Neutralize Yasukuni Visits: A Step towards Resolving the Yasukuni Controversy between Japan and China

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The phrase "hot economics, cold politics" (jingre zhengleng) has been used to describe Sino-Japanese relations since the 1990s. Despite increasingly interwoven economic interests, the two governments have not been able to move forward in their relations, plagued by their divergent interpretations of wartime history. Different approaches towards historical memories have heightened the two peoples' distrust of each other and increased the elites' expectation of mutual conflicts.

The Yasukuni Shrine, a Shintō shrine in Tokyo, is a symbolic battlefield for historical disputes between Japan and China.[1] The Yasukuni controversy between Japan and China resolves around the nature of Japanese prime ministerial visits to the Yasukuni Shrine. From the Chinese official perspective, the Yasukuni Shrine, with its enshrinement of 14 Class-A war criminals (Japanese leaders who were found guilty of planning and waging the war of aggression during World War II) in 1978 and its Yūshūkan war museum that glorifies military heroism, represents Japan denying its war responsibility and aiming for remilitarization. The Japanese government argues that Yasukuni embodies Japanese cultural and religious traditions of remembering and mourning for the war dead. Prime minister's act of paying respect in Yasukuni is considered a domestic matter, and it is the prime minister's duty to mourn and appreciate what the deceased had contributed to the country.

In this essay, I will present the complexity of the Yasukuni controversy by discussing both divided opinions over visits to Yasukuni within Japan and between the Chinese and the

[1] The dispute between Japan and South Korea is not within the scope of this paper.

Japanese governments. While recognizing the challenge of solving the Yasukuni controversy, I argue that a proposal of neutralizing prime ministerial visits to Yasukuni can bridge the gulf between the divergent viewpoints as well as the different thinking of the two governments, thus mitigating the conflicts over Yasukuni visits.

Background: Yasukuni and State Shintō

The significance of the Yasukuni Shrine can be understood in the context of State Shintō. During the pre-Meiji period, Shintō (the way of kami) was perceived to be an extension of Buddhism; Shintō shrines had operated "as part of a temple-shrine complex controlled by the Buddhist priesthood for centuries."[2] The native deities (kami) that Shintō defines are deities of Japanese mythology, spirits of nature and deified emperors and heroes.[3] After 1868, however, Shintō's status was elevated by active state patronage. Shintō rites were unified and Shintō shrines were systematically organized by national rankings as they had never been before the modern period, creating what came to be called State Shintō. State Shintō was upheld by promoting the myths that arose in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries[4] of the emperor being a direct descendant of the imperial deities, and that the Japanese people and their country are superior to others because of their divine origins.

Ever since Shintō gained influence during the Meiji period, new shrines had been constructed, and among them, the Yasukuni Shrine became a great center of State Shintō.[5] The Yasukuni Shrine was originally established in 1869 as the Tokyo Shōkonsha (Tokyo Spirit-Inviting Shrine) to console the spirits of those who fought on behalf of the emperor

[2] Helen Hardacre, *Shintō and the State, 1868-1988* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 81.
[3] Ibid., 10.
[4] John Breen and Mark Teeuwen, *A New History of Shintō* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 45.
[5] Hardacre, *Shintō and the State,* 38.

against the Tokugawa followers during the Boshin War (1868-1869).[6] The shrine was renamed Yasukuni Jinja (Shrine of the Peaceful Nation or Shrine to Pacify the Realm) in 1879 and came to enshrine all those who died in wars including the Sino-Japanese Wars and World War II. Commoners who became soldiers and died on the battlefield were automatically apotheosized and worshipped as national deities at Yasukuni; and the fact that the emperor himself paid tribute to the souls of the war dead promoted the idea that it was a great honor to sacrifice one's life for the state.

