniques,” in *Proceedings of the EMNLP*, 2002, 79-86.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Turney. “Thumbs up or thumbs down?: Semantic orientation applied to unsupervised classification of reviews.” *ACL*, 417–424, 2002.

<sup>30</sup> Choi et al, “Domain-specific sentiment analysis using contextual feature generation,” *Proceedings of the 1st international CIKM workshop on Topic-sentiment analysis for mass opinion*, 37-44, 2009.

In addition to broadening the domains to which sentiment analysis is applied, research has also been performed to explore methods to improve the accuracy of sentiment analysis methods with respect to the subtleties of natural language. The most prominent example of this is the problem of contextual polarity, where a word in the text has a different polarity in context than the word usually holds (the prior polarity) which is explored by Wilson et al. and others.<sup>32</sup> Consider, for example, describing something as “good” versus “not good.” In the first case, “good” has a positive polarity in context while in the second the polarity of “good” is modified by the presence of “not,” making the overall polarity negative. Other similarly explored problems are those of determining sentiments from quotations (as done by Balahur et al. in 2009)<sup>33</sup> and determining the sentiment of a text with respect to a particular topic, rather than attempting to assign an overall polarity to the entire document as done by Nasukawa and Yi in 2003.<sup>34</sup> My work involves using methods that operate on the word and sentence level to study how the language used in discussion of the shrine changes over time.

In the domain of news articles, the literature acknowledges that the articles in aggregate contain a “snapshot” of opinion regarding a particular topic at any given time.<sup>35</sup> Given this assumption, we can reasonably conclude that analyzing a collection of newspaper articles over a long enough time could give us some indication of how that opinion changes over time. To accomplish this, I used lexical and sentential methods to look at things like word frequency over time and the use of polarized language. In addition to demonstrating the applicability of

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<sup>31</sup> K. Lun wei et al. “Opinion extraction, summarization and tracking in news and blog corpora.” *AAAI/CAAW*, 2006.

<sup>32</sup> T. Wilson et al, “Recognizing contextual polarity in phrase-level sentiment analysis.” 347–354. *ACL*, 2005.

<sup>33</sup> A. Balahur et al. “Opinion mining on newspaper quotations.” *Web Intelligence and Intelligent Agent Technologies*, 3, 523–526, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> T. Nasukawa and J. Yi, *Sentiment Analyzer: Extracting Sentiments about a Given Topic using Natural Language Processing Techniques*, 2003.

<sup>35</sup> A. Balahur and R. Steinberger, “Rethinking sentiment analysis in the news: from theory to practice and back.” *Proceedings of WOMSA*, 9, 2009.

computational methods to historical research, the use of these methods also allows one to determine how complicated the methods need to be in order to be of use historically. While it may be that more complicated syntactic methods are also useful, the comparatively simple lexical methods employed here are also demonstrably useful as will be shown.

## **Organization**

In Chapter Two, the data and computational methods used in this study will be presented. Overviews of term frequency analysis and sentiment analysis will be presented in order to understand how the data is manipulated to provide insight into the Yasukuni controversy later on.

Chapter Three will explore Yasukuni Shrine's function as a site of memory along with the narrative it presents of World War II. Particular attention is paid to the monuments on the grounds of the shrine, which highlight Japanese suffering as a result of the war, and the Yūshūkan war museum, which whitewashes Japan's wartime conduct. Knowledge of the site's narrative is imperative for understanding why the official visits are considered so controversial, since visits to Yasukuni can be perceived not only as a show of respect for the dead, but also as an endorsement of the historical narrative presented by the shrine.

In Chapter Four, the evolution of the controversy surrounding Yasukuni prior to 2000 will be presented. Following a brief overview of the history of the shrine from its foundation in 1869 to the enshrinement of the Class A war criminals in 1978, this section focuses primarily on the domestic and international responses to the enshrinement of the Class A war criminals and the 1985 visit to Yasukuni by Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro, as those two events represent significant turning points in the controversy. This section will not involve any computational

work as the documents I have to which computational methods can be applied only go as far back as 2000.

In Chapter Five, the history of the controversy from 2000 onwards will be examined using a combination of historical and computational methods. This chapter analyzes domestic and international responses to Yasukuni visits by Prime Ministers Koizumi and Abe. The responses to these two events are representative of Japan's shifting place in East Asia and epitomize the use of Yasukuni as a scapegoat for Japan's foreign policy controversies by its East Asian neighbors.

Chapter six will present conclusions both about the controversy and the broader applicability of computational methods to historical research. We will now move on to a discussion of the data and methods used in this thesis. While it is not our intention to replace standard methods of analysis with these computational methods, they are useful for quickly getting a broader view of the overall discourse on an issue than what one would get from looking over the documents using close reading. Additionally, it is useful for narrowing down one's focus to particular periods of time, providing direction for later research.

## Chapter 2: Data and Methods

The data used in the computational portion of this research is drawn from a set of East Asian and American newspaper archives. Specifically, the newspapers used are the Japanese newspapers *Japan Times* and *Asahi Shimbun*, the Chinese newspaper *China Daily*, the Korean newspaper *Chosun Ilbo*, and the American newspaper *New York Times*. These newspapers were selected primarily because they all have full text digital English language archives going back at least several years, and are from countries that have some stake in how Japan remembers and commemorates World War II.

In using these particular papers as a significant portion of the body of evidence to study the controversy surrounding Yasukuni, it is important to understand the politics of each paper. *China Daily* is owned by the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China.<sup>36</sup> It is, we may reasonably assume, representative of official Chinese government opinion. *Japan Times* and *Asahi Shimbun* are two of Japan's largest newspapers, with *Asahi* considered somewhat liberal and at times openly critical of the government and *Japan Times* considered more neutral. Notably, *Asahi Shimbun* has reported on the issue of wartime sexual slavery, which other papers within Japan tend to shy away from discussing.<sup>37</sup> *Japan Times* is Japan's largest English-language newspaper.<sup>38</sup> The *New York Times*, widely regarded as a liberal paper, was chosen because the paper's full text archives date back to the 1980s.<sup>39</sup> The conservative *Chosun Ilbo* was chosen because it was the only Korean paper with an English archive that could be found. *Chosun Ilbo* is noteworthy as it was founded in 1920 during the

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<sup>36</sup> State Council Information Office, Accessed: 1/18/16, <http://www.scio.gov.cn/>.

<sup>37</sup> "Forcibly taken away: Coercion that led to lost freedom existed," *Asahi Shimbun*, October 22, 2014, Accessed: 3/7/16, <http://www.asahi.com/articles/ASG8P3CLFG8PULPT001.html>.

<sup>38</sup> Japan Times About Us page, *Japan Times*, Accessed: 7/3/16, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/about-us/>.

<sup>39</sup> Daniel Okrent, "Is The New York Times a Liberal Newspaper?" *New York Times*, July 25, 2004, Accessed: 3/7/16, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/07/25/opinion/the-public-editor-is-the-new-york-times-a-liberal-newspaper.html>.



Japanese colonial period and is historically very critical of Japan (mostly thought criticism of the colonial government) and acted as a bastion of tacit resistance until it was suspended by the Japanese government in 1940.<sup>40</sup>

Newspaper	Nationality	# of Articles	Avg. Length (words)	Start Date	End Date
<i>Asahi Shimbun</i>	Japanese	1944	717	3/22/2011	9/23/2015
<i>Japan Times</i>	Japanese	2567	693	6/14/1998	9/23/2015
<i>Chosun Ilbo</i>	Korean	941	328	12/4/1997	9/9/2015
<i>China Daily</i>	Chinese	2368	648	4/4/2001	9/19/2015
<i>New York Times</i>	American	1151	608	7/18/1980	10/2/2015

Figure 1: Basic Corpus Statistics

General corpus statistics can be seen in Figure 1. While there are other newspapers that would be potentially useful for this project (like the conservative Japanese paper *Yomiuri Shimbun* as a counterpoint to the more liberal *Asahi*), the English language archives of those papers do not cover enough time to be useful.

The articles were collected via web scraping using python with the BeautifulSoup library for HTML parsing and the Requests library for accessing web pages. For each newspaper, a script was written that automatically runs a search for a selected term and collects the text and date of every article in the search results for that term. The search terms I used were “Yasukuni,” “textbooks,” “comfort women,” “Kono statement,” “Senkakau,” “Takeshima,” “Dokdo,” and “Diaoyu.” Once the documents were collected, a database for each newspaper was created to allow the articles to be easily categorized both by paper of origin and time.

My methods can be categorized as word frequency analysis and sentiment analysis. Using word frequency analysis, I can observe which words occur frequently in discussions of the shrine. Using tools like python library the natural language toolkit (NLTK), one can look at particular word categories (like parts of speech) in a particular period of time to see how the

<sup>40</sup> DJun Kil Kim, *The History of Korea, 2nd Edition*, (Santa Barbra: Greenwood, 2014), 154.

discussion of the shrine evolves over time. This can provide topics of historical interest to look into more in depth using traditional historical methods. Another useful method is sentiment analysis (the computational extraction of a text's outlook on its topic), as it allows us to focus only on areas of the corpus where the shrine is discussed in polarized language, indicating that there is potentially significant discussion at a given point in time.

The work I have done using this data can be broken into two phases: an exploratory phase and an analytical phase. In the first phase, the frequencies of certain important terms, like "Yasukuni," "Abe," "Koizumi," "apology," and "war criminals," in the controversy in each newspaper were determined, along with the frequency with which the terms co-occurred. From the results of these processes, in addition to close reading of some of the articles, it became evident not only that these articles contained information of historical interest but also that some of the terms were related to each other in the debate we were observing. For example, mentions of Yasukuni Shrine were frequently accompanied by mentions of Japanese Prime Ministers Koizumi and Abe. Further experiments confirmed that words in the MPQA Lexicon occurred in roughly half of the sentences in the corpus, which implied that sentiment analysis could be a potentially useful tool in analyzing these documents, as about half the sentences contained sentiment-bearing words. If they didn't, sentiment analysis would be a fruitless exercise, as there would be no words to use as markers of sentiment in the sentences.

The second phase of the work with this data has been more analytical. Initially, a program was written which assigned scores to each sentence in the corpus using the MPQA Subjectivity Lexicon using several metrics; the number of positive and negative terms in the sentence, the net score (the number of positive terms – the number of negative terms), and the normalized net score, which is calculated by dividing the net score by the number of sentiment

bearing words in the sentence. This is done to take into account the fact that longer sentences are more likely to contain many sentiment bearing words, and any effects on the polarity score caused by sentence length should be avoided. An example of the scoring process can be seen in Figure 2. In the example, we see that the sentence contains five negative terms and one positive term. However, the one positive term is erroneous, as in context the term minister is not used as “minister of a church” but “minister, a government employee.” It is enough, for our purposes, to be aware that that sentence is strongly negative.

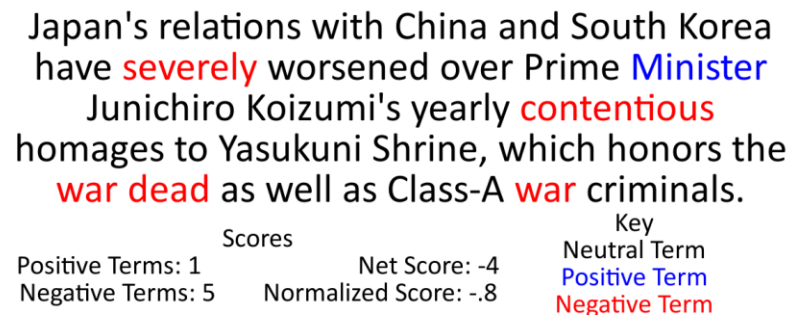


Figure 2: An example of sentiment analysis applied to a sentence from the *Japan Times*

This method allows us to determine what sentences are strongly polarized (either positively or negatively) using word presence as a proxy for sentiment and look at the words that appear frequently in those sentences rather than in the entire corpus, narrowing the set of sentences we are working with to those that include some expression of sentiment. From the frequently occurring terms in those sentences, we can glean information about potential topics of interest based not only on what words we see frequently in a given source, but also based on what is absent and what differs between newspapers.

### **Polarized Language Frequency Analysis**

In order to discuss this method, we must first clarify what we define as “polarized language.” I define a polarized sentence as any sentence containing at least five sentiment

bearing terms from the MPQA subjectivity lexicon. The first way we can leverage this information is by determining the relative frequency of polarized language in each paper, as seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Counts of the number of polarized and total mentions of Yasukuni for each of the five papers in the corpus

Newspaper	<i>Asahi Shimbun</i>	<i>Japan Times</i>	<i>China Daily</i>	<i>Chosun Ilbo</i>	<i>NY Times</i>
Polarized Sentence Count	195	343	354	180	87
Total Sentence Count	1522	2859	2362	724	441
Percentage Polarized	12.821	11.997	14.987	24.862	19.728

It is notable that the plurality of the polarized sentences comes from *China Daily*, perhaps indicating that the paper is more vocally critical of events concerning the shrine than the other papers. However, we also see that *Chosun Ilbo* is the most polarized of the papers, suggesting that *Chosun Ilbo* is also fairly vocal concerning the shrine. *Asahi Shimbun* and the *Japan Times*, while less polarized than the Korean and Chinese papers, also contain a significant number of references to Yasukuni, indicating that there is a significant amount of discussion of the shrine domestically. The *New York Times*, on the other hand, contains few references to the shrine which, while fairly polarized, suggests a comparative lack of interest in the topic. In addition, this definition of polarized language allows us to look at the frequency of polarized language in each source paper over time.

Another way in which the corpus can be used is to reinforce our knowledge of trends within the discussion evident from the articles using changes in term frequencies over time. This process requires three steps. Firstly, one must divide the overall corpus into areas of interest. Then, for each of those periods of interest, one creates a term frequency distribution over all of the sentences in that period. For example, if you had 100 sentences in a given period and the word “Yasukuni” appeared in 75 of them, then the term “Yasukuni” would have a frequency of

.75. Once those frequency distributions are created, one can then create a differential frequency distribution by, for each term in the two distributions, subtracting the frequency of the term in the first distribution from its frequency in the second, substituting 0 if the term does not appear in one of the distributions. The result of this process is a differential frequency distribution, giving us a sense of how the language varies between the two sets of sentences.

We will now move on to a historical perspective on the Yasukuni controversy, first examining the narrative of the site itself, and then discussing the early history of the controversy. We will return to using computational methods in Chapter 5, when I examine the development on the controversy from 2000 onwards.

### Chapter 3: Yasukuni Shrine as a Site of Memory

#### Understanding Yasukuni's Narrative

As part of understanding Yasukuni Shrine, it is critical to look at the place itself as a site of collective memory at which the Japanese people can reflect on past conflicts and in particular on World War II and understand its narrative in addition to the controversy surrounding it. In discussing the shrine as a site of historical memory, it is imperative to look both at the shrine and the monuments that comprise it and also to pay particular attention to the narrative slant of the Yūshūkan war museum. Collectively, these elements of Yasukuni Shrine create a narrative which casts Japan as both victim and liberator, fighting a whitewashed war against colonialism while eliding the darker elements of Japanese colonialism and wartime atrocities, setting the stage for the controversies surrounding the visits.

#### Yasukuni Shrine: The Place

Located in center of Tokyo, Yasukuni Shrine consists of a complex of memorials and related buildings around the main shrine. In front of the entrance to the shrine is a large statue of Ōmura Masujirō, who is considered the founder of the modern Japanese army, making explicit the connection between Yasukuni and the Japanese military (image in appendix.) The main shrine (the *honden*) is where the souls of those enshrined at Yasukuni reside and is generally inaccessible to the public. The main shrine is surrounded by a larger hall where visitors pay their respects. Near the main hall is the Repository for the Symbolic Registers of Divinities (Reijibo Hōanden, image in appendix), where the names of the spirits at Yasukuni are listed. The Repository was constructed in 1972 with a private donation from Emperor Hirohito.<sup>41</sup> The shrine precinct also contains several noteworthy smaller shrines to a variety of groups and

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<sup>41</sup> Breen, John, "Yasukuni Shrine: Ritual and Memory," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, <http://www.japanfocus.org/-john-breen/2060/article.html>, Accessed 10/8/15.

individuals. The Spirit-Pacifying Shrine (Chinreisha) was built in 1965 to “console the souls of everyone who died in wars fought anywhere in the world.”<sup>42</sup> As the map on the Yasukuni Shrine website shows (see Appendix), the Chinreisha is significantly smaller than the main shrine, and is in an out-of-the-way area of the Shrine precinct.

Another area of the shrine grounds contains a trio of memorials to individuals and groups affected by the war. Pictures of each of these can be found in the map in the Appendix. The first memorial, constructed in 1974, is dedicated to Japanese war widows (see appendix for image,) and is described on the Shrine’s official website as “a tribute to the many war widows who did such a fine job of raising their children in the face of incredible hardship and loneliness.”<sup>43</sup> This memorial is a good example of the Shrine’s emphasis on Japanese suffering, part of a larger narrative of victimization which downplays the aggressive nature of Japan’s role in WWII, drawing on the “hardship” and “loneliness” faced by Japan’s war widows. The statue depicts a widow in traditional Japanese clothing with three young children, all looking to their mother for support. Additionally, there are three separate memorials dedicated to horses, carrier pigeons, and dogs killed in service to the military (see appendix for image,) donated in 1958, 1982, and 1992 respectively, showing that even the animals suffered and contributed to the war effort.<sup>44</sup> The first is a life-size statue of a horse, the second a pigeon perched atop a globe, while the third depicts a German shepherd, each cast in bronze. Finally, there is a memorial to Dr. Radhabinod Pal (see appendix for image,) the Indian representative to the International Military Tribunal for

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<sup>42</sup> Yasukuni Shrine website, Chinreisha description, <http://www.yasukuni.or.jp/english/precinct/chinreisha.html>, Accessed 10/8/15.

<sup>43</sup> Yasukuni Shrine website, War widow statue description, <http://www.yasukuni.or.jp/english/precinct/statue1.html>, Accessed 10/8/15.

