

Naïve Realism, a Social Misconception that Divides Us and Them: The Case of Yasukuni Shrine

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Abstract: The current study explores the common social misconception of naïve realism which has relentlessly divided people and obstructed resolution of human conflicts. The three underlying assumptions of naïve realism inform us that opposing parties hold different construal which leads to different behaviors; the parties tend to polarize construal differences between *us* and *them*; and people attribute subjective ideological bias to opponent's viewpoint or behavior. The current study tests the theoretical assumptions on a controversial international political issue of Japanese leaders' visits to the Yasukuni shrine. The findings have partially supported the underlying assumptions of naïve realism and further testified the power of naïve realism as a social misconception in deepening intergroup bias and broadening perceived disparity between groups. However, the study results have also provided support for the caveat of naïve realism in urging people to remain optimistic in searching for common ground between opposing parties. Although in bitter antagonism, supporters and non-supporters of Yasukuni are in fact not so distant in their opinions on the problem of enshrining Class-A criminals in Yasukuni which has long been deemed as the crux of the Yasukuni issue. The findings also revealed that attention should be redirected to the aspect of attending to feelings of other war-victim countries in Asia, a problem that truly polarizes supporters and non-supporters of Yasukuni.

Keywords: naïve realism, intergroup bias, construal, Yasukuni shrine, Class-A criminals

I. INTRODUCTION

In ancient China, opposition against emperors was treated as against the will of heaven (Smitha, 1999). An emperor's intolerance towards opposition could easily cost the lives of his opponents. Honoring democracy and civility, we at the 21st century are required by laws and social norms to ensure that voices of multiple sides, groups, and parties be heard. However, an emperor's intolerant attitude towards opposition can easily find its vestige among those in power, ranks and files, and the "ordinary" beings nowadays. After all, opposing partisans tend to attribute hostile intentions to each other (Robinson & Keltner, 1996). Although in no rights to take the lives of those against us, we are free to stereotype and spurn those on the other side of an issue.

On the phenomenon of partisan dispute, scholars have pointed out that opposing partisan groups differ in the way they construe a social issue of contention. Not only, people tend to exaggerate the construal differences between them and their opponents (Chambers, Baron, & Inman, 2006), and wrongfully attribute the intergroup differences to ideological biases of their outgroup members (Robinson, Keltner, Ross, & Ross, 1995; Robinson & Keltner, 1996). In this study, social misperceptions, the underlying assumptions of *naïve realism*, will be used as the theoretical framework to study the controversial issue of Japanese political leader's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine. The purpose is to see how much the partisan groups of this issue differ in their viewpoints, whether they hold perception biases against each other to polarize their construal differences, and whether they attribute the differences to ideological subjectivity of the other side.

II. BACKGROUND and KEY CONCEPTS

Naïve realism: studies on social misconceptions

To many social psychologists, human beings are constantly ready to engage in intergroup bias (Ashburn-Nardo, Voils, & Monteith, 2001; Roth & Steffens, 2014). In addition, human beings are inclined to categorize selves and others. The characteristics that differentiate categories serve as a ready indicator to divide people into *us*/*them* or *ingroup*/*outgroup*. The fact that human beings often uphold different points of view on any issues makes yet another powerful marker of *us* versus *them*. Along the same vein, according to Wittenbrink, Gist, and Hilton (1999), human beings tend to form subjective construal and representations of their social environment. One assumption of naïve realism says that people are not fully aware of their own subjectivity. As a result, people often make incorrect predictions about others' attitudes and behaviors and

improper behavioral attributions about others (Fields & Schuman, 1976). Not only do most people overestimate the differences between them and their opponents, they also believe that they have seen the reality and hence more enlightened, whereas their adversaries have failed to see the light but have acted out of ideological bias and self-interest (Sherman, Nelson, & Ross, 2003). Based on the assumptions of human subjectivity and polarization of construal differences between opposing groups, Robinson and Keltner (1996) studied the partisanship phenomenon surrounding the Western Canon dispute. According to Robinson and Keltner, this dispute divides opposing groups along the dimension of preferred teaching material for introductory literature and civilization courses. On one hand, traditionalists advocate maintaining the status quo of keeping the traditional canon central to the curriculum. On the other hand, revisionists have pointed out the underrepresentation of female and minority authors and advocated inclusion of their works in the traditional canon. In their study, the self-identified traditionalists and revisionists were asked to make their book choices from a list of 50 books, make the same choice for people advocating an opposing view, and rate the educational values of chosen books. Their study results showed that the book preferences made by traditionalists and revisionists were influenced by their ideological orientation. Not only did both traditionalist and revisionists underestimate the actual overlap in book preferences between the two sides. Not only, they also exaggerated the ideological basis underlying the opposition's book selections.