The emphasis on death for the state was further politicized by Yasukuni's close connection to the military. Unlike other Shintō shrines, administered by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Yasukuni was under the control of the Army and Navy Ministries.[7] The chief priest of Yasukuni tended to be someone who had a military background with no Shintō training.[8] Frequent imperial pilgrimages to Yasukuni by the Shōwa Emperor in full military uniform between 1926 and 1945 were aimed to foster public support for the ongoing wars. Yasukuni became the embodiment of the most honorable way that a Japanese man could contribute to his country—dying on the battlefield. "I will be waiting for you at Yasukuni", is what Japanese soldiers said to their comrades before they left for missions during World War II.

State Shintō suffered a heavy blow under the Allied Occupation of Japan after World War II. The Shintō Directive of 1945 prohibited all state support for and patronage of Shintō. The 1947 Constitution of Japan guaranteed the separation of state and religion. Perceived to be 'a

[6] Yuki Miyamoto, "The Ethics of Commemoration: Religion and Politics in Nanjing, Hiroshima, and Yasukuni," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no.1 (2012): 56.
[7] Mike M. Mochizuki, "The Yasukuni Shrine Conundrum: Japan's Contested Identity and Memory," in *Northeast Asia's Difficult Past: Essays in Collective Memory*, ed. Barry Schwartz and Mikyoung Kim (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 33.
[8] John Breen, "Introduction: A Yasukuni Genealogy," in *Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past*, ed. John Breen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 13.

symbol of Japanese militarism', 'a war shrine', the Yasukuni Shrine was turned into a private religious entity, thus subjected to the stipulation of the Constitution.[9] However, the Shintō Directive was only rigidly enforced until the end of the Allied Occupation in 1952. Various forms of covert support for Shintō from the state have quietly resumed. For example, in order to register the war dead as deities, priests must have access to information such as the date and place of birth of each individual and the circumstances of death. When the Yasukuni Shrine made a private request for aid in collecting this information to the Ministry of Welfare, the ministry gave these data to Yasukuni free of charge; while the request was turned down by the ministry when the religious organization Perfect Liberty Kyōdan asked for the same services.[10] Nevertheless, pacifist movements have grown rapidly in Japan after the war ended;[11] and Japan's postwar democratic Constitution has promoted a pluralistic political environment where various issues and policies are discussed and debated, and Yasukuni is one of them.

Domestic Debate over Yasukuni Visits

Before Yasukuni became a source of contention between China and Japan, it was already a controversial place because of the constitutional principle of the separation of state and religion and Japanese people's varying war memories. Regarding state patronage for the Yasukuni Shrine, on one end of the ideological spectrum is the nationalist right who persistently pushed for reviving state support to Yasukuni. The core political force behind the momentum for renewed state support was the Japan Society for War-Bereaved Families

[9] 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), 110.
[10] Hardacre, *Shintō and the State,* 148.
[11] *Mari Yamamoto,* "Japan's Grassroots Pacifism," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* (2005), http://www.japanfocus.org/-Mari-YAMAMOTO/2102.

(Nihon Izokukai).[12] The Izokukai, with its large membership, has been a key voting bloc for the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) since its foundation, which explained LDP's support for Izokukai's demand of official worship at Yasukuni by the prime minister and the emperor. Conservative politicians of the LDP, supported by the Izokukai, the Association of Shintō Shrines and right-wing groups attempted to introduce a bill known as the Yasukuni Shrine Bill (Yasukuni hōan) five times from 1969 to 1974 to grant state support to Yasukuni.[13] The goal of the bill was to reinstate the prewar status of the Yasukuni Shrine by classifying it as a nonreligious entity, in order to remove the constitutional restraints on official visits to Yasukuni. This reminds people of the state's rhetoric of State Shintō before World War II: declaring that State Shintō was nonreligious or suprareligious, the Japanese state was able to make public participation in Shintō rites obligatory and suppress any religion that would challenge the status of State Shintō.