<sup>44</sup> Statues Honoring Horses, Carrier Pigeons, and Dogs killed in War Service Description, Yasukuni Shrine Office, *Guide of Yasukuni Shrine*.

the Far East (IMTFE), which was constructed in 2005.<sup>45</sup> The description of the memorial simply states that Pal was “the only judge who concluded that all the defendants were not guilty.”<sup>46</sup> The memorial to Pal serves to highlight a pan-Asian element of the shrine’s narrative, wherein Japan acted as the liberator of Asia from Western colonialism. The memorial uses Pal’s dissenting opinion as a means of absolving Japan of its responsibility for the war, reducing its repudiation of the Allied judgement. It omits, however, that Pal still asserted that Japan was responsible for the war, but that he found the evidence used at the trials insufficient to determine the guilt of the defendants, as noted by historian Nakajima Takeshi.<sup>47</sup>

### **The Yūshūkan War Museum**

One final building of note in the Shrine precinct is the Yushukan War Museum, constructed in 1882. Many in Japan and overseas have argued that it presents a distorted view of history, ignoring many negative aspects of Japanese colonial rule and brutal actions of the Japanese military during the war. In one 2014 *Japan Times* article, the museum is described as “stress[ing] national unity and Japanese historical continuity according to a model that highlights the official version to the detriment of differing points of view. The other side of the story is almost nowhere to be seen.”<sup>48</sup> As the author has not visited the museum in person, this analysis draws on the catalog of the museum published by the shrine. The narrative of World War II presented by the Yūshūkan is one that whitewashes and glorifies Japan’s wartime conduct, as evidenced by the museum’s discussion of the reasons for the war, presentation of the campaign

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<sup>45</sup> The IMTFE, also called the Tokyo Tribunal, were the trials at which many Japanese military and government personnel were tried for and convicted of war crimes. Similar trials were also held by the Dutch and Soviets.

<sup>46</sup> Monument of Dr. Pal Description, Yasukuni Shrine Office, *Guide of Yasukuni Shrine*.

<sup>47</sup> Nakajima Takeshi, “*The Tokyo Tribunal, Justice Pal and the Revisionist Distortion of History*,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal* Vol 9, Issue 44 No 3, October 31, 2011, Accessed: 3/8/16, <http://apjif.org/2011/9/44/Nakajima-Takeshi/3627/article.html>.

<sup>48</sup> Simone, Gianni “A Trip around Yushukan: Japan’s Font of Discord,” *Japan Times*, July 28, 2014, Accessed 10/8/2015, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2014/07/28/issues/trip-around-yushukan-japans-font-discord/>.



in northern China from 1937-39 including the Nanjing Massacre, the fate of the war criminals and the American Occupation following the war, and its description of postwar Asia.

### **The Causes of WWII in the Yasukuni Narrative**

The first topic the that Yasukuni narrative in the Yūshūkan uses to present a positive view of Japan's role in World War II is its discussion of the causes of the war, both in terms of the actual events leading to war between Japan and the United States and also the underlying philosophical justification for the war. In the Yūshūkan catalog's discussion of prewar Japan-US diplomatic relations, much attention is paid to aggressive actions by Western powers, such as the freezing of Japanese assets by the American, British, and Dutch governments and the oil embargo imposed upon Japan by the United States, while aggressive actions by the Japanese are downplayed. The oil embargo, in particular, is described as "threaten[ing] Japan's very survival."<sup>49</sup> This quote underscores the idea that Japan had been backed into a corner and was fighting for its survival, and thus in self-defense. Meanwhile, the July 1941 Japanese invasion of French Indochina is described as an "advance," which implies a more peaceful process than the invasion that actually occurred.<sup>50</sup> In another instance, the catalog's authors note that high ranking US officials, including President Roosevelt and the Secretaries of State, War, and the Navy met in late November of 1941 to explore ways to "maneuver them [Japan] into firing the first shot without allowing too much danger to ourselves."<sup>51</sup> This idea is also present in the advanced knowledge conspiracy theory, in which Roosevelt allowed the attack on Pearl Harbor to happen to give the US an excuse to go to war. It is, however, largely discredited by

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<sup>49</sup> Yasukuni Shrine, editor, *Record in Pictures of Yasukuni Jinja Yūshūkan*, (Japan Hicom Co. Ltd., Tokyo, 2009), 43.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 43.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 43.

mainstream historians.<sup>52</sup> The Yasukuni narrative holds that Japan may have been manipulated into starting the war by the United States, which removes blame for the conflict from Japan and places it instead on the US.

The underlying philosophical justification for the war, as described by Kobori Keiichiro in the final section of the catalog, further supports this view of Japan as an unwilling participant in the conflict, fighting as a means of self-defense. Kobori asserts that the conflict was, at its core, one between East Asian civilization, championed by Japan, and aggressive Western civilization, “Japan had no way but to use force as a leader of East Asian civilization to confront Western civilization, whose true nature was to expand throughout the earth, and to fight for self-existence and self-defense.”<sup>53</sup> Japan is being cast as the reluctant savior of East Asian civilization against the onslaught of Western imperialism and colonialism. Kobori further writes that Japan had expended “maximum effort” to avoid war with the United States and Great Britain, further underscoring the idea that the Japanese had no choice but to take up arms to defend their nation.<sup>54</sup> To further support this narrative, Kobori also writes that “facing the explosion of hostility from the Allied Powers, their economic blockade, and the declaration of war against Japan, we had to fight our way rather with resignation to our inevitable fate than with return demonstrated hostility [sic].”<sup>55</sup> Here we again see that Japan was, according to this narrative, forced into the conflict and thus fighting a defensive war.

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<sup>52</sup> Prange, Gordon et al. *Pearl Harbor: The Verdict of History*, (New York, Penguin 1991.)

<sup>53</sup> Yasukuni Shrine, 94.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 94.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 95.

## The “China Incident” and the Nanjing Massacre

The second main instance of whitewashing in the Yūshūkan narrative of the war is the so-called “China Incident,” beginning with the Marco Polo Bridge incident in July 1937 and including the later Nanjing Massacre. The catalog describes the Marco Polo Bridge incident as follows:

On July 7, 1937, while Japanese troops were conducting night maneuvers near Marco Polo Bridge on the outskirts of Beijing, shots were fired at them. Shots were also fired at the Japanese reinforcements who arrived the next morning. A battle was subsequently fought against the Chinese at Wanping. The Japanese government decided to prevent the hostilities from escalating and the local forces signed a truce with the Chinese on July 11.<sup>56</sup>

Details of what actually happened at the Marco Polo Bridge incident are not well known. We can be reasonably certain, however, that a Japanese soldier allegedly went missing around midnight on July 7, 1937.<sup>57</sup> In response to this, Japanese and Chinese officers agreed that a joint investigative group should be formed.<sup>58</sup> While this group was being organized, the Chinese commander ordered the defenders of Wanping to resist any attempt by the Japanese to enter the town. Following this order, the Japanese forces tried to breach the defenses of Wanping, but were repulsed by the Chinese.<sup>59</sup> The catalog portrays the Japanese as passive actors in the incident. Shots “were fired at them,” but no mention is made of them ever firing back until the battle at Wanping. The blame for the hostilities is placed squarely upon Chinese, not on Japanese forces. Additionally, the Japanese government is described as “deciding to prevent

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<sup>56</sup> Yasukuni Shrine, 40.

<sup>57</sup> James B Crowley, 1963, “A Reconsideration of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 22 (3), [Cambridge University Press, Association for Asian Studies]: 277–91, 81.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

hostilities from escalating,” placing the imperial government in the role of peacekeepers in this situation, with no mention of any peaceful overtures from the Chinese side.

The whitewashing continues in the catalog’s discussion of the Nanjing Massacre, which it calls the Nanjing Incident and describes in the following manner:

After the Japanese surrounded [Nanjing] in December 1937, Gen. Matsui Iwane distributed maps to his men with foreign settlements and the Safety Zone marked in red ink. Matsui told them that they were to maintain strict military disciplines and that anyone committing unlawful acts would be severely punished. [...] Chinese soldiers dressed in civilian clothes were severely prosecuted (sic).<sup>60</sup>

This description of the Nanjing Massacre takes an almost denialist stance towards its subject matter. No mention is made of the massacre that actually occurred there, in which Japanese soldiers looted Nanjing and killed and raped hundreds of thousands of its inhabitants over the course of several months following the capture of the city by forces under General Matsui Iwane on December 13, 1937.<sup>61</sup> Even the treatment of Chinese soldiers attempting to escape from the Japanese by posing as civilians is described using the vague phrase “severely prosecuted.” General Matsui Iwane is portrayed as successfully curtailing acts of excessive violence by his men, as if his orders prevented what would have otherwise been a massacre. Matsui, it should be noted, was sentenced to death by the IMTFE for his failure to prevent the Nanjing Massacre, specifically under Count 55, for “deliberately and recklessly disregard[ing] their legal duty to take adequate steps to secure the observance and prevent breaches of the laws of war,” as noted by historian Masahiro Yamamoto.<sup>62</sup> Finally, it is noteworthy that the section on the “China Incident” is distinct from the section of the catalog on World War II, titled “The Greater East

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<sup>60</sup> Yasukuni, 40.

<sup>61</sup> Mark Eykholt, “Chinese Historiography of the Massacre,” in *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography*, ed. Joshua Fogel, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 11.

<sup>62</sup> Masahiro Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, (Westport: Praeger, 2000), 200.

Asia War. In separating the China campaign from World War II as a whole, the authors of the catalog are separating the questions regarding Japan's conduct in that campaign, most critically the debate centered on the Nanjing massacre, from the broader question of Japan's conduct during the war as a whole. This, while not explicitly whitewashing, is representative of a larger attempt to portray Japan's wartime actions in a less negative light.

The discussion of the "China Incident" is accompanied by the stories of soldiers killed during the campaign, often in the form of notes written during the war which emphasize the humanity and heroism of the Japanese soldiers and are on display with the soldier's stories. In most cases, the deaths of the soldiers are only in the face of overwhelming odds, underscoring the martial abilities of the Japanese military. Major Kawasaki Sukehisa, who was killed in November 1937, wrote of his experiences in China that "contempt by Chinese people as well as by Chinese forces for the Japanese has become extremely intense, which makes me cry in anger and sadness not only as an officer but also a citizen," making no mention of the contempt for the Chinese felt by the Japanese as epitomized by the Nanjing Massacre.<sup>63</sup> In another instance, Colonel Higashi Sōji is described as a very pious commander who, upon the death of one of his subordinates, braved heavy enemy fire to reach the fallen soldier and apologize to the Emperor for letting his subordinate die.<sup>64</sup> Higashi died in August 1939 attacking an enemy position using only his sword despite overwhelming odds, and was memorialized by other soldiers in a marching tune, the lyrics and notes to which are presented alongside his description.<sup>65</sup> Major General Ōuchi Tsutomu is described as tirelessly leading his troops after devising the overarching strategy of the Nomonhan incident (a series of battles with Soviet forces in 1939),

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<sup>63</sup> Yasukuni Shrine, 41.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

and eventually dying at the hands of overwhelming enemy forces in July 1939. This description is accompanied by a note left behind by Ōuchi, the contents of which are not described in the catalogs.

### **The War's End in the Yasukuni Narrative**

Another topic that the Yūshūkan uses to glorify Japan's past is its description of the military at war's end and Occupation policies towards Japanese society. In describing the end of the war, the catalog notes that "the disarmament of Japanese military forces was carried out uneventfully, in a final show of typically strict adherence to military discipline. Their fighting spirit was as high as ever and indomitable. Not a single unit, however, defied the Imperial order, which was to be executed immediately and respectfully."<sup>66</sup> They were, in short, ideal soldiers. In another passage, the catalog notes that the occupying American forces were "impressed by the strict discipline and solidarity, as well as the spirit of self-sacrifice and patriotism of Japan's armed forces from the high command to the rank-and-file," which further highlights the positive qualities of Japan's armed forces.<sup>67</sup> However, the Occupation is portrayed as expunging those positive qualities from Japan where the authors assert that "the early American occupation policies focused on eradicating these qualities to ensure that Japan would never again pose a threat to the US."<sup>68</sup>

### **The Yasukuni Narrative and War Criminals**

The Yūshūkan narrative also glorifies Japan's conduct in the war through its discussion of the war criminals' fates after the end of the war, portraying them as ideal devotees of the

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<sup>66</sup> Yasukuni Shrine, 75.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 76.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 76.

Emperor and Japan. For example, the war criminals are referred to as “Showa Era Martyrs,” along with those who killed themselves to take responsibility for the war.<sup>69</sup> Describing the war criminals as martyrs implies that their deaths are somehow more significant than those of the rank-and-file soldiers, in essence placing them on a pedestal. It also implies that they went willingly to their deaths for their convictions, not their crimes. In one instance, Vice Admiral Daigo Tadashige, who was convicted of war crimes and executed by the Dutch, is described as “[accepting] the unjust responsibility placed on him by the Netherlands without a plea for mercy. Before his execution, he sang the national anthem and gave three cheers for the Emperor, which moved the enemy officers to tears.”<sup>70</sup> The description of Daigo’s fate is accompanied by his final letter, in which he writes “I do not feel particularly troubled [about the impending execution] and I am surprisingly my ordinary self,” highlighting his stoic acceptance of his death.<sup>71</sup> In another instance, General and War Minister Anami Korechika is described as having been in favor of “do-or-die resistance” and was opposed to surrender if the Imperial Institution (the “national polity”) was to be dismantled.<sup>72</sup> The catalog further notes that

The end of the war was decided at the direct request of the Emperor himself. General Anami signed the Imperial Rescript on Surrender and committed suicide through disembowelment in the early morning of August 15. His suicide as an act of accepting responsibility as war minister affected the subsequent ceasefire and allowed the organized disarmament of the entire Japanese army.<sup>73</sup>

From this quote, we see that not only does Anami, being a loyal subject of the Emperor, accept the Emperor’s decision to surrender, but also that he was willing to accept his responsibility for the war and that in doing so he eased the transition into the postwar era by enabling the

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<sup>69</sup> Yasukuni Shrine, 84.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 75.

disarmament of Japan's forces. Anami's description is accompanied by his bloodstained farewell note, which is not translated. Other notable artifacts include the farewell poem of General Tōjō, which reads "I will offer one branch of early plum blossoms to Yasukuni shrine" along with a shaver he used while in Sugamo Prison, which collectively serve to play up the humanity of the war criminals and deepen the impact of their sacrifice. Finally, a Rising Sun flag with the signatures of 25 war criminals which was given to one of the American guards at Sugamo Prison is also on display, bearing the description "Zurfley [the guard] held this flag for a long time, professing that Japanese accused [sic] were grand and faced their trial with dignity."<sup>74</sup> Vice Admiral Ōnishi Takijirō, who masterminded the *kamikaze* Special Attack Corps, wrote in his farewell note written shortly before committing suicide through disembowelment (*seppuku*) that "I express my deep gratitude to all the spirits of members of the Special Attack Corps who fought bravely." The catalog describes his suicide as "fulfilling his 'I will follow you later' promise which he had given to the young pilots he sent to their deaths in suicide attacks, and so took responsibility for them."<sup>75</sup>

### **The Effects of the War on Postwar Asia**

The final main topic manipulated in the *Yūshūkan* to portray Japan's role in the war in a positive light is the results of the war in former Japanese territories. In one instance, the authors of the catalog state that

When the war ended, the colonial powers returned to their colonies. But those whose desire for independence had been awakened were no longer the obedient servants of their colonizers. [...] The colonizers who had been defeated by Japan in the early stages of the Greater East Asia War could no longer use military

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<sup>74</sup> Yasukuni Shrine, 84.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 85.



might to suppress the ideals that Japan had advanced after the First World War but had subsequently been rejected-racial equality.<sup>76</sup>

In this passage, Japan is portrayed as having liberated Asia from colonialism. However, this passage conveniently omits that Japan imposed colonialism on many of their territories during the war, rather than liberating them from it. Additionally, it posits that Japan championed a policy of racial equality as part of its efforts to achieve hegemony in Asia. The “Japan as liberator” narrative is also present in the catalog’s afterword section, written by University of Tokyo historian Kobori Keiichiro, who notes that “despite the fact that the period of glorious victories [early in the war] was short, the impact of those victories on the western world and Asia was signified the [sic] first milestone for the movements for independence by many Asian peoples and the radical rejection of the colonial policies of the western countries.”<sup>77</sup> This statement, while true, also omits Japanese colonialism from its narrative.

In contrast to the idealized sentiments concerning racial equality and self-rule in Asia present in the Yūshūkan narrative, the Japanese plan for how their empire was to be administrated was rather different. The plan for administration was described in exacting detail in a 3,000 page secret 1943 government report entitled *An Investigation of Global Policy with the Yamato Race as Nucleus*.<sup>78</sup> Historian John Dower, in his book *War Without Mercy*, describes the plan outlined in the document: “it was the intention of the Japanese to establish permanent domination over all other races and peoples in Asia in accordance with their needs and as befitted their destiny as a superior race.”<sup>79</sup> This contrasts sharply with the idea that Japan sought to promote racial equality in its vision of the future. Furthermore, Dower also notes that “much

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<sup>76</sup> Yasukuni Shrine, 76.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 94-95.

<sup>78</sup> John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 263.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 264.

of the Ministry report was thus devoted to [...] outlining the blueprints for consolidating the inferior peoples of Asia into an autarkic bloc, with Japan in its proper place as their political, economic, and cultural head.”<sup>80</sup> After the war’s conclusion, Japan was to rule over and direct the actions of a set of client states, as was the case with Manchukuo and Korea during the war. As with the case of racial equality, this contrasts with narrative of the Yūshūkan.

The narrative of World War II presented by Yasukuni Shrine and the Yūshūkan war museum is a sanitized version of the war in which Japan is forced into the conflict to defend itself and Asia as a whole from encroaching Western colonialism. Japan’s wartime conduct is significantly whitewashed, omitting Japanese colonial policies and the Nanjing Massacre. In this narrative, the war criminals are portrayed as martyrs for the good of postwar Japan. Finally, both the reasons for and effects of the war are described in ways which support this overarching narrative of the war. Since the shrine creates a narrative that whitewashes Japan’s involvement in the war, it is easy to see why the visits are viewed as more than memorialization of the dead.

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<sup>80</sup> Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 265.

#### Chapter 4: The History of the Yasukuni Shrine Controversy: 1945-2000

The Yasukuni controversy rose to prominence on the international stage in the 1980s. Prior to that, it was a domestic controversy within Japan focused on how to memorialize the war dead, especially those convicted as war criminals at the IMTFE. However, as a result of the changing economic and political situation in East Asia, the controversy became a point of international contention following Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro's official 1985 visit to the shrine. Over time, the shrine becomes a symbol for struggles over how memorialize the war dead within Japan and begins to be linked with other issues in Japan's international relations.

Yasukuni Shrine was constructed 1869, shortly after the Meiji Restoration, to honor soldiers killed fighting for the Meiji government during the civil war.<sup>81</sup> At the time, Shinto shrines were under government control and considered sites for the performance of state rites.<sup>82</sup> Yasukuni, uniquely, was under joint direct control of the Army and Navy ministries. In 1879, the shrine was designated a "special state-funded shrine." Over time, the shrine's pantheon of *kami* expanded to include those killed both in civil wars (like the Saga and Satsuma rebellions) and in Japan's overseas conflicts in Taiwan, Korea, and China.