The studies of Robinson, Keltner, Ross, & Ross (1995) on the abortion debate and the Howard Beach incident further supported the underlying assumptions of naïve realism. Participants in their study on abortion debate were asked to rate their sympathy level towards some abortion scenarios in addition to making the same rating judgments for both partisan groups. They also assessed as true or false some statements relating to illegalization of abortions and estimated how both partisan groups would rate those same statements. In compliance with the assumptions of naïve realism, Robinson et al.'s findings showed that pro-life and pro-choice respondents exaggerated the sympathy gap between the two partisan groups, and they tended to see the other side as being influenced by biasing effect of their political orientation. The assumption of naïve realism also holds true in Robinson et al.'s study on the case of Howard Beach incident in which there was significant overestimation of liberal-conservative construal differences and perceived ideological biases in construal of the other side (versus their own selves).

The three study results point out that we are precluded from potential agreement between us and our adversaries due to our own subjectivity and the tendency to overestimate construal differences between opposing groups (Robinson et al., 1995; Robinson & Keltner, 1996). That is, we often see others as thinking far more differently from us than they really do, so different that we are blind from the fact that some common ground in our views might exist (Sherman, Nelson, & Ross, 2003). In the current study, the assumptions of naïve realism were employed to examine the issue of Japanese political leaders' paying homage to the Yasukuni Shrine.

On August 15, 2006, the 61st anniversary of the end of World War II, former Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi made his last but official visit to the shrine before he completed his premiership term. There was in fact a hiatus of two decades between Mr. Koizumi's pilgrimage to Yasukuni and the one immediate before made by former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone ("Nakasone Stopped Making Official Visits," 2005). Mr. Koizumi's action sparked much outrage from neighboring Asian countries while there was a split in public opinion in domestic Japan. On December 26, 2013, incumbent Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited the war shrine, the first Japanese leader to have paid homage to the shrine since Koizumi. Seven years on, the pilgrimage had resulted in predictable reactions from Japan's neighbors – strong indignation and condemnation. In order to understand the various dimensions to this controversy, and how naïve realism might play out in this specific issue, it is necessary to put Yasukuni shrine within the broad historical context first.

The historic role of Yasukuni

Commissioned by Emperor Meiji in 1869, the Yasukuni shrine commemorates those who lost their lives at war for Japan. More than 2.5 million "souls" from the Boshin War in 1868 through World War II were honored in the shrine (Murphy, 2006). Japanese political leaders' visits to Yasukuni could have been a pure public display of respects to those who had sacrificed themselves at war for Japan. However, the fact that 14 Class-A wartime criminals are worshiped as war heroes in the shrine has turned a public homage into an international controversy (Liu, 2006; Powles, 1976) each and every time a Japanese political leader makes an appearance at the shrine. The 14 Class-A war criminals were the "Showa martyrs" who served as political and military leaders for Japan during World War II and were deemed as masterminds behind the war. At the end of the war, they were tried and convicted at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East in 1946 ("Emperor Showa Spoke from Heart," 2006). In 1978, the shrine decided to include Class-A war criminals in the list of people honored there ("Emperor Hirohito Vexed at Yasukuni's Honoring War Criminals," 2006). In 1979, the decision was made public. After 1975, Emperor Hirohito never visited the shrine again, a policy closely followed by his successor, Emperor Akihito (Murphy, 2006). A memorandum which recorded Emperor

Hirohito's (also known as Emperor Showa) remarks on Yasukuni was brought to light years later. The memo remarks, recorded by former Imperial Household Agency Grand Steward, described Emperor Hirohito's displeasure over the enshrinement of the 14 Class-A war criminals ("Emperor Hirohito Vexed at Yasukuni's Honoring War Criminals," 2006).

History of Japanese political leaders' visits to Yasukuni Shrine

Up to 1975, Emperor Hirohito had made seven visits to the shrine, all undertaken as private acts of worship (Powles, 1976). The emperor's practice of visit in a private capacity was adopted by Japanese prime ministers in the 1970s into 1980s. This had kept the shrine a sanctuary where Japan's militarist past was glorified ("Question of Yasukuni Remains Unresolved," 2006). Yasukuni turned into a flashpoint of contention when former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone made an official visit to the shrine on August 15, 1985, a date marking the 40th anniversary of the end of World War II ("Nakasone Stopped Making Official Visits," 2005). Not only was the visit the first official one made by a postwar Japanese prime minister, it had received much media fanfare (Murphy, 2006). Nakasone's visit was met with great opposition from Japan's neighboring countries, in particular China, Singapore, and South Korea that bore the brunt of Japanese wartime militarist aggression and colonialism (Matthews, 2003). Perplexed by the development of the Yasukuni problem into a diplomatic issue bigger than had expected, Nakasone instructed his chief Cabinet secretary to make a statement saying that Nakasone would refrain from making official visits to Yasukuni "out of consideration for neighboring countries" ("Nakasone Stopped Making Official Visits," 2005).