The bill was finally dropped because of fierce opposition from a broad coalition of leftist political parties, labor unions, and religious bodies, which represent the other end of the spectrum. The opponents of restoring state patronage for Yasukuni criticize how the shrine endangers religious freedom and helps revive militarism by extinguishing in Japan a sense of war responsibility. They pointed out that Yasukuni rejected the requests from Japanese Buddhists and Christians asking their deceased family members be removed from the enshrinement registers of Yasukuni on the grounds that the enshrined are now national deities who ceased to belong to a particular household. Once the ritual of adding names of the deceased to a Book of Souls is performed, the individual souls are transformed to deities that

[12] Mochizuki, "The Yasukuni Shrine Conundrum," 35.
[13] Hardacre, *Shintō and the State,* 160.

attach to the nation and cannot be separated as individuals.[14] What the liberals also find problematic is the narrative of history presented by the Yūshūkan museum, which reopened in 1985. In explaining World War II (which the museum refers to as the "Great East Asian War"), the museum portrayed western powers as the instigator of the war, whereas Japan was forced into the conflict and acted as a liberator of Asia,[15] which was also the pre-war narrative. The suffering that the people of other Asian countries endured at the hands of the Japanese army is largely absent in the museum. Critics argue that by glossing over or denying Japanese atrocities during war, Yūshūkan is promoting an amnesia of war responsibility among the Japanese people.

What is also absent in Yūshūkan is the horror of war for the Japanese people. For example, many Okinawans remain a strong oppositional force to prime ministerial visits to Yasukuni, where 55,000 Okinawan civilians were enshrined as 'war heroes' who cooperated with Japanese military personnel in the war.[16] While Yūshūkan praised the entire population of Okinawa for their brave resistance to foreign military forces during the Battle of Okinawa, it obliterated the memories of many Okinawans who testified that the Japanese "imperial army used the civilian population as shields, sometimes murdered them, and even drove many to acts of group suicide."[17] The Okinawans see the act of categorizing civilian victims as quasi-military personnel, and granting compensation accordingly, as a scheme to cover up the Japanese military's crimes against Okinawans. While some Japanese view Yasukuni as a

[14] Mochizuki, "The Yasukuni Shrine Conundrum," 32.
[15] Yuki Miyamoto, *Beyond the Mushroom Cloud: Commemoration, Religion, and Responsibility after Hiroshima* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 68.
[16] Gaven McCormack and Satoko Oka Norimatsu, *Resistant Islands: Okinawa Confronts Japan and the United States* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 37.
[17] Nobumasa Tanaka, "Okinawa kara Okinawa to tou 'Yasukuni' ," *Sekai*, September 2004, quoted in John Breen, ed.,*Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 153.

symbol of peace, many Okinawans see it a place that glorifies the brutal war during which numerous Okinawan and Japanese lives were lost in vain.

Submerged in the fierce debate is a broad middle ground that might better represent Japanese people's view about history. Many Japanese recognize Japan's past aggression and they acknowledge the need to apologize for its wrongdoings. At the same time, many believe that "Japan's past history is not all negative, that Japan was not the only country responsible for the Pacific War and that Japan has the right to mourn its war dead like any other country."[18] It is important to note that for the majority of the Japanese people according to polling data, the Yasukuni Shrine is a "place to remember Japan's war dead" rather than a "symbol of Japan's militarism."[19] The Yasukuni Shrine, after all, is a place for mourning; it is the place where veterans fulfill their promises to "meet again at Yasukuni"; it is the place where the bereaved families mourn their loved ones.[20]

The Chinese Government Position on Yasukuni Visits

Although the enshrinement of Class-A war criminals became the focal point for Chinese protest, the Chinese government did not clearly object to Japanese prime ministerial visits to Yasukuni immediately after the enshrinement of Class-A was made public in 1979. Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro's visit on August 15 (the day of Japan's surrender), 1983, was the first time that Beijing condemned the Japanese prime minister for visiting the Yasukuni Shrine.[21] It is important to understand that though the enshrinement of war criminals added intensity to Chinese complaints; it was how Nakasone contextualized his visits that alarmed