Since the end of World War II, the shrine has undergone significant changes in terms of legal status. Legally, Yasukuni Shrine lost state funding, which it had received since 1879, with the abolition of "state Shinto" by the Occupation authorities in 1946. Since then, the shrine has been considered an "independent juridical person" and has existed legally separate from the

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<sup>81</sup> Breen, John, "A Yasukuni Genealogy," in *Yasukuni Shrine and the Struggle for Japan's Past*, ed. John Breen, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 12.

<sup>82</sup> Fridell, Wilbur M., "The Establishment of Shrine Shinto in Meiji Japan," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 2 (1975): 143.

government.<sup>83</sup> Despite this separation, the government has played a role in the shrine's affairs, as will be seen. Funding for the shrine has been provided largely by donations from groups like the Yasukuni Worshippers' Society and the Japan Society for the War Bereaved. There were several attempts by the Society for the War Bereaved to "renationalize" the shrine and restore state funding for its rites in the 1960s and 70s, arguing that the state should fund the shrine to honor the spirits of Yasukuni, but none of the proposed bills were passed.

Until the 1970s, visits to the shrine by government officials (including even Emperor Hirohito himself) occurred fairly frequently with little controversy, as noted by historian Caroline Rose.<sup>84</sup> However, the increasing ambiguity of the government visits, the enshrinement of the Class A war criminals, and the timing of the visits began to raise public concern that the line between state and religion, clearly laid out in Article 20 of the Constitution, was being blurred. In 1975, for instance, Prime Minister Miki Takeo visited Yasukuni on August 15, the thirtieth anniversary of the war's end, the first Prime Minister to do so. Miki's visit was controversial for both its timing and its capacity, as noted in a series of articles in *Yomiuri Shimbun* discussing the history of the shrine, in which the author asserts that "the Japan Socialist Party and other opposition parties were critical of the timing of Miki's visit."<sup>85</sup> The author further notes that "Miki said he had visited the shrine as a private citizen as he did not use a government car, he offered cash to the shrine from his own pocket, did not write his title in the visitors book and was not accompanied by government officials."<sup>86</sup> However, the articles also note that "since [Miki's visit], questions have surrounded prime ministerial visits, focusing on in

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<sup>83</sup> Breen, 19.

<sup>84</sup> Rose, 26-7.

<sup>85</sup> Yomiuri Shimbun, "Yasukuni: Behind the Torii: From government-run shrine for war heroes to bone of contention," *The Asia Pacific Journal*, <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Yomiuri-Shimbun/1967/article.html>, Accessed: 11/8/15.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

[sic] what capacity they were made.”<sup>87</sup> This implies that, despite Miki’s assertions to the contrary, there were those who saw his visit in an ambiguous light, and not necessarily private. From this we can conclude that the domestic controversy over the nature of prime ministerial visits began in the 1970s following Miki’s visit, not immediately following the war and not coinciding with the enshrinement of the war criminals in 1978.

### **Critical Points in the Yasukuni Controversy**

We may now turn our attention to particular points of interest in the Shrine’s history since 1945 and examine them in more depth. Matsudaira’s 1978 decision to enshrine the fourteen Class A war criminals,<sup>88</sup> Prime Minister Nakasone’s 1985 official visit to the shrine, Prime Minister Koizumi’s series of official visits from 2001 to 2006, and Prime Minister Abe’s December 2013 visit to the shrine are all of particular interest as each event signifies a change in the relationship between the Shrine and the Japanese government, people, and international observers.

### **The Question of Enshrinement Prior to the 1970s**

The question of enshrining the war criminals was first raised even before the end of the American Occupation, although there are not many available sources on the topic, at least in English. Initially, one argument for enshrinement was to console the relatives of those executed as a result of the Trials. In one instance, Imamura Hisa, the wife of convicted Class B and C war criminal Vice Admiral Imamura Hitoshi, testified before the Committee on Judicial Affairs that “Because those who were punished for war crimes cannot currently be enshrined at Yasukuni,

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<sup>87</sup> Yomiuri Shimbun.

<sup>88</sup> At the Tokyo War Crimes Trial, the accused were divided into three categories A, B, and C. Class A was comprised of government officials who had committed “crimes against peace” in organizing Japan’s war effort.

the bereaved pass their days feeling shunned and forlorn and are truly to be pitied.”<sup>89</sup> From this quotation, it is evident that this early argument for enshrinement was situated in the allegedly unfair treatment of the relatives of the war criminals, and made by their families.

### **Enshrinement of the Class B and C War Criminals**

The 1946 Shinto Directive did not completely sever the links between the government and Yasukuni Shrine. Despite the new legal status of the shrine, the Japanese government was still involved in the process of enshrining the war criminals. The Ministry of Health and Welfare’s Repatriation Relief Bureau, which was responsible for matters regarding the care of the war dead and their families, was strongly in favor of enshrining all three classes of war criminals and established “administrative cooperation on enshrinement” in 1956, as noted by historian Yoshinobu Higurashi in his study of the enshrinement of the war criminals.<sup>90</sup> This “administrative cooperation” consisted of the Ministry collecting data necessary for enshrinement to send to Yasukuni Shrine so that Yasukuni officials could make a decision in each case. Yoshinobu further notes that the Bureau was largely staffed by former members of the military, which could explain the organization’s eagerness to enshrine the war criminals at Yasukuni.<sup>91</sup> With this administrative collaboration, the enshrinement of the Class C and B war criminals was completed by 1967. By 1971, however, the administrative cooperation was halted due to concerns that the ministry’s actions were unconstitutional.<sup>92</sup> Here again we see the continued politicization of the shrine, similar to the backlash to Miki’s 1975 visit discussed above, as public awareness of the issue increased.

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<sup>89</sup> Higurashi Yoshinobu, “Yasukuni and the Enshrinement of War Criminals,” <http://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/a02404/>

<sup>90</sup> Yoshinobu.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Yoshinobu.

## Enshrinement of the Class A War Criminals

The decision to enshrine the Class A war criminals was the result of changes in the identity and ideology of the leadership of Yasukuni Shrine, distancing it from Shinto orthodoxy and heightening its controversial nature. In the early postwar period, the Chief Priest of Yasukuni Shrine, Fujimaro Tsukuba, was of the belief that the spirits of Yasukuni acted as “harbingers of peace, standing hand in hand with all countries of the world.”<sup>93</sup> Among his actions during his 1946-77 tenure as Chief Priest was the establishment of the Chinreisha, which allowed the priests to venerate the foreign war dead as well as those of Japan. He further ensured that the priests did so every day, as they did for the spirits in the main shrine.<sup>94</sup> He was also opposed to the enshrinement of the Class A war criminals as he believed that the Class A war criminals bore responsibility for the war.<sup>95</sup> The question of enshrining the Class A war criminals was actually brought to Tsukuba several times prior to his death, first in February 1966.<sup>96</sup> As a consequence of Tsukuba’s beliefs, the Class A war criminals were not enshrined until Matsudaira Nagayoshi became Chief Priest in 1978.

After Tsukuba’s death in 1977, he was succeeded by Matsudaira, a former Imperial Navy officer. Under Matsudaira, the Class A war criminals were enshrined and a steel fence was constructed around the Chinreisha in 1978, restricting access to anyone but priests. Clearly, these acts were not in accordance with Tsukuba’s position regarding the enshrinement of war criminals and the multinational nature of Yasukuni’s function as a memorial to the war dead.

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<sup>93</sup> Breen, 9.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>95</sup> Xiaohua, Ma, “Yasukuni Controversy and Sino-Japanese Relations,” in *The United States Between China and Japan*, ed. Rose, Caroline and Teo, Victor: (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 109-110.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 110.

More interestingly, Matsudaira's actions were not in accordance with Shinto orthodoxy. The leading Shinto intellectual at the time was Ashizu Uzuhiko, one of the founders of the National Association of Shinto Shrines (*Jinja honcho*), who held beliefs similar to those of Tsukuba described above.<sup>97</sup> Since the end of World War II, Ashizu was staunchly opposed to any association between Yasukuni and "fascists, militarism, or aggression."<sup>98</sup> Following the enshrinement of the Class A war criminals, Ashizu wrote an article in which he asserted that Yasukuni was meant to venerate "those who had fallen on the orders of the state," and that convicted war criminals, as they had not died serving the state, did not merit inclusion.<sup>99</sup> Additionally, many Chief Priests since 1977 have been individuals with military backgrounds and no Shinto training.<sup>100</sup> From these facts, it seems evident that the shrine has become more closely linked with nationalism and the military over time since the late 1970s, prior to which Tsukuba and others sought to distance Yasukuni from those forces.

In order to understand why Matsudaira chose to enshrine the Class A war criminals, it is important to understand something of his background and beliefs. Matsudaira's father served as the last Minister of the Imperial Household.<sup>101</sup> His uncle, Vice Admiral Daigo Tadashige, was tried and executed by the Dutch for class B and C war crimes in 1945 and is honored at Yasukuni Shrine.<sup>102</sup> Matsudaira himself, prior to becoming Chief Priest of Yasukuni, served as an officer in the Imperial Japanese Navy during WWII and in the Self Defense Force after the war's end.<sup>103</sup> Given this background, it is unsurprising that Matsudaira viewed the enshrinement of the Class A war criminals favorably. Matsudaira's strikingly right-leaning historical beliefs

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<sup>97</sup> Breen, 10.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>101</sup> Yoshinobu.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.



are also extremely pertinent to his decision to enshrine the Class A war criminals. In one instance, he publicly stated in a 1992 article in the conservative monthly newspaper *Shokun!* that “if we do not deny the view that Japan is guilty [the archetypal ’Tokyo Trial view of history’], the Japanese national spirit can never be revived”<sup>104</sup> (addition mine). In another, he described his decision to enshrine the fourteen war criminals as “the great pride of his work in his life.”<sup>105</sup> From these statements, we can conclude that Matsudaira’s actions were politically motivated. His rationale for enshrinement is also strikingly different from that Imamura Hisa’s earlier argument. Instead, Matsudaira’s justification rests on the idea that, in order for Japan to develop a strong sense of nationalism, the Tokyo Trial view of history must be repudiated, which further underscores the increasingly politicized nature of Yasukuni Shrine.

### Reactions to the Enshrinement

Initial reactions to the enshrinement of the Class A war criminals were surprisingly minimal. However, the reactions we can find are largely negative as can be seen from domestic and foreign media sources and Emperor Hirohito’s response to the event.

The media response to enshrinement as evidenced by both domestic and foreign news sources was decidedly negative, seeing the enshrinement as a return to past militarism. For several months following the enshrinement, which took place in October of 1978, no media or government reports of the enshrinement were made.<sup>106</sup> This media silence was broken by *Asahi Shimbun* on April 19, 1979, when it published an article critical of the enshrinement.<sup>107</sup>

Following this, foreign media also took notice of the event. An April 22, 1979 *New York Times*

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<sup>104</sup> Xiaohua, 111.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Smith, Sheila, *Intimate Rivals: Japanese Domestic Politics and a Rising China*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 74.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

article on Prime Minister Ohira Masayoshi's visit to Yasukuni noted that his visit was "touched by controversy because last week the Japanese press reported that the priestly authorities last fall had secretly enshrined 14 'Class A' war criminals of the Pacific War."<sup>108</sup> From the *New York Times* article, we can also gain some insight into the Japanese media response to the enshrinement as well. The author notes that a *Yomiuri Shimbun* article editorial stated that "The attempts to turn back the clock fill us with anxiety" and that "the staff of the shrine and many other people might think it quite natural to enshrine these 14 men, but to us it looks like an ominous sign."<sup>109</sup> From these statements, we may conclude that the somewhat limited media response to enshrinement was generally negative.

The second main critic of enshrinement was Emperor Hirohito, whose displeasure at the enshrinement was largely unknown until recently. Hirohito's last visit to Yasukuni was in 1975, over a decade before his death.<sup>110</sup> Since 2007, it has been known that Hirohito ceased to visit the shrine as a direct result of Matsudaira's decision to enshrine the Class A War Criminals. Prior to his 1975 visit, his last visit was in October 1969.<sup>111</sup> As such, the fact that his visits stopped three years before the enshrinement is unimportant. The evidence for this is derived from a pair of documents written by those close to the Emperor. On April 28, 1988, Chief Steward Tomita Tomohiko wrote a memorandum after a conversation with Hirohito in which he quoted the Emperor as saying "Matsudaira had a strong wish for peace, but the child didn't know the

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<sup>108</sup> Scott-Stokes, Henry "Ohira Worships at Tokyo Shrine Where Tojo is Newly Honored," *The New York Times*, April 22, 1979.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> "Hirohito visits to Yasukuni stopped over war criminals," *Japan Times*, July 21, 2006, Accessed: 11/12/15, [http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2006/07/21/news/hirohito-visits-to-yasukuni-stopped-over-war-criminals/#.VKS\\_7narTIU](http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2006/07/21/news/hirohito-visits-to-yasukuni-stopped-over-war-criminals/#.VKS_7narTIU)

<sup>111</sup> Akihiko Tanaka, "Yasukuni Shrine and Japan's International Relations," in *East Asia's Haunted Present: Historical Memories and the Resurgence of Nationalism*, Tsuyoshi Hasegawa and Kazuhiko Togo, ed. (Westport: Praeger, 2008), 125.

parent's heart. That's why I have not visited the shrine since. This is my heart."<sup>112</sup> Note that, in this quote, "Matsudaira" refers to Nagayoshi's father who, as noted above, served as Minister of the Imperial Household. In making this statement, Hirohito is presenting Nagayoshi's actions as misguided and not in accordance with the desires of his father. Further evidence for Hirohito's reasoning can be found in the diary of Chamberlain Urabe Ryogo. In a July 2001 diary entry, Urabe writes "The immediate background to the Emperor terminating his Yasukuni visits was that he did not agree with the enshrinement of the Class A war criminals."<sup>113</sup> Both of these documents were only made public after Hirohito's death in 1989, with Tomita memo released in 2006 and the Urabe diary in 2007. From these documents, we may conclude that Hirohito's cessation of Yasukuni visits was primarily motivated by a dislike of the enshrinement of the Class A war criminals.

### **Japan's Changing Place in East Asia**

In order to understand the reasons for the criticism of Nakasone's 1985 visit, one must look at the broader context of Japanese international relations and how Japan's place in East Asia was in flux at the time. The 1980s corresponds with the waning of Cold War rhetoric. With this decline, as Hein and Selden argue, came a corresponding loss of American protection from international criticism, which had until that point allowed Japan to avoid international pressure regarding their memory of the war.<sup>114</sup>

Additionally, economic disparities between Japan and China may also have been a cause of the increased criticism. Historian Mark Eykholt noted in his study of the Chinese

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<sup>112</sup> "Hirohito visits to Yasukuni stopped over war criminals," *Japan Times*.

<sup>113</sup> Breen, *Yasukuni The War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past*, 4.

<sup>114</sup> Hein, Laura and Selden, Mark, *Censoring History: Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States*, (Armonk: East Gate, 2000), 11.

historiography of the Nanjing Massacre that a common phrase at anti-Japanese protests following Nakasone's visit was "Strongly oppose the second invasion" and noted that "the term second invasion referred to Japan's economic penetration of China through Chinese government invitations for more investment and technical assistance."<sup>115</sup> The first invasion was Japan's military invasion from 1937-45. He further writes that

As China opened to the world in the 1970s Chinese began to see just how far behind China's economy, science, and quality of life were behind those of the United States, Europe, and, most important, Japan. Japan had become a dominant economic power and some saw this as Japan's unjustified reward for half a century of militarism in the Pacific. The 1980s brought a new era of Japanese economic imperialism that was once again raiding China of its wealth for the benefit of Japan.<sup>116</sup>

Collectively, these quotes show that the economic disparity between China and Japan was a source of contention in Sino-Japanese relations and was likened to a new kind of imperialism. In such a diplomatic climate, it is not surprising that events like the Yasukuni visits that could be interpreted as whitewashing or glorifying Japan's imperialist past would be looked upon with greater scrutiny. Additionally, the 1982 textbook controversy, in which China followed by other nations who had been occupied by Japan during the war criticized alterations to Japanese textbooks which were perceived as whitewashing Japan's wartime conduct, dominated Japanese international politics at the time and contributed to the heightened scrutiny of the Japanese government in matters concerning the commemoration of World War II, like the Yasukuni visits.

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<sup>115</sup> Mark Eykholt, "Chinese Historiography of the Massacre," in *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography*, ed. Joshua Fogel, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 37.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

### Nakasone's Official Visit to Yasukuni

The August 15, 1985 visit to Yasukuni by Nakasone marked a dramatic shift in the nature of Prime Ministerial visits to Yasukuni. Unlike previous Prime Ministers like Ohira in 1979 and Miki in 1975, who avoided the issue of state-religion separation by asserting that they were visiting as private citizens, Nakasone was very open about the official nature of his visit. On his previous visits to Yasukuni in 1983 and 1984, Nakasone did not comment about the nature (official or private) of his visits, which provoked domestic controversy.<sup>117</sup> During the August 15 visit, in contrast, Nakasone very obviously made his visit to the shrine official. A *Los Angeles Times* article reporting on Nakasone's visit noted that Nakasone paid for his donation to the shrine with public funds.<sup>118</sup> Additionally, the article reported that "Nakasone told newsmen that he had signed the visitor book as 'Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone,' unlike previous visits, when he had signed as 'a man named Yasuhiro Nakasone who is prime minister'" which further underscoring the official nature of the visit. Finally, Nakasone was accompanied by many members of his Cabinet, who also signed their names with their titles.<sup>119</sup> In an alleged attempt to prevent criticism, Nakasone did not perform traditional Shinto rites during his visit, which he said was to "avoid engaging in religious activity."<sup>120</sup> Given the brazenly official nature of his visit, it is unsurprising that Nakasone's actions elicited harsh criticism not only from within Japan but also from its neighbors, as will be discussed later. As a result of the criticism he received, Nakasone did not continue to visit Yasukuni after this visit.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Rose, 29.

<sup>118</sup> Jameson, Sam, "Nakasone's Visit to Wartime Shrine Criticized," *Los Angeles Times*, August 16, 1985, Accessed: 11/14/15, [http://articles.latimes.com/1985-08-16/news/mn-3020\\_1\\_official-visits](http://articles.latimes.com/1985-08-16/news/mn-3020_1_official-visits).