As such, former Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi's pilgrimage to Yasukuni was looked upon as Koizumi's renegade of his predecessor Nakasone's "gentlemen's agreement" with China and South Korea ("Japan Broke 'Gentlemen's Agreement' on Shrine," 2005). In addition, Koizumi's true intention in making such a move right before stepping down as Japan's prime minister was much speculated and criticized by the general public home and abroad. With the current political landscape in Japan and with Prime Minister Abe being seen as a nationalist, the voice often heard is frustrations at the repeated demands for apologies from neighboring Asian countries over Japan's war-time atrocities, which Yasukuni symbolically enshrines ("Moving on, after the Apology," 2015). As with other issues of contention, supporters and non-supporters of Yasukuni differ in their focus and outlook in approaching the problem.

Dimensions of the Yasukuni issue

Based on several news articles and a survey on Yasukuni visit conducted by the Japan-based IMI (Interactive Marketing Interface) Research Bank, the contention points of the Yasukuni issue can be summarized as follows.

1) The issue is perceived by supporters as a pure domestic issue of Japan but by non-supporters as an issue of international significance. In defending his visit, former Prime Minister Koizumi mentioned that the Yasukuni issue was "Japan's internal affairs" ("Koizumi's Shrine Visit," 2006). Abe commented that his visit to the shrine was never meant to antagonize China and South Korea but was his personal reflection on "preciousness of peace" (Harlan, 2013). Abe also expressed his regret that visit to Yasukuni by Japanese leaders had long become a political and diplomatic issue. As told by Japan's Foreign Minister Fumio Kishido that he believed a politician's visit or a minister's visit to the shrine is "a matter of his or her personal beliefs" (Ford & McCurry, 2013). To many supporters, protests from Japan's neighboring countries are considered an overuse of political leverage. Some mentioned that countries, in particular China, often resort to sensitive issues of historical grievances in an effort to prevent Japan from becoming a political and military powerhouse in Asia (Liu, 2006). Many conservatives in Japan actually see the need of putting an end to its "masochistic" sentiment of guilt over its wartime conduct in Asia (McCurry, 2013). China was repeatedly criticized for using historical issues such as Yasukuni or Japanese textbooks as "diplomatic trump cards" to serve different motives ("Question of Yasukuni," 2006). Nonetheless, to countries that had fallen victim of Japanese wartime aggression, Yasukuni is a very sensitive issue that should not be treated purely as a domestic problem in Japan. The issue is considered to be so sensitive that a public visit to the shrine by the representative of the Japanese government shows inattention of Japan to feelings of other Asian countries.

2) Although supporters of Yasukuni have grown weary of an apologetic Japan, non-supporters look upon the visit as hurting the feelings of Japan's neighboring Asian countries (Matthews, 2003). In reaction to Koizumi's visit, Foreign Ministry of both China and South Korea issued statements related to feelings, with China saying that the visit has hurt the popular feelings and Korea saying that it was deeply disappointed by the visit ("Koizumi Worships at Yasukuni," 2006). One anti-visit protester in Korea said that "what's the use of 100 apologies? What we require is one real action to back up an apology" (Soh, 2001). Exactly same rhetoric from China and Korea played out again in different newspaper articles when Abe made the shrine visit seven years after Koizumi. Immediately after Abe's visit, China's Foreign Ministry issued a statement condemning Abe's action, accusing Abe of "trampling on the feelings" of the Chinese people and other war victim nations

(Rowley, 2013). His move was seen as a “gross violation of the feelings” of Chinese people and people from other Asian countries (Harlan, 2013). In response, Abe had reiterated that he had no intention at all to hurt the feelings of the Chinese and Korean people (Yoshida, 2013). The shrine visit is a very sensitive issue because of public speculations over such a public display of respects to Japan’s war martyrs. Many insist that the visit is symbolic of Japan’s remilitarization, which is all the more true when many are worried about Abe’s nationalist tendencies (Ford & McCurry, 2013).

3) Non-supporters perceive the visit as a revitalization of Japan’s militarism (Dirlik, 1991) whereas supporters see the visit as a “matter of personal freedom” for the prime minister (Murphy, 2006). On one of his visits to Yasukuni, Mr. Koizumi legitimized his intention to pay tribute to those who sacrificed themselves for Japan and emphasized that he went with a mission to promote world peace by “pledging not to start a war again” (Liu, 2006). A review of newspaper articles also pointed to the same rhetoric by Abe. Abe justified his Yasukuni visit by saying that he wanted to pray for the souls of all the people who lost their lives in the war; he also expressed the belief that Japan must never go to a war again, and instead should join hands with countries all over the world to realize peace of the whole world (“Another Backward Step by Abe,” 2013). Although most young people nowadays are far removed from war memories, non-supporters of the shrine visit have much to believe that the visit symbolizes Japan’s attempt to rewrite history and legitimize its wartime atrocities.