[18] Mochizuki, "The Yasukuni Shrine Conundrum," 46.
[19] Kazuya Fukuoka, "Memory, Nation, and National Commemoration of War Dead: A Study of Japanese Public Opinion on the Yasukuni Controversy," *Asian Politics & Policy* 5, no. 1 (2013): 42.
[20] Breen, "Introduction: A Yasukuni Genealogy," 11.
[21] Steven E. Lewentowicz, "In Response to Yasukuni: the Curious Approach the Chinese and South Korean Governments Take Toward an Unresolved Link to the Past" (MA thesis., Naval Postgraduate School,2013), 60.

the Chinese government. With Japan becoming an economic superpower in the 1980s, Nakasone sought to create a positive national identity commensurate with Japan's status that would lift the Japanese people out of the humiliating defeat of World War II.[22] His agenda of ending the post-war era through a reinterpretation of history signaled the government's attempt to transform Japan's post-war mentality that the Chinese elites were not ready for. It is also crucial to note the Chinese domestic context during the Nakasone administration. The Chinese populace perceived Japan with increasing hostility in the 1980s not only because of the Yasukuni visits, but also due to China's large trade deficit with Japan.[23] Japanese products had flooded into the Chinese market in the 1980s, which was seen by the Chinese public as an act of "economic invasion" of China.[24] Against this backdrop, Nakasone's visit to Yasukuni in 1985 triggered anti-Japanese protests staged by thousands of Chinese students in Beijing and Xian.[25] These protests seemed to have official approval at first, but the authorities soon rescinded support as protests spread nationwide and domestic grievances such as inequality and corruption were also addressed by students.[26]

Nakasone's statement of making Yasukuni the place where the state could officially express its respects to those who gave their lives for their country, along with his efforts to strengthen Japanese military capacity, had made the Yasukuni shrine a symbol of Japanese attempts to revive militarist nationalism in some Chinese elites' eyes.[27] From then on, Beijing showed increasing and consistent objections to prime ministerial visits to Yasukuni.[28]

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[22] He Yinan, *The Search for Reconciliation: Sino-Japanese and German-Polish Relations since World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 209.
[23] Lewentowicz, "In Response to Yasukuni," 62.
[24] Ibid., 61.
[25] Ibid., 61.
[26] Allen S. Whiting, *China Eyes Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 67-76.
[27] Mochizuki, "The Yasukuni Shrine Conundrum," 42.
[28] Lewentowicz, "In Response to Yasukuni," 47.

The Chinese government maintains the position that Japanese prime ministerial visits to Yasukuni is tantamount to a defense of Japan's war with China and a glorification of war criminals.

The Chinese government reportedly attempted to resolve the controversy by reaching an informal agreement with Nakasone after fierce anti-Japanese demonstrations broke out in China in 1985. Revealed by China's ambassador to Japan, Wang Yi, in a 2005 Tokyo speech, the informal agreement stated that, "if the top Japanese officials – the prime minister, the chief cabinet secretary, and the foreign minister – would refrain from visiting the shrine, in return China would not condemn pilgrimages there by lesser-known figures."[29] Nakasone denied the existence of such an agreement in 2005. However, the fact that no Japanese prime minister visited Yasukuni for seven years after Nakasone's 1985 visit implies that the two governments probably had attained some sort of mutual understanding over this issue.[30] Nevertheless, the temporary peace over Yasukuni was soon shattered after Prime Minister Koizumi's high-profile visits in 2001.