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Jameson

<sup>121</sup> Haberman, Clyde, "Nakasone, Giving In, Will Shun Shrine," *New York Times*, October 10, 1985, Accessed: 1/15/16, <http://www.nytimes.com/1985/10/10/world/nakasone-giving-in-will-shun-shrine.html>.

Prior to his visit, Nakasone worked to establish that an official visit to the shrine by government official was constitutional despite the clear separation of state and religion. In late 1984, Nakasone set up a committee to investigate the possibility of official visits to Yasukuni, which concluded that official visits might be constitutional.<sup>122</sup> A second report published on August 9, 1985 by an independent group further legitimized Nakasone's visit to the shrine.<sup>123</sup>

### **Reasons for Nakasone's Visit**

Nakasone's reasons for visiting Yasukuni can be found in his background and political views. Nakasone served as an officer in the Imperial Japanese Navy during WWII.<sup>124</sup> More significantly, as noted in a recent *New York Times* article on the "comfort women" controversy, during his service in the Navy, he established a military brothel (a so-called "comfort station") to improve the morale of his troops while stationed in Borneo.<sup>125</sup> This gives Nakasone very concrete reasons to attempt to downplay the darker side of Japan's wartime actions, as accepting that those actions occurred would implicate him as a war criminal. Nakasone was also affected strongly by Japan's defeat. As noted by historian Robert Harvey, after returning to Japan in 1945, Nakasone wrote "I stood vacantly amid the ruins of Tokyo, after discarding my officer's short sword and removing the epaulettes of my uniform. As I looked around me I swore to resurrect my homeland from the ashes of defeat."<sup>126</sup> He began a career in politics after the war, becoming head of the Self Defense Force in 1970 and Prime Minister in 1987. He was strongly

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<sup>122</sup> Rose, 29.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Fackler, Martin, "Japan's Elder Statesman Is Silent No Longer," *New York Times*, January 29, 2010, Accessed: 11/15/15, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/30/world/asia/30nakasone.html>.

<sup>125</sup> Kotler, Mindy, "The Comfort Women and Japan's war on Truth," *New York Times*, November 14, 2014, Accessed 11/15/15, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/15/opinion/comfort-women-and-japans-war-on-truth.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/15/opinion/comfort-women-and-japans-war-on-truth.html?_r=0).

<sup>126</sup> Robert Harvey, *The Undeclared: The Rise, Fall and Rise of Greater Japan*, (London: Macmillan, 1994), 362.

right-wing from the very beginning of his career, writing a letter to MacArthur in 1951 that was scathingly critical of the Occupation.<sup>127</sup>

Politically, Nakasone is conservative, taking a nationalist stance on many issues. He began his political career believing that Japan, in its postwar remorse, was losing its traditional values.<sup>128</sup> In a 1985 report outlining his beliefs concerning the state of postwar Japan, Nakasone emphasized the importance of creating a strong national identity and criticized the masochistic view of Japan that resulted from the Tokyo Trial.<sup>129</sup> Since Nakasone believed that Japan needed to move past the Tokyo Trial view of history in order to strengthen itself and better participate in the modern world, his official visit to Yasukuni could be seen as a way of repudiating the Trial by showing that the government was willing to honor those who had fallen during WWII, war criminals included, and trying to put the issue to rest within Japan. In doing so, he also brought the issue to light outside of it.

### **Domestic Criticism**

Objections to Nakasone's visit from within Japan were made primarily on legal and religious grounds, based on the belief that Nakasone's visit was unconstitutional, as it crossed the line established between state and religion created by Article 20 of the Constitution. Rose notes that Nakasone's visit "resulted in a number of domestic lawsuits" related to the constitutionality of the Yasukuni visits and offerings.<sup>130</sup> In the first such case, the Sendai High Court ruled in 1991 ruled that the objective of Nakasone's visit had a "religious meaning" and clearly overstepped the bounds of the relation between the state and a religious organization, as noted by

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<sup>127</sup> Fackler.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Futamura, Madoka, *War Crimes Tribunals and Transitional Justice: The Tokyo Trial and the Nuremberg Legacy*, (Routledge: London, 2007), 82.

<sup>130</sup> Rose, 27.

Urs Zachmann in his study of religion and the Japanese constitution.<sup>131</sup> The Court ruled that Nakasone had acted unconstitutionally. In a second case in 1992, the Osaka High Court argued that the outward appearance of the visit must be considered a “religious activity” to which the people did not consent, making the visit unconstitutional.<sup>132</sup> The Fukuoka High Court ruled in 1993 that, while a single visit did not constitute official recognition of Yasukuni worship, successive visits would have that effect.<sup>133</sup> In a final case, as described in a *Los Angeles Times* article, a Buddhist monk and 23 other citizens of Ehime Prefecture sued the prefectural government for using taxpayer money to make donations to Yasukuni Shrine, as Nakasone did in his visit.<sup>134</sup> The case was eventually settled in 1997 with a Supreme Court decision that declared the use of taxpayer funds for offerings to religious shrines unconstitutional.<sup>135</sup> Collectively from these court decisions, we see that the domestic objections to Nakasone’s visit stemmed more from questions regarding freedom of religion and the relationship between state and religion described by the Constitution, rather than directly from issues regarding the shrine’s contentious view of Japan’s past. It may be, however, that the individuals who instigated these lawsuits were in fact objecting to the visits in historical terms, but sought a way of combating the visit without claiming that Nakasone was venerating the war criminals and Japan’s past militarism, which he could simply deny.

Less formal objections to the visit were also made outside of the legal arena by religious groups. Unlike the legal cases, these objections were concerned that the Yasukuni visits honored Japan’s militarist past. In one instance, as reported in a *Los Angeles Times* article, a

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<sup>131</sup> Urs Zachmann, “The Postwar Constitution and Religion,” in *Handbook of Contemporary Japanese Religions*, ed. Inken Prohl, (Boston: Brill, 2012), 236.

<sup>132</sup> Zachmann, 237.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, 237.

<sup>134</sup> Sonni Efron, “Offerings of Taxpayer Funds at Japanese Shrine Barred,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 1997, Accessed 1/11/16, [http://articles.latimes.com/1997-04-03/news/mn-44922\\_1\\_yasukuni-shrine](http://articles.latimes.com/1997-04-03/news/mn-44922_1_yasukuni-shrine).

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*.



spokesperson for Sokka Gakkai, Japan's largest Buddhist lay organization, stated concerning the Ehime case that "Yasukuni Shrine is not Arlington National Cemetery, it's a religious site for followers of the Shinto faith. Japanese taxpayers shouldn't be forced to provide funds for the preferential treatment of religious groups the government favors."<sup>136</sup> From this comment, we see that some in Japan objected to the use of government funds as Yasukuni donations as that constituted a breach of the division between state and religion, further highlighting the issue evident from the court cases discussed above. In the same article, however, the author also cites Rev. Moriyama Tsutomu, a minister of the United Church of Christ, who stated that "Even if I were not a Christian, I would feel that Yasukuni is the backbone of the militaristic emperor worship that suppressed the Asian peoples."<sup>137</sup> That comment is noteworthy as it overtly highlights Yasukuni's connections with Japanese imperialism. Like the statements made in Japanese news media following Prime Minister Ohira's visit six years prior, this statement draws on that connection as the basis for objection to the visit. Unlike Ohira's 1979 visit, however, Nakasone's visit was given significantly more attention and resulted in the legal battles and religious objections discussed above, which perhaps shows the increasing importance of the Yasukuni issue in Japanese society as a whole perhaps as a result of the sharply increased international attention given to the visit.

### **International Criticism**

Nakasone's Yasukuni visit was noticed by many outside Japan, principally in China and the United States. As one would expect, the responses from China and the United States were vastly dissimilar. The Chinese response was characterized by an objection to the revisionism

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<sup>136</sup> Efron

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

inherent in official visit and the official veneration of the war criminals. In the United States, the response was significantly less polarized and seemed less like a commentary on the visit and more like a description of events as they unfolded, as if the visit was something it was important to be aware of, but not concerning in and of itself.

Criticism of Nakasone's visit from China was focused on the issue of historical memory exemplified by the shrine: in officially visiting Yasukuni and honoring those who are enshrined therein, Nakasone was honoring the war criminals at whose direction Japan waged an aggressive war of conquest and belittling the suffering of those outside of Japan resulting from the war. The Chinese response to Nakasone's Yasukuni visit condemned the official veneration of the war criminals as offensive to those who suffered fighting against Japan, as is evident from government and media responses to Nakasone's visit. Even prior to Nakasone visiting the shrine, Chinese government officials were wary of the prospect, as evidenced by a Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement shortly before the fortieth anniversary that urged the Japanese government to "handle the matter with prudence."<sup>138</sup>

Following Nakasone's visit, the response unsurprisingly became more critical. Rose notes that, at one such anniversary commemoration, the Chinese statement specifically referred to the official Yasukuni visit by stating that the shrine is "where, among others, the chief Japanese war criminals [are] venerated." In this quote, a clear link is made between the shrine and the war criminals and it reveals that Chinese objections to the visit were in part based on presence of the war criminals. The speech continued with the assertion that the visit "hurt the feelings of the Chinese people."<sup>139</sup> From the use of "the Chinese people" as opposed to "the

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<sup>138</sup> Rose, 30.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

Chinese government,” we see that the Chinese government is asserting that it speaks for China as a whole in stating that Nakasone’s visit was viewed unfavorably and will thus harm relations between the two countries. Unlike previous visits, the Chinese government (and through them China as a whole) has taken notice and will not accept Japan’s lack of contrition. Additionally, there may have been a direct complaint from the Chinese government to the Japanese government concerning Nakasone’s visit. Rose asserts that no such complaint was made,<sup>140</sup> but historian Takahashi Tetsuya writes that such a complaint was made and that “the criticism of the Chinese [...] was that a Japanese prime minister visiting a shrine in which Class A war criminals were worshipped raised doubts about the Japanese government’s recognition of war responsibility.”<sup>141</sup> Here we see a reiteration of the objections by the Chinese government discussed above, which further demonstrates that their objection to the visit was made primarily due to concerns over the Japanese government’s apparent lack of contrition in persisting with the official visit to Yasukuni.

Criticism of Nakasone’s visit from China is also evident in the media response to the visit. An August 25, 1985 *New York Times* article reporting on the criticism of Nakasone by the Chinese media stated that China issued “unusually sharp” criticism of Japan through the *New China News Agency*.<sup>142</sup> The statement, as described in the article, criticized Nakasone for “pander[ing] to and [...] actually embolden[ing] those in Japan who have always wanted to deny the aggressive nature of the war and to reverse the verdict on Japanese militarism long condemned to the dustbin of history.”<sup>143</sup> The criticism is that Nakasone’s visit strengthened

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<sup>140</sup> Rose, 29.

<sup>141</sup> Takahashi, 110.

<sup>142</sup> John Burns, “China Criticizes Japan on Visit to War Shrine,” *New York Times*, August 25, 1985, Accessed: 11/14/16, <http://www.nytimes.com/1985/08/25/world/china-criticizes-japan-on-visit-to-war-shrine.html>.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

historical revisionism within Japan and prevented the Japanese government from recognizing their responsibility. This concern is further evident in the statement when the authors write that

The Chinese people and Government have cherished the hope that the Japanese Government will bow to the historical facts and take an unequivocal stand on that appalling war of aggression and on where the guilt and responsibility lie. To their deepest disappointment and regret, the Japanese Government decided, for the first time since the end of the war, to pay an official visit to the shrine.<sup>144</sup>

We see that the official visit to Yasukuni is juxtaposed with the Japanese government accepting “historical facts” and recognizing “where guilt and responsibility lie.” In doing so, the authors portray the official Yasukuni visit as an impediment to progress and harmful to relations, as it elicited the “disappointment and regret” of the Chinese people and government. The statement continued with the assertion that the visit “impress[ed] one with the intention to obscure more or less the wicked nature of the war of aggression unleashed by the Japanese militarists - an intention that makes a mockery of the sentiments and aspirations of the Chinese and other Asian peoples.”<sup>145</sup> Here, we see that the visit is not only hurtful to the Chinese people, but also to others who suffered as a result of Japan’s actions in World War II. Additionally, we also see that the visit was seen as an attempt to promote historical revisionism in Japan by downplaying the aggressive nature of the war.

The American response to Nakasone’s visit, as can be seen from news articles discussing the visit and its aftermath, could be characterized as that of an interested outside observer; not particularly invested in the debate one way or another, but nonetheless seeing the issue as critical to understanding modern East Asian politics. In an October 10, 1985 *New York Times* article describing Nakasone’s decision not to visit the shrine in the future, the author writes that

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<sup>144</sup> Burns.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

The controversy, although rooted wholly in symbolism, demonstrates the extent to which Japan's wartime aggression shadows its latter-day foreign relations. Other Asian countries continue to look warily for possible signs of revived Japanese militarism, and Tokyo reacts with open edginess every time the issue arises.<sup>146</sup>

This section is the only part of a reasonably long article that mentions Japanese militarism, and it does so in a way that couches it in terms of how it affects Japanese international relations, rather than in a way that could be construed as critical. The article then discusses the domestic context of the visit and ends by noting that the issue will likely affect talks held by Foreign Minister Abe Shintaro and Chinese leaders in the near future. A second *New York Times* article describing the Chinese criticism of the visit consists almost entirely of direct quotation from and paraphrasing of the *New China News Agency* statement, aside from a brief comparison between the Yasukuni visit and the 1982 textbook uproar.<sup>147</sup> A *Los Angeles Times* article describing Nakasone's visit did little more than describe why, unlike past visits, the visit was official, then launched into a description of the domestic and Chinese response to the visit.<sup>148</sup> Nowhere did the author make a statement that could be viewed as taking a stance, either positively or negatively, on Nakasone's visit. As these articles make clear, the American viewpoint on Nakasone's visit was, in contrast to the Chinese response, that of an interested but unconcerned outside observer.

### **1985-2001: From Nakasone to Koizumi**

Following the domestic and international furor in the wake of Nakasone's official 1985 visit to Yasukuni, official visits to the shrine decreased in frequency. Prime Ministers continued to visit the shrine, but did so infrequently. In 1992, Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi visited the shrine in secret, which was made public by *Yomiuri Shimbun* in 1996 and did not receive any

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<sup>146</sup> Haberman.

<sup>147</sup> Burns.

<sup>148</sup> Jameson.

significant backlash.<sup>149</sup> Also in 1996, Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro visited the shrine on July 29. Like Nakasone's earlier visit, it was met with criticism both abroad and within Japan. A *New York Times* article reporting on Hashimoto's visit noted that both the Chinese and Korean governments criticized the visit.<sup>150</sup> A Chinese spokesperson on "state-run television" is reported as saying "the way Prime Minister Hashimoto worshipped hurt the feelings of all the people from every country, including China, which suffered under the hands of Japanese militarists," echoing complaints in the wake of Nakasone's visit.<sup>151</sup> The South Korean statement did not directly criticize Hashimoto.<sup>152</sup> As a result of international criticism, like Nakasone, Hashimoto did not visit the shrine again after the international outcry during his prime ministerial tenure.<sup>153</sup>

Within Japan, the response was less vocal than the response to Nakasone's visit. Takemitsu Ogawa, leader of "a pacifist group of war victims' families [the group is not named]," who commented that "we strongly protest this 'official visit' by Prime Minister Hashimoto, which glorifies war and praises the war dead as 'heroic spirits.'"<sup>154</sup> Kunihiro Masao, former foreign affairs advisor to Prime Minister Miki, lamented the lack of vocal response within Japan in an article for the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* entitled "The Decline and Fall of Pacifism."<sup>155</sup> In the article, he wrote that he was "both alarmed and saddened when Hashimoto's visit to the shrine failed to generate the kind of political, media, and street protests that would have been the case even a few years ago."<sup>156</sup> The cause of this, Kunihiro asserted, was that "the traditional

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<sup>149</sup> Hankwon Kim, *Cultural and State Nationalism: South Korean and Japanese Relations with China*, (2007, ProQuest, Ann Arbor), 195-6.

<sup>150</sup> Associated Press, "Japan Premier Visits Shrine to War Dead," *New York Times*, July 30, 1996, Accessed 1/25/16, <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/07/30/world/japan-premier-visits-shrine-to-war-dead.html>.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Masao Kunihiro, "The Decline and Fall of Pacifism," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, January 1997, 36.

<sup>154</sup> Associated Press "Japan Premier Visits Shrine to War Dead."

<sup>155</sup> Kunihiro, 35.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, 36.

opposition of labor leaders to anything even remotely reeking of revived militarism is gone with the wind” and that “the dominant Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is increasingly unsympathetic to pacifist notions.”<sup>157</sup>

As we have seen, the Yasukuni issue has evolved since the end of World War II from a domestic issue discussed only within Japan into a symbol of Japan’s contested war memory by the time of Nakasone’s visit. The process of Yasukuni becoming a scapegoat for other issues in Japan’s international relations began during this period, becoming more overt from 2000 onwards. In the next chapter, we will investigate how the Yasukuni controversy became subsumed into the broader context of Japan’s diplomatic relations and politics from 2000 onwards.

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<sup>157</sup> Kunihiro, 36.

## **Chapter 5: The History of the Yasukuni Shrine Controversy since 2000**

The Yasukuni controversy from 2000 onwards is dominated by the visits to the shrine by Prime Ministers Koizumi and Abe. As with Nakasone's earlier visit, the visits elicited significant criticism both within Japan and by its Asian neighbors. As with the responses to Nakasone's visit in 1985, the content of the criticism remained the same throughout the period, its context shifts in response to political and diplomatic developments in each point in time, with the shrine acting as a symbol of the contested memory of World War II and Japan's continued unrepentance for its wartime behavior.

To study the Yasukuni controversy from 2000 onwards, my analysis draws on the computational methods discussed in Chapter 2, in addition to close reading of both the newspaper articles in the corpus and other sources. Data was first used to identify time periods of interest to further explore using historical methods. A graph of polarized language frequency over time, as in Figure 4, provides insight into the development of the controversy since 2000. To briefly recap Chapter 2 where this method was first described, this chart relies on the use of sentiment analysis to score all of the sentences mentioning Yasukuni Shrine from 2000-2015 in each of the papers. Then, we can define a "polarized sentence" as any sentence containing five or more sentiment bearing terms. Using this definition, we can look at the frequency on a per-month basis of polarized sentences in each of the papers, giving the graph in Figure 4.