4) Non-supporters perceive the visit as Japan’s another attempt to overturn certain historical facts and legitimize its wartime atrocities whereas supporters believe in Koizumi’s and Abe’s pledges to promote world peace by the visit. Many non-supporters suggested that it is Japan’s responsibility to look squarely at the history and their past mistakes (“Koizumi’s Yasukuni Shrine Visit Draws Mixed Reactions,” 2006). In his article, Dirlik (1991) reminded readers of the important role of the issue of history in Japan’s relation with Asian countries in general, attested to by Taiwan opposition leader’s call for a much honored attitude to history on the part of Japan (“Taiwan’s Ma Calls on Japan,” 2006). The above issues of contention share their origin in the dispute over the contents of Yasukuni, the enshrinement of 14 Class-A war criminals which makes Yasukuni a taboo to so many. The fact that Japanese leaders’ worshipping at Yasukuni is seen so much as a political issue is largely due to the enshrinement of the so-called Class A war criminals (Politics, 2013).

5) Non-supporters believe Yasukuni’s housing of Class-A war criminals makes it all the more inappropriate for Japan’s political leaders to visit the shrine whereas supporters honored the intentions of both Koizumi and Abe to pay respect to those who lost their lives for Japan regardless of nationalities (“Another Backward Step by Abe,” 2013; Liu, 2006; Symonds, 2001). To many, class A war criminals have become a focal point of rising nationalist feelings among some Japanese (Rowley, 2013).

Based on the assumptions of naïve realism and the summarized points of contention regarding the Yasukuni issue, this author had set up the following hypotheses.

H1: Supporters and non-supporters of Yasukuni visit have different and subjective construal along the various dimensions of the issue.

H2: Supporters and non-supporters of Yasukuni visit will overestimate the construal differences between the two sides.

H3: Supporters and non-supporters of Yasukuni visit believe the other side (versus their own side) to be influenced by ideological biases in their assessment of the issue.

III. METHOD

Instrument

Survey item preparations

The 40 items on the questionnaire in this study were constructed on the basis of the above literature review and the information procured from the IMI Research Bank. Designed along the aforementioned points of contention, the 40 items were built on a set of 10 master questions and covered the various dimensions of the Yasukuni issue (See appendix for the 10 master questions). The five pro-Yasukuni visit statements had reached a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .836. The five anti-Yasukuni visit statements had reached a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .839.

Participants

In order to obtain a comparable representation of both sides of the issue, the final study included 20 self-identified supporters and 20 self-identified non-supporters, with their stance on the issue captured by the last item on the questionnaire. Due to the extreme sensitivity of the issue under study, this author was satisfied with a small yet comparable sample. The participants included volunteers recruited from three registered Asian student associations at a university in southern United States. They responded to a recruitment message along with an on-line survey link prepared by this author and distributed by the organizations’ presidents. The rest of the participants included in the final analysis were Japanese, Koreans, and Taiwanese currently residing in

respective countries. They were recruited via the snowball technique through different social connections. All of them completed the survey online.

Procedure

Participants were expected to finish a three-section survey. In section I (See appendix), they were asked to rate, using 7-point Likert-type scales, the degree to which they believed the truthfulness of 10 statements. In Section II, they were asked to predict how true a supporter and a non-supporter of the shrine visit would rate those same 10 statements. In Section III, they were asked to rate the bases on which they assessed those 10 statements in Sections I and II, and how much they believed those bases to exert an impact on both supporters and non-supporters in their assessment of those same statements. The questions on bases for judgments include two with objective bases (i.e., information learned from the media, and general knowledge of the international relations among East Asian countries), and one with a comparatively subjective basis (i.e., ideological belief).

IV. RESULTS

Construal differences

Composite scores were calculated for each respondent using the 10 items in Section I, also the 10 master questions (See appendix). The computed scores represented supporter construal ($M = 48.35, SD = 8.6$) and non-supporter construal ($M = 21, SD = 9.61$) respectively. That is, this section was designed to find out the construal differences between supporters and non-supporters, the first assumption of naïve realism. The questions were written and coded (with questions 3, 4, 6, 8, and 11 coded reversely¹) in a way so that a higher composite score represents a pro-visit construal. A one-way analysis of variance performed on these scores revealed a significant difference in construals of supporters and non-supporters, $F(1, 38) = 54.59, p < .001$. The disparity in construal differences is clear with supporters scoring much higher than non-supporters (see Figure 1), indicating that compared to non-supporters, supporters had responded with higher agreement to questions of dimensions that favor the shrine visit. H1 is thus supported.

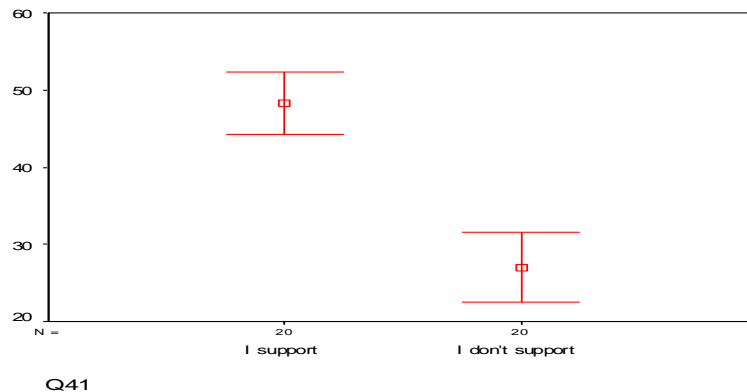


Figure 1. Disparity between supporter construal and non-supporter construal.