While there are genuine concerns about Japanese militarist revival among some Chinese elites, domestic political concerns are also crucial in explaining the Chinese government's hard stance towards Japan over historical issues such as Yasukuni. The Chinese Communist Party's legitimacy was seriously challenged domestically by students who demanded political reforms during the Tiananmen Incident in 1989. In order to restore regime legitimacy, the Chinese government tried to supplement Communism with nationalist propaganda to secure

[29] *Agency France Press*, April 27, 2005, quoted in Susan L. Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 163.
[30] Susan L. Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 163.

public support.[31] The nationalist campaign aimed to instill patriotism by emphasizing China's history of resisting foreign aggression, and the 1937-1945 Sino-Japanese War was particularly highlighted to show Chinese suffering and heroic resistance. The Chinese Communist Party illustrated its political legitimacy by emphasizing its leadership in 1945 victory in the Anti-Japanese War.[32] Chinese politicians also found Japan-related issues useful for presenting themselves as strong leaders and for diverting attention from difficult domestic problems.[33]

Anti-Japanese sentiments quickly flared up in the 1990s as tragic wartime stories continued to be retold by the older generation and the Chinese people's suffering during the war was never fully addressed by the Chinese government. Over the Yasukuni issue, although the Chinese public's views are not uniform, recent opinion polls showed that a majority of the Chinese people believe a Japanese prime minister should not visit the shrine no matter under what circumstances.[34] Anti-Japanese nationalism proved to be a double-edged sword for the Chinese government, however, for while it promoted political cohesion to some extent, it also undermined Beijing's national and diplomatic interests. The Chinese government found it increasingly difficult to stabilize its relations with Japan, a country with which it shares many common economic interests.[35] In April 2005, a series of violent anti-Japanese demonstrations erupted in more than a dozen Chinese cities, protesting against a newly approved textbook in Japan that downplays Japan's brutal actions during its occupation of China in World War II.[36]

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[31] Yinan, *The Search for Reconciliation*, 244.
[32] Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower*, 144.
[33] Ibid., 144.
[34] The Genron NPO and China Daily, *The 9th Japan-China Public Opinion Poll: Analysis Report on the Comparative Data* (Tokyo, 2013), 23.
[35] Shiro Armstrong, "The China-Japan Relationship and Core Australian Economic Interests," *East Asia Forum*, May 27, 2012, http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/05/27/the-china-japan-relationship-and-core-australian-economic-interests/.
[36] Jian Zhang, "The Influence of Chinese Nationalism on Sino-Japanese Relations," in *China-Japan Relations in the*

As the protests were largely spontaneous, the Chinese government was hard-pressed to find a delicate way to halt the protests before they turned against the government itself.[37] Since the public started to equate being tough with Japan with being patriotic, Chinese leaders did not dare to back down over conflicts with Japan, and this applies to the Yasukuni controversy.

An Evaluation of the Current Available Solutions

With respect to the bilateral dispute over prime ministers' visits to Yasukuni, two solutions have been proposed in the past. The first focuses on finding or creating another national secular memorial to encourage foreign as well as domestic leaders to pay respects to the war dead there. The idea was first raised by Nakasone in the 1980s and has emerged from time to time but always ended up being buried again.[38] Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery, where actual remains of 'unknown soldiers' of World War II were enshrined,[39] was discussed as an alternative to the Yasukuni Shrine. In fact, the neo-nationalist Prime Minister Abe paid a visit to Chidorigafuchi on August 15, 2013.[40] Nevertheless, despite opposition from the right wing of the LDP and the Izokukai, a secular national cemetery cannot replace the Yasukuni Shrine in practice. Since 2,466,000 spirits of the war dead are enshrined in Yasukuni, the emotional bond between the bereaved families and Yasukuni cannot be substituted by another place. This means the importance of Yasukuni in the public's mentality will not decline much even with the establishment of another memorial; thus, the incentive for the prime minister to make visits to Yasukuni remains. Anti-Yasukuni intellectuals like Takahashi Tetsuya have

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Twenty-first Century: Creating a New Past?, ed. Michael Heazle and Nick Night (Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2007), 15.

[37] Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower*, 142-143.

[38] John Breen, "Yasukuni and the Loss of Historical Memory," in *Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past*, ed. John Breen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 162.