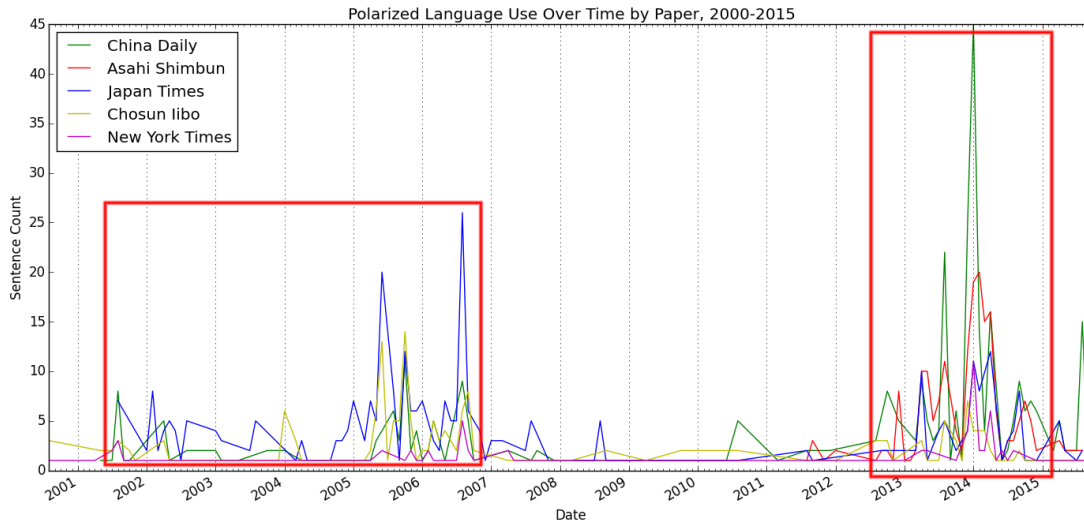


Figure 4. Polarized language frequency from 2000-2015 for each of the five papers in the corpus

From this graph, two periods of interest become apparent, as evidenced by the spikes in the graph. The first, from 2001 to 2006, coincides with Koizumi's prime ministerial tenure during which he visited Yasukuni six times, including one visit on the anniversary of the war's end on 15 August. The second, from 2013 to 2015, is Abe Shinzō's second term as Prime Minister during which Yasukuni again became a point of tension both in Japan and in its relations with its neighbors. There is also a very prominent spike in the use of polarized language in December 2013, which perhaps indicates that Abe's visit at that time is worth investigating in a more detailed manner. Interestingly, there is also an uptick in the use of polarized language in 2007, when Abe (then Prime Minister) did not visit the shrine. At that particular point, we also see that the majority of the discussion is in the *Japan Times*, indicating that the events attracted little international attention as the articles in the *Japan Times* were written in Japan and published in a Japanese paper, rather than by foreign sources. Examination of the articles from that point revealed that they are largely concerned with the right-wing backlash over a lack of official visits.

From this analysis, it is evident that the use of polarized language (as in the previously mentioned periods) can be used as a proxy to locate important events in the controversy. Were I to perform similar analysis to study a different topic, this technique would be a useful guide to find interesting points of time to study in more detail, as done here with Koizumi's and Abe's visits.

### **The Broader Context of Koizumi's Visits**

There are several noteworthy events and trends which perhaps explain why Koizumi's visits were responded to so critically by Japan's neighbors at the time. The increase in criticism from Korea (which, it should be recalled, did not criticize Nakasone's visit in 1985) is likely due to the fact that, following the 1991 testimony of former "comfort woman" Kim Hak-sun, the Korean government became significantly more wary of issues concerning Japan's war memories. More immediately, one of Koizumi's first acts as Prime Minister was to approve the use of the highly revisionist *New History Textbook (Atarashii Rekishi Kyokasho)*.<sup>158</sup> The approval of the textbook elicited an appeal by an international group of scholars which asserted, among other more specific objections, that the textbook "negates both the truth about Japan's record in colonialism and war and the values that will contribute to a just and peaceful Pacific and world community."<sup>159</sup> Furthermore, a pair of territorial disputes between (one between Japan and Korea over the Takeshima or Dokdo islands and another between Japan and China over the Senkaku or Daoyu islands) may have also contributed to heightened animosity between Japan and its neighbors, leading to more of an outcry over the Yasukuni issue.

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<sup>158</sup> Susan Carpenter, *Japan Inc. on the Brink: Institutional Corruption and Agency Failure*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 233.

<sup>159</sup> *International Scholars' Appeal Concerning the 2002-Edition Japanese History Textbooks*, July 10, 2002, Accessed: 2/1/16, <http://space.geocities.jp/japanwarres/center/english/appeal1.htm>.

As noted previously, from 2001 to 2006, Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro annually visited Yasukuni shrine. During this period, relations between Japan and its mainland neighbors, which could be considered cold at the best of times, took a turn for the worse. Koizumi's visits were harshly criticized by foreign media largely over issues of historical memory and were accompanied by a sharp downturn in Japan's diplomatic relations with China and Korea. Within Japan, in contrast, Koizumi's regular visits were met with criticism both by the media and other government officials as well as support from right-wing nationalist intellectuals.

Koizumi is a very right-wing politician, notable for his efforts to expand the role of Japan's Self-Defense Force (SDF) and to revise Article 9 (the "no-war clause") of the constitution, allowing Japan's SDF to be deployed abroad. In 2003, Koizumi successfully passed legislation that allowed the SDF to operate in support of US forces in Iraq (although, it should be noted, not in combat roles).<sup>160</sup> This was the first time since 1945 that Japanese forces had operated outside of a UN peacekeeping mandate. Additionally, under his auspices, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) began work on a revised version of Article 9, which, as noted in a *Japan Times* article on the subject, would allow Japan to "exercise the right to collective defense, and possibly resort to force, in three separate basic laws pertaining to security, international cooperation and emergencies."<sup>161</sup>

Koizumi's visits were motivated by political concerns and a desire to commemorate Japan's war dead. In April of 2001 during the LDP presidential election, Koizumi pledged that he would visit Yasukuni on August 15 if he were elected.<sup>162</sup> Of his six visits to Yasukuni as

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<sup>160</sup> "End of an era as Japan enters Iraq," *The Guardian*, July 25, 2003, Accessed: 1/27/16, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jul/26/iraq.japan>.

<sup>161</sup> Kajimoto Tetsushi, "LDP work on Article 9 gets Koizumi nod," *Japan Times*, October 19, 2005, Accessed: 1/27/16, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2005/10/19/national/ldp-work-on-article-9-gets-koizumi-nod/>.

<sup>162</sup> Rose, 33.

Prime Minister, only the final one was on August 15. Prior to the 2001 election, Koizumi is only known to have visited the shrine twice: once in 1989 and again in 1997.<sup>163</sup> Political scientist Lam Peng Er notes that Koizumi's Yasukuni visits represent him taking an assertive stance towards Korea and China.<sup>164</sup> An August 14, 2001 editorial for the *Japan Times* noted that Koizumi's visits were a means of "meeting the wishes of Shinto religious organizations — which are a power base for the Liberal Democratic Party."<sup>165</sup>

Koizumi himself denied the allegations that he was using the visits as a means of gaining political support. His visits, Koizumi asserted, instead functioned as a means of commemorating the war dead to whom Japan owes its current prosperity. In a statement on August 13, 2001, the day of his first visit to the Shrine as Prime Minister, which had been initially planned for the 15th, Koizumi stated that

Every year, before the souls of those who lost their lives in the battlefield while believing in the future of Japan in those difficult days, I have recalled that the present peace and prosperity of Japan are founded on the ultimate sacrifices they made, and renewed my vow for peace.<sup>166</sup>

In the same statement, Koizumi also asserted that "Sincerely facing these deeply regrettable historical facts as they are, here I offer my feelings of profound remorse and sincere mourning to all the victims of the war."<sup>167</sup> In this statement, Koizumi is being deliberately ambiguous. It's not entirely clear exactly what he feels remorseful for, whether it is Japan's actions towards

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<sup>163</sup> Akihiko Tanaka, "Yasukuni Shrine and Japan's International Relations," in *East Asia's Haunted Present: Historical Memories and the Resurgence of Nationalism*, Tsuyoshi Hasegawa and Kazuhiko Togo, ed. (Westport: Praeger, 2008), 134.

<sup>164</sup> Peng Er Lam, "Japan's Deteriorating Ties with China: The Koizumi Factor," *China: An International Journal* 3, (2005), 275.

<sup>165</sup> "Mr. Koizumi's poor choice," *Japan Times*, August 14, 2001, Accessed: 1/29/16, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2001/08/14/editorials/mr-koizumis-poor-choice/>.

<sup>166</sup> Junichiro Koizumi, "Statement of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi," August 13, 2001, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/koizumi/state0108.html>.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

others, or that so many people (Japanese included) had to die in the conflict, or if he simply regrets Japan's defeat. On August 15, 2005, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II, Koizumi stated "Sincerely facing these facts of history, I once again express my feelings of deep remorse and heartfelt apology, and also express the feelings of mourning for all victims, both at home and abroad, in the war," echoing many of the sentiments from his 2001 statement.<sup>168</sup>

However, his words and his actions present two very different pictures of the Japanese government's willingness to atone for past wrongs. As will be seen, international criticism of Koizumi's visits was largely focused on the issue of Japan's war memory, despite Koizumi's attempts to defuse the issue by asserting his (and Japan's) commitment to peace.

### **Domestic Response**

Unlike prior visits by Prime Ministers like Nakasone and Miki, the response to which focused almost exclusively on the constitutionality and legality of the visits, the domestic criticism of Koizumi's visits was also concerned with the damage done to Japan's international relations, in addition to the issues of constitutionality. The groups who objected to the visits also differed, with the usual critics joined by the members of the Japanese political elite, businesspeople, and South Korea. The word cloud of frequently-used adjectives in sentences mentioning Yasukuni from the *Japan Times* supports this narrative of events, as can be seen in Figure 5 below:

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<sup>168</sup> Junichiro Koizumi, "Statement of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi," August 15, 2005, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/announce/2005/8/0815.html>.



Figure 5. Frequently-used adjectives from sentences mentioning Yasukuni in the *Japan Times* from 2001-06

In this word cloud, we see evidence of both the discussion of the historical aspects of the shrine, as evidenced by terms “colonial” and “historical,” (colored blue for clarity) and the discussion of the legality of the visits using terms like “constitutional” and “religious” (colored red for clarity.) Alongside these terms, however, we also see terms dealing with Japan’s international relations like “Sino-Japanese,” “bilateral,” and “foreign.” This indicates that some discussion of the international response to the visits did occur within Japan and that it impacted the media response to the visits.

Like Nakasone’s 1985 visit, Koizumi’s visits precipitated a number of court cases concerning the constitutionality of his actions. A November 2, 2001 *Japan Times* article written shortly after Koizumi’s August 13 Yasukuni visit noted that “about 640 people filed a suit with the Osaka District Court, 65 others with the district court in Matsuyama, Ehime Prefecture, and 211 more with a court in Fukuoka. Advocacy groups in Tokyo and Chiba are also preparing to sue the government over the Yasukuni controversy.”<sup>169</sup> It should be noted that the Ehime, Fukuoka, and Osaka courts also dealt with constitutionality cases after Nakasone’s visit. The lawsuits claim that Koizumi’s visit was unconstitutional and those in Osaka, Ehime, and

<sup>169</sup> “‘Unconstitutional’ shrine visit provokes barrage of lawsuits,” *Japan Times*, November 2, 2001, Accessed: 1/28/16, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2001/11/02/national/unconstitutional-shrine-visit-provokes-barrage-of-lawsuits/>.

Fukuoka each demanded money ranging from ¥10,000 to ¥100,000 (\$85 to \$850 at current exchange rates) as compensation for “psychological pain” suffered as a result of the visits.<sup>170</sup>

The article also notes that the plaintiffs “include kin of Japanese killed during World War II, Buddhist and Christian followers, and South Koreans whose relatives served in the Japanese military during the war.”<sup>171</sup> In addition to the usual critics of Yasukuni visits, who objected on religious grounds, we also see that South Koreans, who prior to this point had not been involved in the Yasukuni controversy, became more involved in it. We will come back to this when we discuss the international response to Koizumi’s visits below.

As with the court cases following Nakasone’s visit, it may be that the cases were used as a proxy to attempt to address the historical issues surrounding Yasukuni Shrine in a more concrete manner than objections that Koizumi could simply deny. In one instance, Akira Kobayashi, a Christian plaintiff in the Chiba case whose father had been captured by the Soviets during the war and died in captivity, argued that “I would like to reject the state unilaterally glorifying the death [of my father] and [the Shinto shrine] honoring him as it pleases. [additions in original].”<sup>172</sup> Kobayashi, at least, objected to the historical use to which his father’s memory had been put in addition to his religious objections.

The eventual court rulings in response to the Koizumi visits serve to highlight the controversial nature of Yasukuni Shrine in Japanese society. The Fukuoka court, for example, found the visits unconstitutional.<sup>173</sup> The Osaka High Court ruled that Koizumi’s visits were unconstitutional but did not grant reparations to the plaintiffs, as noted in a *Japan Times*

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<sup>170</sup> “‘Unconstitutional’ shrine visit provokes barrage of lawsuits,” *Japan Times*.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> “Court rejects Yasukuni lawsuit.” *Japan Times*, November 26, 2004, Accessed: 1/28/16, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2004/11/26/national/court-rejects-yasukuni-lawsuit/>.

<sup>173</sup> “Koizumi’s Yasukuni trips are ruled unconstitutional,” *Japan Times*, October 1, 2005, Accessed: 1/28/16, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2005/10/01/national/koizumis-yasukuni-trips-are-ruled-unconstitutional/>.

article.<sup>174</sup> The Tokyo court, in contrast, ruled that Koizumi's visits did not violate the Constitution.<sup>175</sup> The Chiba court did not comment on the constitutionality of the visit.<sup>176</sup> The courts also differed on the official status of the visit, with the Tokyo court asserting that the visits was private while the Osaka court held that the visit was official.<sup>177</sup> Perhaps most interestingly, the Supreme Court rejected a case against Koizumi regarding his visits and declined to rule on the constitutionality of the visits.<sup>178</sup>

Koizumi's visits also received criticism from the Japanese political elite. As noted in a 2005 *Los Angeles Times* article, former Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro (who, it should be recalled, abandoned visiting Yasukuni in response to international criticism), publicly stated that Koizumi needed to "think how his conduct will affect the national interest" and that "it would be an admirable political decision to stop visiting the shrine."<sup>179</sup> According to a November 2005 *Japan Times* article, Nakasone further stated that the Yasukuni issue was central to Japan's declining relations with China and South Korea, noting that "the Yasukuni issue is one reason" that Japan has no reciprocal visit of leaders with China and South Korea.<sup>180</sup> Secondly, in June 2005, as noted in a *Japan Times* article, Speaker of the Japanese House of Representatives Yohei Kono delivered a statement to Koizumi on behalf of former Prime Ministers Mori, Miyazawa, Hashimoto, and Murayama which urged him to "decide [whether to visit the shrine] with utmost

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<sup>174</sup> "Koizumi's Yasukuni trips are ruled unconstitutional," *Japan Times*.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> "Court rejects Yasukuni lawsuit," *Japan Times*, November 26, 2004

<sup>177</sup> "Koizumi's Yasukuni trips are ruled unconstitutional," *Japan Times*, October 1, 2005.

<sup>178</sup> Mari Yamaguchi, "Japan Supreme Court Rejects War Shrine," *The Washington Post*, June 23, 2006, Accessed 2/3/16. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/23/AR2006062300242.html>.

<sup>179</sup> Bruce Wallis, "War Shrine Controversy Growing," *Los Angeles Times*, June 6, 2005, Accessed: 1/29/16, <http://articles.latimes.com/2005/jun/06/world/fg-koizumi6>.

<sup>180</sup> Tetsushi Kajimoto, "Nakasone hits Koizumi populism, Yasukuni visits," *Japan Times*, November 23, 2005, Accessed: 1/29/16, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2005/11/23/national/nakasone-hits-koizumi-populism-yasukuni-visits/>.



caution. [addition in original].”<sup>181</sup> The statement, the article notes, was formulated at a meeting Kono organized earlier that month to discuss “to discuss the shrine visits and their impact on ties with China and South Korea.”<sup>182</sup> As that meeting’s content makes evident, Koizumi’s Yasukuni visits became an important topic within the government over the course of his premiership.

Koizumi’s visits were also criticized by his political opponents. According to a *Japan Times* article, the New Komeito party leader Kanzaki Takenori stated in 2004 that “Tokyo-Beijing ties are being obstructed by Koizumi’s visits to the Shinto shrine, which honors the nation’s war dead as well as convicted war criminals and is seen by Asian neighbors as a symbol of Japan’s past militarism,” further highlighting not only the importance of the shrine in international relations but also the historical element of the controversy.<sup>183</sup> Japanese Communist Party Chair Shii Kazuo, in a June 2005 statement, noted the incompatibility of Yasukuni’s “war of self-defense” narrative with the government’s remorseful stance, and noted that “If the prime minister really wants the public not to take his Yasukuni visit as an expression of his support for Yasukuni Shrine's views, the best way is for him to stop his Yasukuni Shrine visits.”<sup>184</sup>

Koizumi’s visits were also criticized by members of the Japanese business community. In a *Los Angeles Times* article on the subject, chairman of the Japan Association of Corporate Executives Kakutaro Kitashiro commented that “there can be no stable development while

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<sup>181</sup> “Kono warns Koizumi about Yasukuni visits,” *Japan Times*, June 8, 2005, Accessed: 1/29/16, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2005/06/08/national/kono-warns-koizumi-about-yasukuni-visits/>.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Tetsushi Kajimoto, “Kanzaki tells Koizumi to take Yasukuni protests seriously,” *Japan Times*, December 9, 2004, Accessed: 1/29/16, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2004/12/09/national/kanzaki-tells-koizumi-to-take-yasukuni-protests-seriously/>.