“Other” predictions

The second assumption of naïve realism is that opposing partisans would polarize construal differences between two parties, an assumption to be tested with Section II of the survey. The 10 master questions appeared in Section II (1) of the questionnaire again and respondents were asked to predict how a *typical supporter* would rate the truthfulness of those 10 statements. Composite scores of this section were calculated for each respondent to arrive at supporter estimate of supporter construal and non-supporter estimate of supporter construal. T-statistic test results revealed nonsignificant differences between supporter estimate of supporter construal and supporter construal ($M = 49.85$ for the former vs. 48.35 for the latter), $t(19) = -.857, p = .402$. This indicates that supporters only slightly overestimated general supporters’ construal of the shrine issue (see Figure 2). Although the overestimation is small and insignificant, the result reflects one of the arguments of naïve realism which suggests an overestimation of the construal of “ingroup” others.

¹ Questions start by default from Q2, with Q1 asking for participant’s consent to be part of the study. Q41 asked respondents to indicate their stand on the issue – “I support” or “I don’t support” Japanese political leader’s visit to Yasukuni.

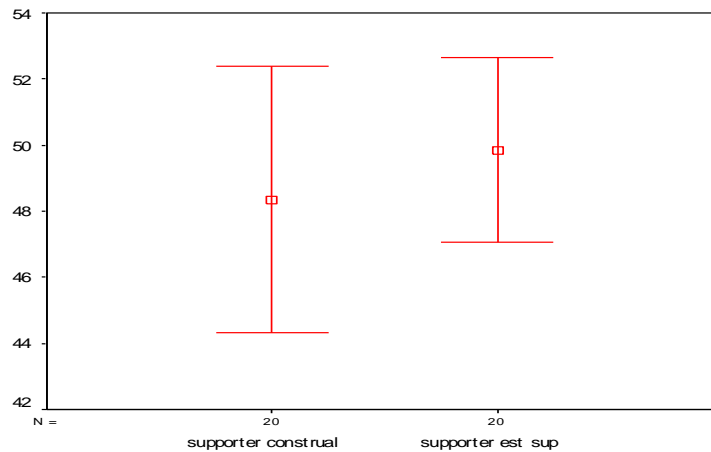


Figure 2. Disparity between supporter construal and supporter estimate of general supporter construal.

In addition, T-statistic revealed nonsignificant differences between non-supporter estimate of supporter construal and supporter construal ($M = 53$ for the former vs. 48.35 for the latter), $t(38) = -1.646$, $p = .108$. In this case, non-supporters also overestimated supporter construal, although the difference did not reach statistical significance (see Figure 3).

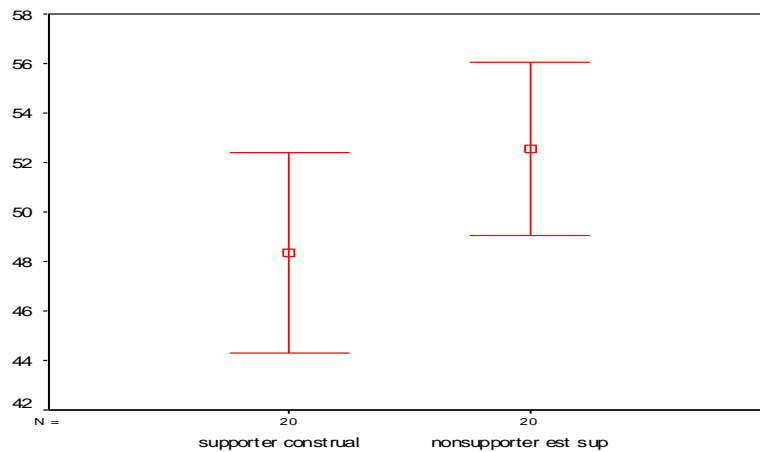


Figure 3. Disparity between supporter construal and non-supporter estimate of general supporter construal.

In a similar pattern, with Section II (2) of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to predict how a *typical non-supporter* would rate the truthfulness of those 10 master questions. Based on responses in this section, comparisons were made to judge whether non-supporter construal was overestimated by either supporters or non-supporters. T-statistic revealed nonsignificant differences between supporter estimate of non-supporter construal ($M = 29.1$ for the former vs. 27 for the latter), $t(38) = -.689$, $p = .495$ (see Figure 4).