[39] Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery, http://www.env.go.jp/garden/chidorigafuchi/english/index.html.

[40] "Naigai kōkan no Chidorigafuchi senbotsu sha haka en sanpai," Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery for the War Dead, http://www.boen.or.jp/boen00.htm.

pointed out that, with the government consistently refusing to seriously pursue the question of war responsibility, any new peace memorial could become a second Yasukuni.[41] On the other hand, it is clear that the Chinese government will not be satisfied with the establishment of a new memorial if Japanese prime ministers continue to visit Yasukuni. For instance, while Chinese official news sources such as *Xinhua Ribao* and *Renmin Ribao* mentioned the fact that Prime Minister Abe offered the wreaths on August 15 at Chidorigafuchi, it was quite marginal amid their wide coverage of Japanese Cabinet members visiting Yasukuni and Chinese protest against it.[42] Although lacking poll data, I highly doubt that the majority of the Chinese people know the existence of a secular national cemetery named Chidorigafuchi because of scarce Chinese media attention on it.

Another solution is to make changes to Yasukuni itself, such as de-enshrining the Class-A war criminals and changing the exhibitions of the Yūshūkan museum. Since the deities enshrined in Yasukuni are represented by slips of paper inscribed with their names, the removal of the Class-A would be a ritual act involving transferring the paper from the Yasukuni Repostitory to a repository elsewhere.[43] However, the Yasukuni priesthood has remained strongly opposed to de-enshrinement by claiming that the spirits once enshrined can never be dislodged according to Shintō traditions. Meanwhile, even though the Yūshūkan underwent some modifications during 2006-2007 to "remove inappropriate expressions that may be viewed as intellectually dishonest or far-fetched" because of increasing pressure from the United States, the modifications were rather limited and one of the people who undertook

[41] Tetsuya Takahashi, *Yasukuni mondai* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2005), 214, quoted in John Breen. ed.,*Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 162.
[42] *Xinhua Ribao*, August 15, 2013, http://www.chinanews.com/gj/2013/08-15/5165837.shtml.
Renmin Ribao, August 15, 2013, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/micro-reading/mfeed/hotwords/20130818877_2.html.
[43] Breen, "Introduction: A Yasukuni Genealogy," 5.

this project admitted that "it would be better to completely rewrite everything."[44] Changes at Yasukuni initiated by the Japanese government are not possible in the near future as they will be seen as the state's interference in religious freedom, an infringement upon the constitutional principle of separation of state and religion. Without voluntary actions that come from the shrine itself, changing Yasukuni does not seem to be a practical option.

A New Proposal: Chinreisha

Based on the above analysis, I propose a new solution that can alleviate the tensions between China and Japan over prime ministers' visits to Yasukuni, and this is where a small shrine named Chinreisha comes into play. Adjusting its former position on Yasukuni visits, the Chinese government could strike a deal with the Japanese leaders that "China will not protest Japanese prime ministers' visits to the Yasukuni Shrine as long as every time the prime minister pays homage to the deities at the main sanctuary, he would do the same for those enshrined in Chinreisha."

An introduction of Chinreisha is needed to clarify how this proposal is going to work. Most of the rites that Yasukuni priests perform and the pilgrimages the Japanese prime ministers make, take place in the Honden (Main sanctuary) of Yasukuni. To the south of the main sanctuary sits a small shrine named Chinreisha (Spirit Pacifying Shrine) that is much less known to the public.[45] Chinreisha offers a narrative of the war different from the rest of Yasukuni. Established by the Chief Priest Tsukuba Fujimaro in 1965, Chinreisha contains two *za* (seats) for deities not enshrined in the Main sanctuary.[46] One is dedicated to all of those

[44] Hisahiko Okazaki, "Telling the Truth at Yasukuni," *The Japan Times*, February 24, 2007, http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2007/02/24/commentary/telling-the-truth-at-yasukuni/#.UnanxaVNboQ.
[45] John Breen, "Yasukuni Shrine: Ritual and Memory," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* (2005), http://www.japanfocus.org/-John-Breen/2060.
[46] Breen, "Introduction: A Yasukuni Genealogy," 9.