<sup>184</sup> Kazuo Shii, “JCP Shii comments on Koizumi's answers,” June 3, 2005, Accessed: 1/29/16, [http://www.jcp.or.jp/english/jps\\_weekly3/20050602\\_hisotry2.html](http://www.jcp.or.jp/english/jps_weekly3/20050602_hisotry2.html).

national sentiments are in conflict.”<sup>185</sup> In another instance, Kakutaro stated in a press conference that “I hope that the prime minister refrains from visiting the Yasukuni Shrine. I think this is a majority opinion in the business world. There is concern it will hurt business ties between China and Japan.”<sup>186</sup> Kakutaro sees the worsened relations resulting from the visits as detrimental to economic prospects abroad. Mie Teno, a senior business executive, stated in the same article that “I like Mr. Koizumi, on economic issues he has very good instincts, but Yasukuni is his Achilles' heel.”<sup>187</sup>

There were also those within Japan, primarily right-wing academics and government officials, who supported Koizumi's visits. Okazaki Hisahiko, former Director General of Foreign Relations and head of the conservative think tank Okazaki Institute, wrote prolifically in support of Koizumi's visits. Following Koizumi's announcement that he would visit the shrine on August 15, 2001 (which he later rescheduled), Okazaki wrote that “He is right in doing so. I do not think he needs to go to the trouble of discussing such trivial matters as whether the premier's visit to the shrine should be done in an official or private capacity.”<sup>188</sup> Okazaki sees the entire controversy regarding the shrine going back to Nakasone's visit two decades earlier as a domestic issue, arguing that it was the result of political maneuvering by “Japanese antiestablishment forces [...] to ferment interference from abroad and respond it [sic] from within

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<sup>185</sup> Bruce Wallace, “Corporate Giants Pressure Japan's Politicians to Stop Visiting War Shrine,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 28, 2006, Accessed: 1/29/16, <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/may/28/world/fg-shrine28>.

<sup>186</sup> Sean Curtin, “Japan Inc opposes Koizumi's China policy,” *Asia Times*, December 11, 2004, Accessed: 1/29/16, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Japan/FL11Dh01.html>.

<sup>187</sup> Wallace.

<sup>188</sup> Hisahiko Okazaki, “Koizumi Need Not Think Twice About Yasukuni Visit,” *Okazaki Institute*, July 29, 2001, <http://www.okazaki-inst.jp/2001/07/koizumi-need-not-think-twice-a.html>.

Japan.”<sup>189</sup> Later in Koizumi’s premiership, Okazaki wrote in an article for *Daily Yomiuri* newspaper

If Japan is able to defend the integrity of its position over the Yasukuni issue, the success would serve as proof of the ineffectiveness of the strategy [of criticizing the Yasukuni visits that] China has so far pursued. It might even lead China to conduct some soul-searching conducive to creating a new relationship with Japan. Unless Japan adopts such a policy, China would continue to employ the same strategy in dealing with one issue after another, thus perpetuating the jerky pattern that characterizes Japanese-Chinese ties.<sup>190</sup>

Paradoxically, Okazaki asserts that the only way for Japan to achieve lasting ties with China, is for them to not relent on the Yasukuni issue, and continue to have prime ministerial visits despite criticism. To do otherwise would be to legitimize China’s complaints as a valid political strategy. Political scientist Jennifer Lind notes that then-LDP Secretary General Abe Shinzō stated in 2005 that “It’s the duty of the nation’s leader to offer prayers to the souls of those who lost their lives for our country.”<sup>191</sup>

### **International Response**

Criticism of Koizumi’s visits from China and South Korea was largely focused on the historical issues surrounding the visits, as they were seen as indicative of a lack of contrition on the part of the Japanese government. The adjectives used in sentences mentioning Yasukuni in both *China Daily* and *Chosun Ilbo* during Koizumi’s premiership, shown in Figure 6, provide an overview of the media discussion of the visits in China and South Korea.

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<sup>189</sup> Okazaki, “Koizumi Need Not Think Twice About Yasukuni Visit.”

<sup>190</sup> Hisahiko Okazaki, “Japan must never concede on Yasukuni issue,” *Daily Yomiuri*, June 5, 2005, Accessed: 1/30/16, <http://www.okazaki-inst.jp/2005/06/japan-must-never-concede-on-ya.html>.

<sup>191</sup> Jennifer Lind, *Sorry States: Apologies in International Politics*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 67.



Figure 6. Frequently-used adjectives from sentences mentioning Yasukuni in the *China Daily* (left) and *Chosun Ilbo* (right) newspapers from 2001-06

As these word clouds make evident, much of the discussion in the *China Daily* and *Chosun Ilbo* papers revolves around this historical issues surrounding the shrine and visits to it, as can be seen from the presence of terms like “historical” and “colonial” (as before, colored blue for ease of viewing.) However, the word clouds also somewhat misrepresent the criticism in this instance. Given that many words like “bilateral,” “diplomatic,” and “international” appear in the clouds, one could assume that the damage to relations between Japan and its neighbors was a major factor in the criticism. As will be shown below, the damage to relations is described as a consequence of the visits, not an element of the criticism. Cause and consequence become somewhat muddled in a word cloud representation of this data.

The notion of a “correct understanding” of history is a common theme among many of these objections. As noted in an August 2001 *China Daily* article, historian Hu Yuhai stated that “the Japanese Government has never faced up to their history and the crimes they committed. Besides, they have vainly attempted to cover up the truth and revive militarism, which is characterized as aggressive and inhumane.”<sup>192</sup> The author of the article also noted that several student protests occurred following the visit, at which demonstrators carried banners with the words “Strongly Protest Against Japan's Distorting History Textbooks, Strongly Protest Against

<sup>192</sup> Daozu Bao, “Nation criticizes shrine visit,” *China Daily*, August 16, 2001, Accessed: 1/30/16, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/en/cd/2001-08/16/content\\_76996.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/en/cd/2001-08/16/content_76996.htm).

Paying Homage to Yasukuni Shrine.”<sup>193</sup> In both of these instances, we see that the shrine visits are being linked with the broader historical issue, whether through “attempts to cover up the truth and revive militarism” or through associations with “Distorting History Textbooks.” In addition, the author noted that a meeting of historians occurred in Beijing “to condemn the revival of Japanese militarism” at which Zhang Haiping, a senior member of China’s Academy of Social Sciences stated that “The action of the Japanese Government doesn't match its remarks.”<sup>194</sup>

Criticism continued along the same lines as Koizumi continued to visit the shrine. Vice Foreign Minister of China Yang Wenchang, in a complaint to the Japanese ambassador following Koizumi’s January 2003 visit to Yasukuni, asserted that “Only a correct understanding of history can avoid a replay of historical tragedies [and] ensure the peace and development of the Asia-Pacific region.”<sup>195</sup> Yang further stated that the visit “[ran] counter to the Japanese government's commitment to face up to and review its history of aggression,” as noted in a *Xinhua* article on the complaint.<sup>196</sup> Here again we see that the shrine visits are seen as a display of Japan’s lack of contrition. In another instance in October 2003, after an announcement by Koizumi that he would be visiting Yasukuni once again the following year, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhang Qiyue stated that “correct understanding and handling of history should form the political foundation of Sino-Japanese relations,” underscoring the importance of the issue of collective memory to continued amicable Sino-Japanese relations. On August 16, 2006, one day after Koizumi’s visit to the shrine on the anniversary of the war’s end, Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing stated that “To correctly understand and address that part of history constituted the

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<sup>193</sup> Daozu Bao, “Nation criticizes shrine visit.”

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Lind, 163.

<sup>196</sup> “Japanese PM's shrine visit draws protests at home and abroad,” *Xinhua*, January 15, 2003, Accessed: 1/30/16, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2003-01/15/content\\_690734.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2003-01/15/content_690734.htm).

political basis for the resumption and development of China-Japan relations after the war, and is the important precondition for the two countries to face up to the future” and described Koizumi’s visit as “challeng[ing] international justice” and “trampl[ing] upon the conscience of mankind.”<sup>197</sup> Like the previous objections, Li sees Japan’s lack of contrition as the main issue plaguing Sino-Japanese relations at the time, but he also goes beyond that in stating that the visits “challenge international justice” (i.e. the Tokyo Trials) and in viewing the visits as offensive “to all mankind” rather than to the Chinese people specifically.

The Korean criticism of Koizumi’s visits follows from the same general ideas as the Chinese objections, stating that the Yasukuni visits are representative of a lack of contrition on the part of the Japanese government. This can be clearly seen in the press releases by South Korea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs in response to Koizumi’s visits. After his 2001 visit, for instance, an unnamed spokesperson stated that

Prime Minister Koizumi insists in his statement that the purpose of his visit to Yasukuni Shrine is to commemorate the victims who sacrificed their lives for Japan and to recapitulate his commitment to promoting peace, while expressing his regrets for Japan's past colonial rule and aggression. However, the ROK government can not (sic) refrain from expressing a deep concern that the Japanese prime minister paid respects to even war criminals who destroyed world peace and inflicted indescribable damage to the neighboring countries.<sup>198</sup>

The Korean government’s objection to the visit stems from the fact that, despite Koizumi’s attempts to apologize for Japan’s wartime conduct, he persisted in paying respects to the war criminals who were responsible for it. The two sentiments are perceived as are highly

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<sup>197</sup> “Koizumi's provocation condemned,” *China Daily*, August 16, 2006, Accessed: 1/30/16, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2006-08/16/content\\_665661.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2006-08/16/content_665661.htm).

<sup>198</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of South Korea, “Statement by MOFAT Spokesperson on Prime Minister Koizumi's Visit to Yasukuni Shrine,” August 13, 2001, Accessed: 1/31/16, [http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/press/pressreleases/index.jsp?menu=m\\_10\\_20&sp=/webmodule/htsboard/template/read/engreadboard.jsp%3FtypeID=12%26boardid=302%26seqno=296553](http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/press/pressreleases/index.jsp?menu=m_10_20&sp=/webmodule/htsboard/template/read/engreadboard.jsp%3FtypeID=12%26boardid=302%26seqno=296553).

incongruous. The statement concluded that “[Koizumi] should respect the positions and national sentiments of the countries concerned based on a correct understanding of history.”<sup>199</sup> Here again we see the notion of a “correct” understanding of history, implying that the view Koizumi is endorsing with his visit is incorrect and in need of rectification. The content of the official statements concerning Koizumi’s visits remains essentially constant over time. After Koizumi’s January 2003 Yasukuni visit, an unnamed official spokesperson stated that “We would like to recall that we have pointed out numerous times that homage to war criminals must be stopped, based on the strong belief that a correct understanding of history constitutes the foundation of relations between Japan and the neighboring countries.”<sup>200</sup> Here, as before, we see that the “correct understanding” of history is once again highlighted as critical to progress in the region. The statement also noted that “The ROK government can not (sic) understand the logic of paying homage to war criminals who destroyed peace while insisting it is a prayer for peace,” which further underscores the incongruity of Koizumi’s actions and the government’s official position.<sup>201</sup> The statement in response to Koizumi’s final visit reiterated similar themes in noting “If Japan truly has the will to take on responsible roles in the international community while contributing to peace and co-prosperity of the region, it must first build mutual trust with its neighboring countries by facing up to the historical truth and taking on corresponding acts,” and “Our Government expresses deep disappointment and anger over Japanese Prime Minister

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<sup>199</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of South Korea, “Statement by MOFAT Spokesperson on Prime Minister Koizumi’s Visit to Yasukuni Shrine,” August 13, 2001.

<sup>200</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of South Korea, “Statement by the MOFAT Spokesperson on Prime Minister Koizumi’s Visit to the Yasukuni Shrine,” January 14, 2003, Accessed: 1/31/16, [http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/press/pressreleases/index.jsp?menu=m\\_10\\_20&sp=/webmodule/htsboard/template/read/engreadboard.jsp%3FtypeID=12%26boardid=302%26seqno=295765](http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/press/pressreleases/index.jsp?menu=m_10_20&sp=/webmodule/htsboard/template/read/engreadboard.jsp%3FtypeID=12%26boardid=302%26seqno=295765).

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.





Articles from the American media about the visits make plainly evident this emphasis on contextualizing the Yasukuni controversy for a foreign audience. A *New York Times* article written in response to Koizumi's August 13, 2001 Yasukuni visit focused on the critical response both within Japan and from China and Korea.<sup>203</sup> The article describes Koizumi as "torn between the outrage of neighbors who suffered from Japanese aggression and his own, perhaps more pressing, need to demonstrate resolve to his people, who are counting heavily on him to set Japan back on course after a decade of economic decline," and called the Yasukuni issue "a no-win situation," casting Koizumi as a somewhat sympathetic figure.<sup>204</sup> A *Washington Post* article written after Koizumi's 2005 visit to Yasukuni focused entirely on international criticism, opening with the phrase "China and South Korea on Monday angrily protested Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's decision to make a controversial visit to a shrine that honors Japan's military dead, including convicted World War II war criminals."<sup>205</sup> Only a short paragraph is dedicated to describing Koizumi's visit, with the rest of the article devoted to discussing the criticism from China and South Korea and describing the effects of the visit on Japan's international relations.<sup>206</sup> A *New York Times* article written following Koizumi's August 15 visit, while not critical of the visit itself, did criticize his stubbornness on the issue in stating that "Mr. Koizumi had [...] painted himself into a corner by turning the Yasukuni debate into a test of wills."<sup>207</sup> Apart from that relatively critical remark, the rest of the article functioned as a retrospective on Koizumi's premiership, stating that Koizumi "claimed a more assertive role for Japan in the world," and a discussion of the future of the Yasukuni issue in the context of international

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<sup>203</sup> Stephanie Strom, "Japan's Premier Visits War Shrine, Pleasing Few," *New York Times*, August 14, 2001, Accessed: 1/31/16, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/08/14/world/japan-s-premier-visits-war-shrine-pleasing-few.html>.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Anthony Faiola, "Koizumi's Shrine Visit Angers Asians, Again," *The Washington Post*, October 18, 2005, Accessed: 1/31/16, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/10/17/AR2005101701417.html>.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Norimitsu Onishi, "Koizumi Exits Office as He Arrived: Defiant on War Shrine," *New York Times*, August 16, 2006, Accessed: 1/31/16, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/16/world/asia/16japan.html>.

relations, noting that Abe Shinzō, Koizumi's likely (and actual) successor, may have a way to improve relations by shunning Yasukuni visits. It is also important to note that the seemingly neutral point of view present in most of the American papers requires the reader to forget the role that the American Occupation played in the controversy by designating the war criminals in the first place, which is completely absent in the American discussion of the Yasukuni controversy.

There were, however, two notable critics of Koizumi's visits in the United States.

Herbert Bix, the Pulitzer Prize winning historian and author of a highly regarded but controversial book on Emperor Hirohito's war responsibility, stated in a May 2001 opinion piece for the *New York Times* that "using a rhetoric (sic) of peace, [Mr. Koizumi] fosters and promises deeper cooperation with the great powers. But the political footprints Mr. Koizumi has already laid down do not inspire confidence."<sup>208</sup> He further asserted that "Mr. Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni Shrine seems to offer little clear political advantage, but is sure to reignite old debates, passions and memories."<sup>209</sup> Bix regards the shrine visits as devoid of political utility and simply a way to reopen old historical wounds. In another instance, Henry Hyde, veteran of World War II, US Congressperson and Chairman of the House International Relations Committee, sent a letter to Japanese Ambassador to Washington Kato Ryozyo in October 2005.<sup>210</sup> In the letter, Hyde states that he feels "some regret over the continued visits of Japanese government officials to the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo" and that "the shrine [...] has become a symbol throughout Asia and the rest of the world of unresolved history from the Second World War and of those militaristic attitudes which spawned the War in the Pacific"<sup>211</sup> He concluded by noting that "I

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<sup>208</sup> Herbert Bix, "Japan's New Nationalism," *New York Times*, May 29, 2001, Accessed 1/31/16, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/05/29/opinion/japan-s-new-nationalism.html>.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Joshua Stanton, "Hyde Expresses Disappointment Over Yasukuni Visit," *One Free Korea*, October 10, 2005, Accessed 1/31/16, <http://freekorea.us/2005/10/23/hyde-expresses-disappointment-over-yasukuni-visit-2/>.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

am concerned that a renewed discussion of history at this critical juncture will distract nations in the region from carrying out a constructive dialogue on the issues at hand, such a result will not serve the national interest of either of our nations.”<sup>212</sup> Hyde, like Bix, sees the historical issues resulting from the Yasukuni visits as detracting from present issues of more pressing concern.

### The Data on Koizumi

A term frequency analysis of the mentions of Yasukuni Shrine during Koizumi’s premiership supports this interpretation of the controversy. Take, for example, the words clouds created with adjectives from the *Japan Times* and *China Daily* in Figure 8.

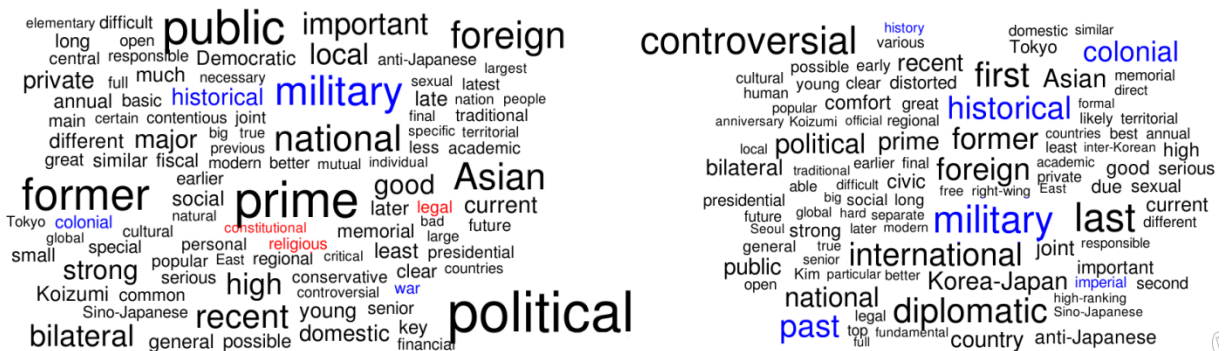


Figure 8: Adjective clouds from *Japan Times* (at left) and *China Daily* (at right) from 2001-06

From the word clouds, it is evident that both the *Japan Times* and *China Daily* include words that refer to Japan’s militaristic past (colored blue for clarity), while of the two only *Japan Times* contains terms dealing with the religious and constitutional ramifications of the visits (colored red for clarity). From this, one can infer that the *China Daily* articles tend to be more concerned with the historical issues surrounding the shrine. *Japan Times* articles, on the other hand, also contain references to the constitutional and legal aspects of the visits, underscoring the broader focus of discussion concerning the shrine within Japan, including both the historical and

<sup>212</sup> Stanton.

constitutional aspects. This supports the previous analysis of the responses to Koizumi's visits within Japan and from its Asian neighbors.

### **The Broader Context Abe's Visit**

There are three specific events that are useful in contextualizing the criticism of Abe's visit. Firstly, the two previously mentioned territorial disputes were also significant issues in Japan's international relations at the time. In November 2013, China significantly escalated tensions by establishing an "air defense identification zone" over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, which official Japanese sources considered as having "danger of leading to an unexpected situation."<sup>213</sup> Additionally, during the first year of his second term as Prime Minister, Abe noted in several meeting with foreign heads of state that he was planning on beginning to consider the possibility of revising Article 9 on the Constitution.<sup>214</sup> The discussions that occurred as a result of his decision eventually culminated in major changes to Japan's defense laws, giving Japan the "right of collective defense" (allowing Japanese forces to provide combat aid to their allies) in September 2015.<sup>215</sup> Finally, the controversy over wartime sexual slavery (chiefly between Japan and Korea) was also a point of contention following Abe's reelection in 2012; with many worried that Abe would attempt to push a nationalist narrative of events and revise the previous 1993 apology by then-Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono Yohei.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> "China establishes 'air-defence zone' over East China Sea," *BBC News*, 23 November, 2013, Accessed 2/7/16, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-25062525>.