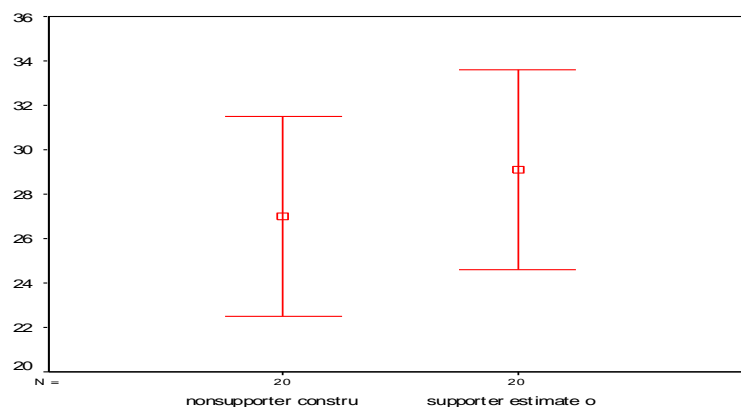


Figure 4. Disparity between non-supporter construal and supporter estimate of general non-supporter construal.

It is worth pointing out that supporters in this study did not overestimate non-supporters' anti-shrine visit construal. To the contrary, they perceived non-supporters to be a little bit more benign in their anti-shrine visit sentiment. This goes against the assumption of naïve realism which suggests that opposing partisan groups tend to overestimate the differences between them. However, this result supports the concept of asymmetries in social misperception (Robinson & Keltner, 1996), which suggests that members of the status quo (non-supporters of the shrine visit) are more inclined to bias while they are more accurately judged by their opponents (i.e., as we have seen previously that non-supporter overestimation of supporter construal was higher than supporter estimation of non-supporter construal; that is, non-supporters, the status quo group, are indeed more biased as seen in the current study). A comparison between non-supporter construal and how it was estimated by non-supporters further indicated the biased attitude among non-supporters. That is, there were significant differences between non-supporter estimate of non-supporter construal and the actual non-supporter construal ($M = 19.5$ for the former vs. 27 for the latter), $t(19) = 3.46, p < .01$ (see Figure 5). Again, such an overestimation stands for an overestimation of the construal of "ingroup" others. Hence, H2 is only partially supported, with non-supporters overestimating supporter construal but not vice versa, although the difference was not statistically significant.

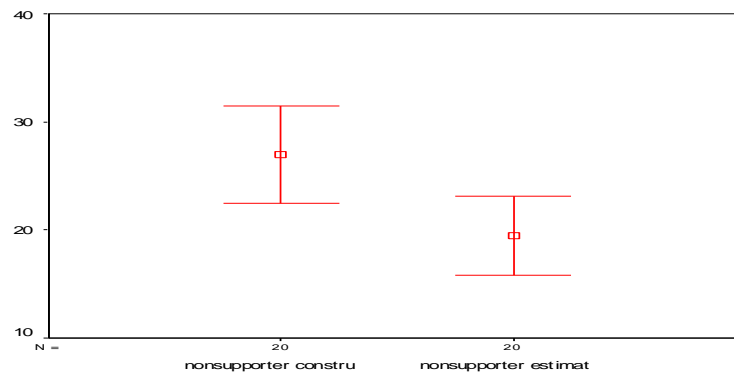


Figure 5. Disparity between non-supporter construal and non-supporter estimation of the general non-supporter construal.

Perceived bases for judgments

The third assumption of naïve realism tells that partisan groups normally attribute ideological bias to opponent's viewpoint/behavior and tend to see themselves as being more objective than their counterparts. In turn, they believe themselves to base their judgment on available evidence rather than ideological bias, which is presumed to be the basis of judgment for those on the other side. Section III was designed to test this assumption as hypothesized in H3. Specifically, participants rated the degree to which they perceived themselves, a *typical supporter*, or a *typical non-supporter* to be influenced by specific judgment bases in assessing the questions of Sections I and II. A combination of the response choices -- "information learned from the mass media" and "possessed general knowledge about the international relations among countries in East Asia" -- served as the "objective" judgment base, whereas "political ideology or belief" was the "subjective" judgment indicator. The ratings of both groups on selves, supporters, and non-supporters were summarized in Table 1 below. Although none of the between-group differences reached statistical significance, there certainly was a general trend of self-bias and ingroup-bias in ratings for both supporters and non-supporters. Both supporters and non-supporters rated themselves the highest in influence by objective evidence available. Both groups also saw their own ingroup members to be influenced by objective judgment factors slightly more than their outgroup counterparts.

Table 1
Rating Summaries (M, SD) on Objective Judgment Bases

Participants	Rated influence on self	Rated influence on supporter	Rated on influence on non-supporter
Sup	8.95 (1.73)	8.8 (2.3)	8.45 (2.52)
Non-sup	9.8 (3.24)	8.05 (4.31)	8.25 (3.90)

Note. Sup = supporters; Non-sup = non-supporters. Higher scores indicate higher perceived objectiveness in viewpoint.