Japanese who fought against the imperial army during the Boshin War and those who died in "unnatural" ways in wars since 1853, such as soldiers who died of starvation or illness on the warfront or soldiers who took their lives before capture.[47] The other *za* is dedicated to all the war dead regardless of their nationality: British, American, Chinese, Korean and South East Asian.[48] The priest Tsukuba sought to explain the rationale behind the shrine in 1964: "It is my belief that the kami of Yasukuni are active even now as harbingers of peace, standing hand in hand with the spirits of the war dead from all countries of the world. The [construction of the new Chinreisha] renders possible for the first time in Japan the veneration of the glorious spirits of the war dead of all the nations of the earth."[49] Chinreisha, however, was concealed from the public by a steel fence installed by the Chief Priest Matsudaira Nagayoshi, who came after Tsukaba in 1977.[50] This explains why even the vast majority of Japanese visitors to Yasukuni are not aware of its existence. The true motivation for Matsudaira Nagayoshi to close Chinreisha remains unknown; however, it is important to note that Matsudaira, a former Imperial Army officer, was also responsible for reopening the controversial Yūshūkan museum in 1985.[51]

Chinreisha attracted public attention in 2006 when it was reopened to the public by the Chief Priest at that time – Nanbu Toshiaki. Nanbu's decision to remove the fence probably has something to do with his background. As indicated by Breen, Nanbu's ancestors, who belonged to domains that fought against the Meiji government in the Boshin War, are

[47] *Tokyo Shimbun*, "Chinreisha Yasukuni no kaitō kenshō," August 12, 2006, http://blog.goo.ne.jp/harumi-s_2005/e/9d41ec4121361d073feb5b1fe3052ef3.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Breen, "Introduction: A Yasukuni Genealogy," 9.
[50] Ibid., 10.
[51] Ibid., 10.

enshrined in Chinreisha.[52] The newest Chief Priest of the Yasukuni Shrine, announced in January 18, 2013, is Tokugawa Yasuhisa.[53] The connotation of the great-grandson of the last Tokugawa shogun being selected as the chief priest of Yasukuni will be discussed later.

This proposal can be effective not only because it requires both China and Japan to make concessions, but also because it would neutralize the nature of Yasukuni, moving to a middle ground and away from the extreme narratives surrounding Yasukuni. To many Chinese people, Yasukuni stands for revisionist political forces' attempts to deny Japan's war responsibility and to remilitarize. A shift of attention from the Class-A war criminals and Yūshūkan to the Chinreisha shrine will help the Chinese public to see a more complicated picture of Japanese historical views. Instead of fixating on the vocal right-wing groups in Japan, Chinese can perceive Japanese people's voices of pursing peace through the lens of Chinreisha. While the deceased enshrined in the main sanctuary can be individually identified, Chinreisha provides a collective enshrinement for the war dead as there is not a name list attached to the shrine. Therefore, a Japanese prime ministerial visit to Chinreisha would provide a symbolic mourning for all the war dead of the world, including the Chinese. When Prime Minister Koizumi stressed that he was not paying respect to specific individuals, such as the Class-A criminals,[54] it is hard to tell because the Class-A war criminals are enshrined with everyone else in Reijibo Hoanden (Repository for the Divinities) behind the main sanctuary. However, because Chinreisha is physically separate from the main sanctuary, the Japanese prime minister can make it clear that it is a matter of mourning rather than

[52] Breen, "Yasukuni Shrine: Ritual and Memory."
[53] *Asahi Shimbun*, "Yasukuni jinja jūichi dai gūji ni Tokugawa Yasuhisa shi," January 18,2013, http://www.asahi.com/national/update/0118/TKY201301180248.html.
[54] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Basic Position of the Government of Japan Regarding Prime Minister Koizumi's Visits to Yasukuni Shrine*, October, 2005, http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/postwar/yasukuni/position.html.

glorifying by paying a visit there.