<sup>214</sup> "Abe tells Philippine leader of tilt toward more robust military," *Japan Times*, July 27, 2013, Accessed: 2/7/16, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/07/27/national/politics-diplomacy/abe-tells-philippine-leader-of-tilt-toward-more-robust-military/>.

<sup>215</sup> Will Ripley, "Japanese lawmakers OK greater overseas role for military," *CNN*, September 18, 2015, Accessed: 2/7/16, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/09/18/asia/japan-military-constitution/>.

<sup>216</sup> Reiji Yoshida, "In Abe's future, a nationalist rewrite of the past?," *Japan Times*, March 13, 2013, Accessed: 3/8/16, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/03/13/reference/in-abes-future-a-nationalist-rewrite-of-the-past/>.

Abe's visit to Yasukuni took place on December 26, 2013, the first anniversary of his second term as Prime Minister. The responses to his visit, both within Japan and abroad, are very similar to the aftermath of both Nakasone's and Koizumi's visits.

Abe, like Koizumi and Nakasone, is a radically right-wing politician in the LDP, strongly advocating for constitutional revision. He is the Vice Secretary of the political wing of the revisionist lobby Nippon Kaigi and thirteen of his nineteen Cabinet members (who, it should be noted, are selected by the Prime Minister) are also affiliated with the lobby.<sup>217</sup> The group's stated goals are to “change the postwar national consciousness based on the Tokyo Tribunal's view of history as a fundamental problem’ and to ‘revise the current Constitution.’”<sup>218</sup> Abe was also instrumental in the September 2015 Diet legislation allowing the SDF to perform overseas combat missions.<sup>219</sup>

Despite his right-wing political views, Abe's relationship with Yasukuni shrine is rather ambiguous. During his first term, from 2006 to 2007, he avoided visiting the shrine as a way of cultivating better relations with China and South Korea.<sup>220</sup> In response to his non-visit on August 15, Abe was mailed a letter of protest and severed fingertip by rightwinger Yoshihiro Tanjo.<sup>221</sup> While campaigning for reelection in 2012, Abe expressed regret that he was unable to

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<sup>217</sup> Matthew Penney, “The Abe Cabinet - An Ideological Breakdown,” *The Asia Pacific Journal*, Accessed: 2/3/16, <http://apjif.org/-Matthew-Penney/4747/article.html>.

<sup>218</sup> Christian Winkler, *The Quest for Japan's New Constitution: An Analysis of Visions and Constitutional Reform Proposals 1980-2009*, (Routledge: London, 2011), 75.

<sup>219</sup> Johnathan Soble, “Japan's Parliament Approves Overseas Combat Role for Military,” *New York Times*, September 18, 2015, Accessed: 2/3/16 <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/19/world/asia/japan-parliament-passes-legislation-combat-role-for-military.html>.

<sup>220</sup> Christopher Hughes, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy Under the 'Abe Doctrine': New Dynamism or New Dead End?*, (London: Palgrave, 2015).

<sup>221</sup> “Severed pinkie sent to LDP to protest Abe's Yasukuni no-show,” *Japan Times*, August 24, 2007, Accessed: 2/3/16, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2007/08/24/news/severed-pinkie-sent-to-ldp-to-protest-abes-yasukuni-no-show/>.

visit Yasukuni as Prime Minister, stating that he would likely do so if reelected.<sup>222</sup> After being reelected in December 2012, Abe did not visit the shrine in August or in October during the shrine's autumn festival, but did make a donation to the shrine with private funds in April.<sup>223</sup> Prior to the shrine's autumn festival, Abe stated that "It is only natural to demonstrate feelings of respect to the war dead who fought and gave up their lives for the nation. Because it has the potential to become a diplomatic issue, I will refrain from saying whether or not I will visit," underscoring the ambiguity of his stance on Yasukuni.<sup>224</sup>

### Reasons for Abe's Visit

Abe's visit, like those of Nakasone and Koizumi before him, was also politically motivated. In Abe's official statement on his visit to Yasukuni, he stated that "the purpose of my visit today, on the anniversary of my administration's taking office, is to report before the souls of the war dead how my administration has worked for one year to renew the pledge that Japan must never wage a war again," basing his claim on his "severe remorse for the past," describing his visit as a gesture of pacifism.<sup>225</sup> He attempted to clarify that he did not mean to spark controversy in his visit, even noting that he specifically visited the Chinreisha, where the souls of Japan's wartime enemies are enshrined.<sup>226</sup> However, his commitment to "never wage a war again" was perhaps undermined in the eyes of his critics by his overt desire to revise Article 9 of the Constitution. He also may have been motivated by more pressing political concerns, such as taking a strong foreign policy stance to please supporters. Jeff Kingston, professor of Asian

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<sup>222</sup> Michio Nakamoto, "Japan's Abe visits Yasukuni Shrine," *Financial Times*, October 17, 2012, Accessed: 2/3/16, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/e864691a-1829-11e2-80e9-00144feabdc0.html>.

<sup>223</sup> "Abe to skip autumn Yasukuni Shrine visit," *Asahi Shimbun*, October 17, 2013, Accessed: 2/3/16, [http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind\\_news/politics/AJ201310170062](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201310170062).

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Shinzō Abe, "Statement by Prime Minister Abe: Pledge for everlasting peace," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, December 26, 2013, Accessed: 2/3/16, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/a\\_o/rp/page24e\\_000021.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page24e_000021.html).

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

Studies at Temple University in Tokyo, asserts that Abe was demonstrating “[that] he is a tough guy, that he is not afraid of China. It is something that plays very well to his base” by visiting the shrine.<sup>227</sup>

## Domestic Criticism

The domestic criticism of Abe’s visit, as previously noted, was highly similar to the reaction to those of Koizumi and Nakasone, although it decreased in volume. The similarity to the reaction to Koizumi’s visits can be seen in the frequently-used adjectives of *Asahi Shimbun* and the *Japan Times* at the time of Abe’s visit, shown in Figure 9.

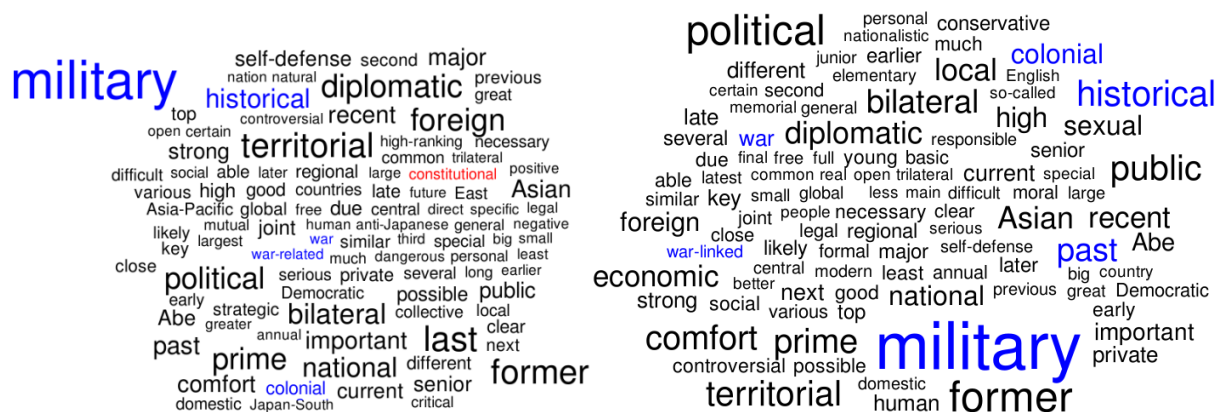


Figure 9: Adjective clouds from *Asahi Shimbun* (at left) and *Japan Times* (at right) from 2013-15

As with the data from Koizumi’s tenure as Prime Minister, much of the discussion concerns the historical aspect of the shrine visit or Abe’s attempts to revise Article 9, as shown by the terms highlighted in blue, but that is not the only facet of the discussion present in the articles. The constitutional side of the debate is also evident, albeit less prominently as there were fewer lawsuits brought against Abe than against Koizumi.

<sup>227</sup> Rupert Wingfield-Hayes, “Why Japan’s Shinzō Abe Went to Yasukuni Shrine,” *BBC News*, Accessed: 2/3/16, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-25518137>.



As with previous visits, Abe's visit provoked a series of lawsuits objecting to his visit and demanding reparations. As noted in an April 21, 2014 *Asahi Shimbun* article, a case made to the Osaka High Court, the 546 plaintiffs claimed "that visits to Yasukuni serve to promote the teachings of the shrine and cause psychological pressure on the plaintiffs, thereby violating their freedom of religion."<sup>228</sup> They also argued that "the heightened diplomatic tensions in Northeast Asia after Abe's Yasukuni visit led to a violation of their right to a peaceful existence."<sup>229</sup> Another *Asahi* article also published in April 2014 noted that a second lawsuit was filed in Tokyo. In the lawsuit, the plaintiffs claimed that "Abe's pilgrimage to the Shinto shrine in Tokyo violated the separation of politics and religion as stipulated in the Constitution," mirroring past objections to Prime Ministerial visits.<sup>230</sup> Like the first lawsuit against Abe, they also claimed that Abe's visit violated their right to a peaceful existence.<sup>231</sup> Yogo Kimura, the head of the lawyers representing the plaintiffs in the Tokyo case, stated in a press conference that "the visit was made amid the government's push to enable Japan to wage wars. Abe had the intention to build a spiritual basis for it."<sup>232</sup> Given Abe's move towards revising Article 9, it is interesting that the plaintiffs claim that their right to a peaceful existence is being violated. From their point of view, perhaps, the plaintiffs see Abe's visit as a move away from Japan's pacifist policies.

Abe was also criticized by some in the media and political elite who felt that his visits caused diplomatic and economic problems and signaled a departure from pacifism. In an *Asahi Shimbun* editorial, the author called the visit "a futile act of self-righteousness" and stated that "Abe's move has a serious impact on various matters including the way the Japanese people face

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<sup>228</sup> "Lawsuit seeks compensation for mental stress caused by Abe's Yasukuni visit," *Asahi Shimbun*, April 12, 2014, Accessed: 2/4/16, [http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind\\_news/social\\_affairs/AJ201404120051](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201404120051).

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Odaka Chiba, "2nd lawsuit filed against Abe's visit to Yasukuni Shrine," *Asahi Shimbun*, April 22, 2014, Accessed: 2/4/16, [http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind\\_news/politics/AJ201404220058](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201404220058).

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.



war as well as Japan's national security and economy."<sup>233</sup> The author also stated that "[Abe's] act is nothing less than a declaration of intent to turn his back to the postwar course followed by the Japanese people who vowed never to make war while mourning the war dead," asserting that Abe's visit to the shrine was indicative of his desire to remilitarize Japan.<sup>234</sup> A member of the New Komeito party objected to the visit on the grounds that it was damaging to Japan's economic prospects, stating "I don't understand why [Abe] goes out of the way to make waves. The administration would remain safe and secure if only it focused on the economy."<sup>235</sup> New Komeito party leader Natsuo Yamaguchi, as noted in a *Japan Times* article, called the visit "unfortunate because it was made despite his [Yamaguchi's] repeated warnings that political and diplomatic problems would follow."<sup>236</sup> The article also noted that Democratic Party of Japan and the People's Life Party (both opposition parties) were also critical of the visit, but did not clarify what exactly their criticisms were. Additionally, as noted in a December 26, 2013 *China Daily* article, Secretary General of the Social Democratic party Mataka Seiichi stated that Abe had "vowed to follow an active pacifist road, but was engaging in active militarism now" by visiting Yasukuni.<sup>237</sup> Finally, JCP Chair Shii Kazuo stated in a speech on same day that "Prime Minister Abe paying homage to this shrine is declaring to the world that his administration supports the position justifying the past wars of aggression."<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> "Abe's visit to Yasukuni Shrine a futile act of self-righteousness," *Asahi Shimbun*, December 27, 2013, Accessed: 2/4/16, <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/editorial/AJ201312270032>.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> "Prime minister's Yasukuni visit does not bode well for 'Abenomics'," *Asahi Shimbun*, December 27, 2013, Accessed: 2/4/16, <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/business/AJ201312270074>.

<sup>236</sup> "Komeito unhappy with Yasukuni pilgrimage," *Japan Times*, December 27, 2013, Accessed: 2/4/16, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/12/27/national/politics-diplomacy/komeito-unhappy-with-yasukuni-pilgrimage/>.

<sup>237</sup> "Japan political parties criticize Abe's visit," *China Daily*, December 26, 2013, Accessed: 2/5/16, [http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2013-12/26/content\\_17198873.htm](http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2013-12/26/content_17198873.htm).

<sup>238</sup> Kazuo Shii, "JCP Chair Shii comments on Abe's shrine visit," December 26, 2013, Accessed: 2/4/16, [http://www.jcp.or.jp/english/jps\\_2013/20131226\\_yasukuni.html](http://www.jcp.or.jp/english/jps_2013/20131226_yasukuni.html).

As to why the domestic criticism was less frequent than in the past, there are several possible explanations. Political scientist Toshiya Takahashi postulates three. Firstly, he asserts that the political makeup of the LDP had become more right-leaning, noting that “The Abe-led LDP’s election successes in the December 2012 lower house election and July 2013 upper house election resulted in an increase in new backbenchers who support Abe’s policies without criticism.”<sup>239</sup> Secondly, he notes that the opposition parties had been considerably weakened.<sup>240</sup> Finally, and perhaps most importantly, he states that Abe’s political and intellectual supporters successfully endeavored to increase the number of people in favor of Yasukuni visits, noting that “according to a recent survey, a majority of Japanese aged between 20 to 30 (sic) consider that Abe’s visit to the shrine is preferable, while the survey for all ages do (sic) not.”<sup>241</sup>

## International Criticism

International criticism of Abe’s visit is strikingly similar to that following Koizumi’s and Nakasone’s earlier visits. This is evident from the frequently-used adjective in sentences mentioning Yasukuni Shrine from the *China Daily* and *Chosun Ilbo* articles written during Abe’s prime ministerial tenure shown in Figure 10 below.



Figure 10: Adjective clouds from *China Daily* (at left) and *Chosun Ilbo* (at right) from 2013-15

<sup>239</sup> Toshiya Takahashi, “Abe’s Yasukuni Visit: the view from Japan,” *East Asia Forum*, January 24, 2014, Accessed: 2/4/16, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2014/01/24/abes-yasukuni-visit-the-view-from-japan/>.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Toshiya Takahashi, “Abe’s Yasukuni Visit: the view from Japan.”

In these word clouds, as with those from Koizumi's tenure, we see that many terms appear which indicate that the discussion focuses on the historical aspects of the shrine (colored blue for clarity.) In addition to those words, words that imply links to other issues in Japan's international relations also show up more frequently than in Koizumi's tenure. For example, terms like "sexual" and "comfort" (as in "comfort women") refer to the ongoing controversy surrounding wartime sexual slavery, while "territorial" refers to the island disputes over Takeshima/Dokdo and Senkaku/Diaoyu islands with South Korea and China, respectively.

As before, the Chinese objections to the visit were centered on the historical issues the visit raised. In a December 26, 2013 *China Daily* article entitled "Abe's Yasukuni Visit a Dangerous Step," one journalist stated that "the move denies history, hurts the peoples again who were invaded by Japan, and shows the continuous rise of Japan's right wing."<sup>242</sup> The author further asserted that the visit "arouses nothing but painful memories that Japan brought to China and its other neighbors," underscoring the nature of the shrine visit as closely linked to memories of Japan's wartime actions. Another article written the same day entitled "Abe's Shrine Visit Grave Provocation" asserted that "by visiting the shrine that honors Japan's war criminals, Abe is publicly challenging the post-World War II order, and embracing the country's dangerous tradition of militarism."<sup>243</sup> A December 29 *China Daily* article entitled "Abe's Shrine Visit a Flagrant Denial of Justice" noted that "Abe's choice to visit the Yasukuni Shrine was a deliberate attempt to deny the historical conclusion on Japanese militarism, and challenge the post-war

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<sup>242</sup> "Abe's Yasukuni Shrine visit a dangerous step," *China Daily*, December 26, 2013, Accessed: 2/5/16, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-12/26/content\\_17198661.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-12/26/content_17198661.htm).

<sup>243</sup> "Abe's shrine visit grave provocation," *China Daily*, December, 26, 2013, Accessed: 2/5/16, [http://africa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-12/26/content\\_17198345.htm](http://africa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-12/26/content_17198345.htm).

world order. The visit was also meant to whitewash Japanese aggression and colonial rule. It has aroused painful memories Japan has brought to the Chinese people and other nations.”<sup>244</sup>

The official Chinese government statements were no less critical of Abe’s visit, concerned not only with historical issues but also regarding Japan’s future behavior. Chinese Ambassador to Japan Cheng Yonghua stated in a letter to the *Mainichi Shimbun* newspaper that “Japanese leaders visiting the Yasukuni Shrine concerns their understandings of the aggressive war’s nature and responsibility, which absolutely can not (sic) be accepted by the Chinese side.”<sup>245</sup> He further asserted that Japanese acceptance of the “correct” view of the past was essential to the continued development of Sino-Japanese relations and of continued regional peace in general, calling upon the Japanese government to “take history as a mirror.”<sup>246</sup> Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin stated in an interview that Abe’s visit was “going against the tide of history and openly provoking international justice and human conscience.”<sup>247</sup> Foreign Minister Wang Yi argued that Abe’s visit was “an attempt to whitewash Japan's war of aggression, challenge the just trial of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, and challenge the resultant post-war order.”<sup>248</sup> Like Yonghua, Yi also argues that Japan must face up to its past actions in order to better face the future, stating “The only way to open up the future is

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<sup>244</sup> “Abe's shrine visit a flagrant denial of justice,” *China Daily*, December 29, 2013, Accessed: 2/5/16, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2013-12/29/content\\_17203113.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2013-12/29/content_17203113.htm).

<sup>245</sup> Yonghua Cheng, “Ambassador to Japan Cheng Yonghua Writes to Japan’s Mainichi Shimbun on the Issue of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s Visit to the Yasukuni Shrine,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, December 30, 2013, Accessed: 2/5/16, [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjb\\_663304/zwjg\\_665342/zwbd\\_665378/t1114404.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zwjg_665342/zwbd_665378/t1114404.shtml).