Table 2 below shows the rating summaries on the subjective judgment base; that is, influence of political ideological beliefs. No group comparisons are statistically significant. Compared to the case of objective judgment bases, a generalization is harder to draw in terms of the rating results on subjective judgment base. In terms of non-supporters, there revealed a self bias as shown by a lower rated influence on self compared to that of supporters ($M = 4.35$ for the former vs. $M = 4.60$ for the latter). They also showed an ingroup bias which was indicated by a lower rated influence on non-supporter compared to a higher rated influence on supporters ($M = 4.15$ for the former vs. $M = 4.80$ for the latter). Results for supporters are harder to interpret based on assumptions of naïve realism. As shown in table 2, supporters in fact rated themselves as most influenced by subjective political ideology. They did not show an ingroup bias in their ratings for supporters and non-supporters either. It is speculated that our respondents might not look upon political ideology or beliefs as a subjective or even negative judgment base. Their ratings could be very different if the question were phrased in a more direct manner such as replacing “political ideology” with “personal opinions” or “personal beliefs.” As a result, H3 is only partially supported.

Table 2
Rating Summaries (M, SD) on Subjective Judgment Bases

Participants	Rated influence on self	Rated influence on supporter	Rated on influence on non-supporter
Sup	4.6 (1.31)	4.55 (1.50)	4.35 (2.11)
Non-sup	4.35 (2.03)	4.80 (1.93)	4.15 (2.37)

Note. Sup = supporters; Non-sup = non-supporters. Higher scores indicate higher perceived subjectivity in viewpoint.

Implications for resolving Yasukuni impasse

Fortunately, the current study provides only partial support for naïve realism and its assumption of overestimation of construal differences between opposing partisan groups. Such an assumption tends to draw people anchoring on two sides of an issue further apart from each other. More importantly, we should take caution and avoid being “overly pessimistic” (Robinson, et al., 1995) about reaching possible agreement between two opposing sides. With further analysis, the data of the current study had revealed that there might exist a common ground between supporters and non-supporters of Yasukuni. Specifically, an item by item comparison between ratings of supporters and non-supporters showed that it is very likely that both the media and relevant parties in the Yasukuni issue have been focusing on wrong dimensions of this complicated issue. It takes only a brief review of a news database to find out that the most discussed Yasukuni-related problem in the media is Yasukuni’s housing of Class-A war criminals. However, the current study results showed that supporters and non-supporters were not so much different in their opinions regarding this particular aspect. Although the intergroup mean comparison for the related questionnaire item was statistically significant (see Table 3), $t(38) = 2.319, p = 0.026$, a closer examination showed that non-supporters, on average, rated “agree” to the statement whereas supporters, on average, indicated “moderately agree” to the statement -- only one scale difference on the 7-point scale.

Table 3
Item Summary (M, SD): Question 11^a

Value	Question 11 ^a	
	Supporter	Non-supporter
Mean	3.70	2.35
Standard Deviation	1.95	1.73

Note. Questions 11^a = The fact that Yasukuni Shrine houses Class-A convicted wartime criminals makes Japanese political leader’s visit all the more inappropriate (reversely coded). Lower scores indicate higher agreement to the statement.

To the contrary, supporters and non-supporters demonstrated great differences in their opinions on the question regarding Japan’s inattention to feelings of other East Asian countries (see Table 4).

Table 4

Item Summary (M, SD): Question 8^a

Value	Question 8 ^a	
	Supporter	Non-supporter
Mean	4.85	1.46
Standard Deviation	2.00	1.21

Note. t-statistics: $t(38) = 6.71, p < .01$.

Question 8^a = Japanese political leader's visit to Yasukuni Shrine shows Japan's inattention to feelings of other countries in East Asia (reversely coded). Lower scores indicate higher agreement to the statement.

However, news reports and some scholarly papers tend to portray the issue of human feelings by centering on playing political games or putting out diplomatic trump card by Japan's neighboring countries (Liu, 2006; "Question of Yasukuni," 2006; Taniguchi, 2005). Nevertheless, at occasions when we heard concerns voiced by East Asian countries which helped direct us to see the problem of "feelings" being the "true point of contention." For example, interviewed by a Korean newspaper, a Korean citizen whose father was conscripted by the Japanese Imperial Army, commented on the Koizumi's first shrine visit and said, "I want to cry I am so angry...It's an insult to Asian nations, which were victims of the Pacific War..." (Symonds, 2001). Researchers with the China Foundation for International and Strategic Studies criticized Koizumi's shrine visit by saying that they "feel sorry" because the visit "severely stings the feelings of the peoples whose countries fell victim to Japanese aggression in history" ("Koizumi's Shrine Visit," 2006). As mentioned earlier, at the governmental level, the Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a statement saying that Koizumi's pilgrimage to Yasukuni "has hurt the popular feelings of the countries that suffered from Japan's wartime aggression," while South Korea's Foreign Affairs and Trade Ministry expressed "deep disappointment and outrage" at Koizumi's shrine visit last August ("Koizumi Worships at Yasukuni Shrine," 2006). In addition, Taiwan opposition leader called on Japan to "honor Asian neighbors' feelings" when asked about Koizumi's visits to the Yasukuni ("Taiwan's Ma Calls on Japan," 2006). Finally, the most recent visit to Yasukuni in 2013 by Prime Minister Abe was criticized by the Chinese Foreign Ministry as "gross violation of the feelings of Chinese people and people from other Asian countries who were harmed during World War II" (Harlan, 2013).