For the Japanese people, Chinreisha could call a more nuanced interpretation of the past, "a past of perpetrators and of victims, of winners and losers, of horror as well as heroism,"[55] that might better express the majority's consciousness. Clarifying Prime Minister Abe's position on visiting Yasukuni Shrine at a press conference, Foreign Minister Fumoi Kishida said: "first of all those people who have sacrificed their lives for the country, we must pay respect to those people. And Japan consistently has made efforts to build a peace loving nation and we have consistently contributed to the international society by building a society that protects peace and human rights."[56] In line with the government's position of visiting Yasukuni as an act of honoring peace, adding Chinreisha as an object of pilgrimage will only reaffirm the prime minister's pledge for world peace. I predict that this act will win public support since the majority of the Japanese people view Japan as a country aspiring for peace. Though there is not available survey data to generalize people's opinion over paying respect to Chinreisha, I find that some Japanese showed a very positive view of paying visit there because of its enshrinement of the war dead from all around the world.[57] If the proposal can secure a large domestic support base, Japanese prime minister will find it wise to adopt the proposal. Whether the proposal can gain support from the Yasukuni priesthood remains uncertain, though the new chief priest's Tokugawa lineage may play a constructive role in promoting the status of Chinreisha, in which 19th century Tokugawa supporters were enshrined.

[55] Breen, "Yasukuni Shrine: Ritual and Memory."
[56] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Press Conference by Minister for Foreign Affairs Fumio Kishida,* August 2, 2013, http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/kaiken/kaiken24e_000020.html#topic3.
[57] Blog: http://shisly.cocolog-nifty.com/blog/2013/04/post-e874.html
Online forum: http://detail.chiebukuro.yahoo.co.jp/qa/question_detail/q1344846748.

There are three possible responses to the proposal from the Japanese side. The worst case is dismissal. The Japanese government may cite Shintō rituals to argue that there is no precedent of prime ministers' worshipping the spirits of foreign soldiers or that the deceased enshrined in Chinreisha are considered unlucky because they died in less honorable ways, and thus should not be given official pilgrimage. Nevertheless, in this case, Chinreisha still gets a lot of publicity, which will foster domestic debate over whether foreign war dead should be treated as equal to national war dead and how Japanese should mourn and remember the war dead, facilitating a less extreme historical perspective. Another possibility is that the proposal discourages the prime minister's visits to Yasukuni. In order to avoid the pressure of paying respect to Chinreisha, the prime minister chooses not to visit Yasukuni at all. Because this result is what the Chinese government initially wanted, the Chinese government will not have any reason to protest if the prime minister gives up his visit. The third result would be that the Japanese government accepts this proposal, and the Chinese government does as it promised and stops protesting. To be sure, I recognize that these are all hypothetical scenarios. Further research is needed to learn about how the Japanese public and Yasukuni priesthood views paying visits to Chinreisha and possible objections from both the Chinese and the Japanese sides.

When Prime Minister Koizumi argued that visiting Yasukuni is a matter of domestic issue, he overlooked the fact that this act also epitomizes a historical perspective that seriously affects Japan's diplomatic relations with China. It is undeniable that recent Chinese official depictions of Japanese political image are exaggerated, overemphasizing Japan's right-wing views of historical issues whereas more liberal and peaceful opinions are ignored or even

denied. However, it is true that, 68 years after the end of World War II, the Japanese still have not reached a consensus over how they would remember the wars in a way that would unify the country as well as remedy the relations with its Asian neighbors. Haunted by historical issues, Japan will not be able to realize its national aspirations of playing a more active and positive role on the world stage. Settling the Yasukuni controversy can be a good start.

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