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Liu Zhenmin, “Forging Ahead with Determination, Playing the Main Melody of Asian Cooperation: Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin’s Comments on Asian Situation and Neighborhood Diplomacy,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, December 31, 2013, Accessed: 2/5/16, [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/zvjh\\_665391/t1114403.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zvjh_665391/t1114403.shtml).

<sup>248</sup> Wang Yi, “The Japanese Leaders Should Respect The Red Line of Human Conscience and International Justice,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, January 9, 2013, Accessed: 2/5/16, [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjb\\_663304/wjbz\\_663308/2461\\_663310/t1116500.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/wjbz_663308/2461_663310/t1116500.shtml).

to expose and condemn the past; and the only way for Japan to win back the trust of its neighbors is to commit itself to peace.”<sup>249</sup>

The Korean objections to Abe’s visits also focused on the historical issues surrounding Yasukuni and their ramifications for Japan’s future behavior. A December 27, 2013 *Chosun Ilbo* editorial entitled “The Japanese Government is Out of Control,” asserted that Abe’s insistence on whitewashing Japan’s wartime actions would lead to further regional conflict noting “By visiting Yasukuni, Abe has made it clear that he does not intend to back down from a diplomatic and even military confrontation with South Korea and China over the issue of whitewashing his country's wartime atrocities,”<sup>250</sup> underscoring that Japan’s revisionism was not only problematic for its own sake but also because it presented a worrying picture of Japan’s future possible actions.

The official statement by the Korean government is also directly critical of Abe’s visit. In a statement by a spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of South Korea, the speaker stated that “Prime Minister Abe’s visit to the Yasukuni Shrine clearly shows his erroneous perception of history. The visit is an anachronistic act that fundamentally undermines not only the ROK-Japan relations but also stability and cooperation in Northeast Asia.”<sup>251</sup> He continued by wondering if Abe “really thinks that he could contribute to promoting peace with such an incorrect view of history,” placing Abe’s incorrect view of history as a major issue in the way of

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<sup>249</sup> Wang.

<sup>250</sup> “The Japanese Government Is Out of Control,” *Chosun Ilbo*, December 27, 2013, Accessed: 3/15/16, [http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2013/12/27/2013122701743.html](http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/12/27/2013122701743.html).

<sup>251</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, “Statement by the Spokesperson of the ROK Government on Japanese Prime Minister Abe’s visit to the Yasukuni Shrine,” December 26, 2013, Accessed: 2/6/16, [http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/press/pressreleases/index.jsp?menu=m\\_10\\_20&sp=/webmodule/htsboard/template/read/engreadboard.jsp%3FtypeID=12%26boardid=302%26seqno=313228](http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/press/pressreleases/index.jsp?menu=m_10_20&sp=/webmodule/htsboard/template/read/engreadboard.jsp%3FtypeID=12%26boardid=302%26seqno=313228).

future progress.<sup>252</sup> He concluded by noting that “If Japan truly wants to actively contribute to world peace, it is most important for the country to face up to history and build trust by feeling deep remorse and apologizing to the governments and people of neighboring countries,” further highlighting the importance of “facing up to history” as a way for Japan to “actively contribute to world peace.” Without a “correct view” of history, as was also asserted after Koizumi’s visits, Japan’s claim to a path of peacefulness is nothing but hollow words.

Abe’s visit was also noted by the United States, although in significantly less critical terms than Japan’s Asian neighbors. In response to the visit, the American Embassy in Tokyo issued a statement as follows:

Japan is a valued ally and friend. Nevertheless, the United States is disappointed that Japan's leadership has taken an action that will exacerbate tensions with Japan's neighbors. The United States hopes that both Japan and its neighbors will find constructive ways to deal with sensitive issues from the past, to improve their relations, and to promote cooperation in advancing our shared goals of regional peace and stability. We take note of the Prime Minister’s expression of remorse for the past and his reaffirmation of Japan's commitment to peace.<sup>253</sup>

This statement is interesting for several reasons. Firstly, it is the first official statement concerning the Yasukuni visits by the United States, which up until that point had remained silent regarding the visits. Secondly, the statement is couched in terms of international cooperation, asking “Japan and its neighbors” to find ways to deal with this issue, placing the onus of reconciliation neither wholly on Japan nor on its neighbors. Furthermore, no mention is made of the shrine itself or of the narrative of the war that the shrine presents which, as with the news articles discussed previously, requires the reader

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<sup>252</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, “Statement by the Spokesperson of the ROK Government on Japanese Prime Minister Abe’s visit to the Yasukuni Shrine,” December 26, 2013.

<sup>253</sup> Embassy of the United States in Tokyo, Japan, “Statement on Prime Minister Abe's December 26 Visit to Yasukuni Shrine,” December 26, 2013, Accessed: 2/6/16, <http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/p/tp-20131226-01.html>.

to forget the role the American Occupation play in the controversy. Finally, the American statement, unlike the objections by China and Korea, accepts the notion that Abe is expressing remorse for the past and continuing to work towards peace. It is unsurprising that this is the case, as Japan was the United States' staunchest ally in the region during the Cold War and continues as such. Not to accept Abe's statement would be damaging to relations.

The European Union also took similar note of Abe's visit, with Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, issuing a statement which noted that "[Abe's visit] is not conducive to lowering tensions in the region or to improving relations with Japan's neighbours, especially China and Republic of Korea."<sup>254</sup> She further stated that "The EU urges the countries involved to build positive and constructive ties with their neighbours that will bolster confidence, defuse tensions and assure the long term stability of the region."<sup>255</sup> Like the American statement, no mention is made of World War II and the issues of memory it entails.

Articles in American newspapers take the same neutral tone as before in an attempt to contextualize the visit for an unfamiliar audience. As evidence of this, consider the word cloud in Figure 11, comprised of adjective from mentions of Yasukuni in the *New York Times* from 2013-15.

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<sup>254</sup> Catherine Ashton, "Statement by the Spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the visit of Prime Minister Abe to Yasukuni Shrine," European Union, December 26, 2013, Accessed 2/6/16, [http://eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2013/131226\\_01\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2013/131226_01_en.pdf).

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.



Figure 11: Adjective cloud from the *New York Times* from 2013-15

In this word cloud, we again see many words that imply the existence of a discussion concerning the historical aspects of the shrine. Those words, however, co-occur with many words that imply an attempt to place the Yasukuni controversy within a broader context, also discussing the economic and political ramifications of the visits and linking them to other issues in Japan's international relations.

Further evidence for this trend can be seen in other American media sources' responses to the visits. One *New York Times* article on Abe's visit focused on Abe's history with the shrine, the international backlash resulting from the visit, and the broader context of the visit, mentioning the attempts to revise Article 9 and the island disputes with China and South Korea, devoting a single sentence to describing the visit.<sup>256</sup> A *Washington Post* article follows a similar route, also discussing the history of the shrine's controversy going back to Nakasone and detailing Abe's reasons for visiting.<sup>257</sup> A *CNN* article focused on the international criticism of the visit and its diplomatic context, noting

<sup>256</sup> Hiroko Tabuchi, "Japanese Premier Visits Contentious War Shrine," *New York Times*, December 25, 2013, Accessed: 2/6/16, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/26/world/asia/japanese-premier-visits-contentious-war-shrine.html>.

<sup>257</sup> Chico Harlan, "Japanese prime minister's visit to Yasukuni war shrine adds to tensions in Asia," December 26, 2013, Accessed: 2/6/16, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/japanese-prime-ministers-visit-to-yasukuni-war-shrine-spurs-new-tension-in-asia/2013/12/26/c04b0616-6df8-11e3-b405-7e360f7e9fd2\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/japanese-prime-ministers-visit-to-yasukuni-war-shrine-spurs-new-tension-in-asia/2013/12/26/c04b0616-6df8-11e3-b405-7e360f7e9fd2_story.html).



that the visit would only further damage already strained relations over the island disputes.<sup>258</sup>

### **A Computational Perspective on the Continuity of the Yasukuni Issue**

The criticisms made of both Koizumi and Abe are very similar. In both periods, the domestic criticism focused on both the constitutional ramifications of the visits and the problems of historical memory associated with the shrine. The international criticism from Japan's Asian neighbors, on the other hand, focused more on the issues of memory as a way of critiquing Japan's present behavior and perceived heightening militarism, using the shrine as a scapegoat. The data can be used in conjunction with term frequency analysis and term frequency analysis to demonstrate the static nature of the controversy, as was done earlier with the differing foci of domestic and international sources.

Term frequency analysis is useful in examining these trends in the controversy. For example, I generated word clouds from all of the adjectives in sentences that mentioned Yasukuni Shrine in both the *Japan Times* and *China Daily* newspapers then limited the word clouds to only use the 100 most frequent words from each source, giving us the following results in Figure 12:

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<sup>258</sup> Ed Payne and Yoko Wakatsuki, "Japanese Prime Minister Abe visits controversial Yasukuni war shrine," *CNN*, December 28, 2013, Accessed: 2/6/16, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/12/25/world/asia/japan-pm-war-shrine/>.

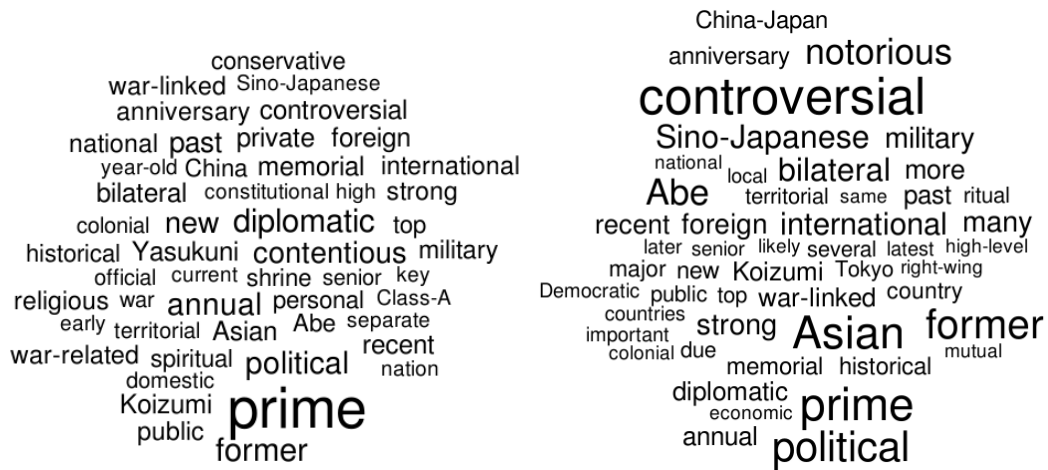


Figure 12. Adjective clouds for the *Japan Times* (at left) and the *China Daily* (at right)

There are two noteworthy aspects of these images. It should be noted that Koizumi and Abe both appear quite frequently, which underscores their importance in the controversy in addition to the above analysis of the polarized language over time, further supporting this particular periodization of the controversy. Additionally, the *Japan Times* uses words like “constitutional” and “religious” alongside words like “war-linked” and “colonial.” *China Daily* only contains words like “war-linked” and “colonial,” omitting those that would imply a concern for constitutionality. Given these differences, one can infer that the *Japan Times* focuses on the issue of legality in addition to the historical issues, while *China Daily* is more concerned by militarist overtones of the Yasukuni visits. As has been demonstrated in the historical discussion above, we see a trend that is remarkably similar to this through close reading of documents from the corpora in addition to other primary sources. Term frequency analysis is quite useful in examining these trends in the controversy.

The nature of the Yasukuni controversy can also be studied by plotting the frequency of polarized language based on the month of the article’s publication. This gives us the graph in Figure 13.

## Highly Polarized Sentence Frequency By Month

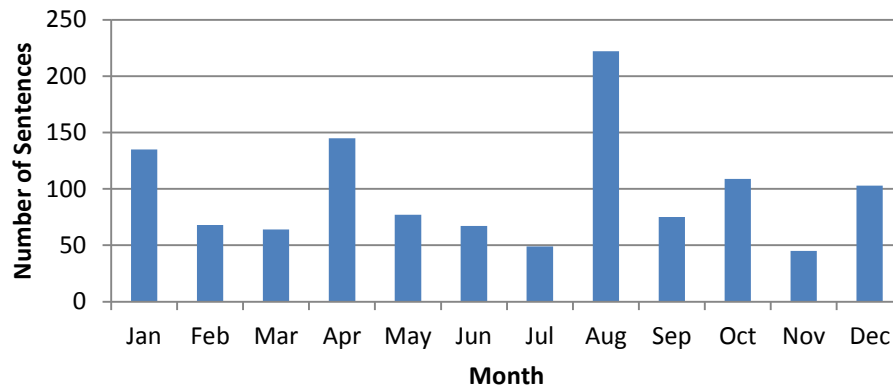


Figure 13. Polarized language frequency as a function of month, based on data from 2000-2015

August is a clear outlier, which indicates that articles written in August, since it contains the anniversary of the end of World War II, are more likely to contain polarized language. From this, we can infer that the anniversaries play a role in the Yasukuni debate. Additionally, the high volume of polarized language in August does not persist into September, which underscores the nature of the Yasukuni controversy as a rather intermittent issue. Articles are written that mention it in response to the August visits, which are exceptionally controversial, but the discussion does not last long beyond the initial outcry.

The static nature of the controversy from 2000 onwards is also evident from the data if one applies differential term frequency analysis, also described in chapter 2. To apply this method, I took all of the sentences mentioning Yasukuni from articles written during the two periods identified by the polarized language frequency analysis, Koizumi's term as Prime Minister from 2001-06 and Abe's second term from 2013-15. The distribution resulting from comparing the sentences containing mentions of Yasukuni Shrine from Koizumi's term to those of Abe's term shows very little variance. Across all of the terms, the average frequency variation

is  $-5.857 \times 10^{-5} \pm 0.008\%$ . This implies that the language changes little between the two periods of time. Given that we lack any notion of what a standard “variance profile” looks like (i.e, for an arbitrary set of sentences from an arbitrary set of documents, how much can we expect the language to vary on average), it is difficult to say exactly how much (or little) the language changes over time in this case relative to the norm. On the other hand, the historical evidence, as previously discussed, also suggests that the discussion concerning the controversy changes relatively little from 2000 onwards, which supports this interpretation of the data, regardless of the lack of a concrete ground truth.

The Yasukuni controversy’s development from 2000 onwards is reflective of Japan’s changing place in East Asia. Criticism of Yasukuni visits is used by Japan’s neighbors to critique its actions in other spheres, like the territorial disputes and the perceived shift towards militarism. While the reasons underlying the criticism change, the central objections remain the same: that the shrine visits represent an endorsement of Japan’s militarist past and that the shrine acts as a symbol of the continued contest to control the memorialization of World War II. Domestically, the criticism has remained focused on the issues of memory as part of the ongoing contest over memory of World War II in Japan.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions

The Yasukuni controversy, as has been shown, is a complex, multifaceted issue. Part of why this is the case is that the shrine itself creates a narrative of the war which glorifies the Japanese military, downplays its atrocities, overemphasizes Japanese suffering, and honors convicted war criminals. As a result of this narrative, official government visits to the shrine, especially after the enshrinement of the Class A war criminals in 1978, have provoked sharp international criticism and domestic controversy.

The context of the Yasukuni controversy has changed significantly over the course of its history. Prior to the 1980s, it was an issue debated only in Japan in the context of enshrinement politics. By the 2000s, however, Yasukuni became emblematic of controversies surrounding how Japan faces both its past and its future discussed both within Japan and internationally and acted as a symbol over the continuing contest over the memorialization of World War II. The divisive use of Yasukuni as a symbol of an aggressive foreign policy as with Abe and Koizumi's visits despite their pacifist overtones and as a symbol of Japan's unrepentant view of the past and worrying future potential in the responses to those visits by South Korea and China have also contributed to the multidimensional meaning of Yasukuni.

Internationally, the Yasukuni controversy has been subsumed into the broader tapestry of Japan's international relations and become a scapegoat used to criticize Japan's actions in other areas, like the controversies over wartime sexual slavery, textbook revision, or the island disputes. The sources of international criticism have also expanded, with the United States and European Union being among more recent critics of Yasukuni visits, ignoring the historical issues in favor of attempting to encourage regional stability without attacking any particular group, reflecting the increased importance of Yasukuni Shrine at the international level.

Domestically, the critics of the Yasukuni visits and their motivations have also changed over time. Although the kin of war dead and religious figures have been critical of the visits, they have from time to time been joined in their criticism by members of the Japanese political elite and business circles who viewed the visits as detrimental to Japan's diplomatic and economic prospects abroad. Popular criticism seems to have steadily declined over the course of the 2000s, as represented by the decrease in criticism of Abe's visit compared to those of Koizumi, perhaps indicative of Japan's slow shift to the right.

Apart from this shift in context, the content of discussions concerning the shrine has remained fairly static since its emergence as an international issue with Nakasone's 1985 visit. International criticism of shrine visits from Japan's Asian neighbors, regardless of time period, have remained focused on the issues of memory epitomized by the shrine, particularly on the presence of the Class A war criminals. The domestic debate has also consistently invoked issues of constitutionality and religious freedom alongside issues of historical memory as an alternative, more concrete means of criticizing the government's unwillingness to come to terms with Japan's militarist past. This analysis is supported not only by an analysis of media sources and government documents discussing the shrine visits, but also by the computational evidence from the newspaper corpora.

Methodologically, this project has demonstrated the utility of computational methods in historical research involving media sources. The benefits of this approach were twofold. Firstly, the analysis of polarized language over time helped define the periodization of the controversy by showing the importance of Koizumi and Abe's visits in media discussions of the shrine, Secondly, term frequency analysis provided an additional method of verifying trends within the controversy through demonstrating the differing foci of domestic and international media

concerning the shrine visits and providing evidence for the changing context of the Yasukuni controversy by showing the links between the Yasukuni controversy and other issues like the territorial disputes and the “comfort women” controversy, giving a higher-level view of the overall discussion of the controversy than that provided by close reading.

## Appendix

The 1946 Japanese Constitution:

[http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution\\_and\\_government\\_of\\_japan/constitution\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html)

Yasukuni Shrine map: <http://www.yasukuni.or.jp/english/precinct/map.html>

Statue of War Widow with Children



Monument of Dr. Pal



Statues for Horses, Carrier pigeons, and Dogs



Register of Divinities (Reijibo Hōanden)





Chinreisha (Spirit-Pacifying Shrine)



Statue of Ōmura Masujirō



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