Ironically, both Emperor Hirohito and former Prime Minister Koizumi referred to their "feelings" and "hearts" when making remarks about the Yasukuni issue. In a memorandum by a former Imperial Household Agency Grand Steward, Emperor Hirohito was recorded as saying that he would stop visiting the Yasukuni after the shrine had decided to honor the Class-A criminals. The emperor said, "that's how I feel in my heart; that's my heart" ("Emperor Showa Spoke from Heart," 2006). In justifying his visits, Koizumi said about the visit being "a matter of my heart, my personal inner feelings" ("Koizumi's Shrine Visit Sparks Enraged Voices," 2006). However, as pointed out by an editorial in the Japan Times, Koizumi could be considered as "callous" because he only "mentioned the feelings of his heart, but not the hearts of those who were victims of Japan's war of aggression" (A Legacy of Callousness," 2006). Emphasizing the importance of resolving disputes over the Yasukuni issue, Japan opposition leader Ichiro Ozawa called for "resolving bitter feelings" of Japan's Asian neighbors" ("Opposition Leader says Japan Must Regain Trust," 2006). Most importantly, we should not forget that former Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone had stopped making official visits to the Yasukuni Shrine "out of considerations to neighboring countries" ("Nakasone Stopped Making Official Visits," 2005).

V. CONCLUSION

The current study was conducted to test the underlying assumptions of naïve realism by applying the theory to the controversial issue of Japanese leaders' visits to Yasukuni Shrine. The goal was to see whether the common social misconception has also deepened intergroup bias among supporters and non-supporters of Yasukuni. The results have yielded only partial support for the central tenets of the theory. It is true that there are construal differences between supporters and non-supporters to influence the viewpoints and behaviors of the two parties (see Figure 1). Regarding the assumption that opposing partisans tend to polarize construal differences between the two sides, the current study results indicated that only non-supporters had overestimated supporters' pro-shrine visit construal (see Figure 3) but not the other way around (see Figure 4). Nonetheless, both parties had overestimated the construal of *ingroup others* regardless of the extent, meaning that both supporters and non-supporters believe *other* supporters or non-supporters were more for/against the Yasukuni compared to themselves.

A more meaningful finding of the current study lies in the attempt to search for an overlooked but possible area of agreement between partisan groups, a positive implication of naïve realism. As the results showed, on the aspect of the Yasukuni issue that has received the most media coverage (i.e., housing of Class-A criminals in the shrine), the two groups had not differed much in their viewpoints. They both stood at the “agree” area, with supporters *moderately agreeing to* and nonsupporters *agreeing to* the idea that enshrinement of Class-A criminals makes the shrine visit inappropriate for Japanese political leaders (see Table 3). This result begs for at least two considerations. One is that supporters and non-supporters might have exaggerated their construal differences on a specific dimension of the Yasukuni issue, Class-A criminals, the problem portrayed by the media to be the crux of the Yasukuni controversy. In addition, to resolve the current conflict, it might be more feasible for all parties involved to move away from centering on the debate of Class-A criminals. Rather, it might be helpful to redirect attention to the point of contention that supporters and non-supporters truly disagree on, such as “being considerate to feelings of other Asian countries” as revealed by the current study findings (see Table 4). Ultimately, as informed by naïve realism, to resolve a conflict, we must not be overly pessimistic but to search for the common ground that we most likely have been blind to due to our misconceptions about the *outgroup*.

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Appendix

Reproduction of Section I of Questionnaire:

Section I, Direction: on a scale of 1-7 with 1 indicating that you strongly disagree and 7 indicating that you strongly agree, please rate the truthfulness of the following statements.

- | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|-------------------------------|---|---|--|----------------|
| strongly disagree | | | | neither agree
nor disagree | | | | strongly agree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | | |
- _____ 2. Japanese political leader's visit to Yasukuni Shrine is purely a domestic issue of Japan.
 - _____ 3. It is important that Japanese political leader worship the Japanese who sacrificed their lives for the country in World War II.
 - _____ 4. Japanese political leader's visit to Yasukuni Shrine is symbolic of Japan's consent to war time atrocities.
 - _____ 5. As claimed by former Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi, Japanese political leader's visit to Yasukuni Shrine serves as a means of promoting world peace for Japan.
 - _____ 6. Japanese political leader's visit to Yasukuni Shrine signifies Japan's another attempt to overturn certain historical facts.
 - _____ 7. Other Asian countries' opposition against Japanese leader's Yasukuni visit is an overuse of political leverage.
 - _____ 8. Japanese political leader's visit to Yasukuni Shrine shows Japan's inattention to feelings of other countries in East Asia.
 - _____ 9. Japanese political leader's visit Yasukuni Shrine symbolizes a revival of Japan's militarism.
 - _____ 10. Regarding the issue of Yasukuni visit, it is not the political responsibility of Japanese leader to adopt the opinions of other countries.
 - _____ 11. The fact that Yasukuni Shrine houses Class-A convicted wartime criminals makes Japanese political leader's visit all the more inappropriate.