



## YASUKUNI SHRINE

Tokyo, Japan  
35.6941, 139.7438



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### Executive Summary

The Yasukuni Shrine, originally established in 1869, became controversial after the Second World War when 14 Class A War Criminals were enshrined at the site. Aside from the 14 war criminals, over 2.5 million souls are preserved at Yasukuni. Visits by Japanese leadership to the shrine have resulted in difficult relations with Japan's neighbours, notably China and South Korea, which have expressed outrage over the Shrine's symbolism and inclusion of war criminals. Some descendants of enshrined Koreans have demanded that the names of their ancestors be removed. This case study explores the complexities of commemoration of contested sites and their potential for international diplomatic ramifications and complex legal challenges.

## Introduction

The Yasukuni Shrine, located in central Tokyo, commemorates Japan's war dead. The Shrine differs from other war memorials because it does not have a burial function, but rather enshrines the spirits of the war dead and worships them as a certain deity.<sup>1</sup> In the 1930s, the government began to expand the qualifications for enshrinement in order to use it politically as a patriotic symbol, thus, not only those who died in the battle-field could be enshrined but also civilian employees.<sup>2</sup> The Shrine therefore entails political, religious, and social dimensions.

Several issues have sparked domestic controversy and attracted international attention. Namely; the enshrinement of fourteen Japanese Class-A war criminals, who were key figures in Japan's aggression during World War II; private and official visits to the Shrine by Japanese prime ministers; the inclusion of Korean, Taiwanese, and Okinawan names among those enshrined; and the historical narratives presented by the Shrine and its accompanying museum. The complexity involved in the site has had far-reaching implications for inter-state and regional relations and remains a point of contention hindering international cooperation.

## Background

The Yasukuni Shrine is located in Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, northwest of the Imperial Palace and adjacent to Kitanomaru Park.<sup>3</sup> The original name was *Tokyo Shokonsha*, meaning shrine to which spirits of the dead are invited. Established by the Meiji emperor on June 29, 1869, and subsequently renamed as the Yasukuni Shrine, it was designated a Special Government Shrine in 1879 under the directive of Grand Minister Sanjo Santomi. By this process, it became a Shinto shrine and government-sponsored war memorial, with the phrase Yasukuni meaning to 'preserve peace for the entire nation.'<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of the Shrine is to honor and commemorate those who dedicated their lives to the country, starting with the Boshin War (1868-69), which returned the emperor to political power and dissolved the shogunate,<sup>5</sup> and through World War II. Today, there are more than 2,466,000 souls enshrined at Yasukuni.<sup>6</sup> This not only includes soldiers but civilian personnel, women, children, and Korean and Taiwanese people who died serving Japan's imperial government.<sup>7</sup>

Notably, the Shrine also houses fourteen Class-A war criminals, individuals charged with committing crimes against peace and serving as main architects of Japan's war of aggression from World War II. This has caused it to function as a source of controversy and anger for China and Korea, which view it as an act of disrespect and disregard for Japan's role in committing crimes in

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<sup>1</sup> Kei Koga, "The Yasukuni Question: Histories, Logics and Japan-South Korea Relations," *Pacific Review* 19 (2015): 1-29.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Akiko Takenaka, "Mobilizing Death: Developing the Myth of Yasukuni," in *Yasukuni Shrine : History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 23-4.

<sup>4</sup> Nikkei Asian Review, "Explainer: The Yasukuni Issue," *Nikkei Asian Review*, January 6, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Yasukuni Jinja, "History," Yasukuni Jinja. 2019.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

East Asia during World War II. Despite these objections, the Shrine has received repeated visits from key Japanese leaders, including former Prime Ministers Junichiro Koizumi and Shinzo Abe, inciting controversy over Japan's contrition and the separation between religion and state in Japan.

The foundational concept for the Shrine was conceived by Omura Masujiro, vice-minister of the Army Ministry in 1869.<sup>8</sup> Masujiro was a key figure in the modernization of the Imperial army and abolishing the samurai warrior class.<sup>9</sup> He chose the Kudan site due to its proximity to the Imperial Palace and clear view of Tokyo, identifying it as a strategic location in cases of domestic armed conflict.<sup>10</sup> The construction project, based upon this vision, was completed in only ten days in June 1869.<sup>11</sup> On June 28, the first *shokon* ritual (ritual to invite spirits of the dead), was held to honour the spirits of 3,588 imperial soldiers who died during the Boshin War.<sup>12</sup> The permanent inner shrine was completed three years later in 1872.<sup>13</sup> The Shrine was administered as an element of state Shinto by the army and navy ministries until the end of World War II.<sup>14</sup>



**Figure 1:** "Masujiro Omura Statue at Yasukuni Shrine"  
Image by Toshihiro Gamo CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

The grounds of the Shrine encompass several elements. Entering through Shinto gates, visitors are first greeted by a bronze statue of Omura Masujiro, (Figure 1) who is considered to be the founder of the Meiji-era Japanese army and key visionary for Yasukuni.<sup>15</sup> There are two lanterns at the entry of the Shrine depicting military endeavours in the Meiji and early Showa periods.<sup>16</sup> Upon passing through the second set of Shinto gates, visitors arrive at the Main Hall and Main Sanctuary. This central area is adjacent to the Yushukan, the controversial Japanese war museum, which has been cited as misrepresenting Japan's criminal acts during World War II.<sup>17</sup>

## History of the Contestation

### *1869 - From a place for entertainment to militarization*

<sup>8</sup> Akiko Takenaka, "Mobilizing Death: Developing the Myth of Yasukuni," in *Yasukuni Shrine : History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 23-4.

<sup>9</sup> Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Omura Masujirō | Japanese Military Strategist," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Akiko Takenaka, "Mobilizing Death: Developing the Myth of Yasukuni," in *Yasukuni Shrine : History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 23.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Nikkei Asian Review, "Explainer: The Yasukuni Issue," *Nikkei Asian Review*, January 6, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Akiko Takenaka, "Mobilizing Death: Developing the Myth of Yasukuni," in *Yasukuni Shrine : History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 23.

<sup>16</sup> Shaun O'Dwyer, "The Yasukuni Shrine and the Competing Patriotic Past of East Asia," *History & Memory* 22, no. 2 (2010): 151.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

General public consciousness of the Yasukuni Shrine as a war memorial was relatively low in its initial years.<sup>18</sup> There are few articles from that time discussing the establishment of the Shrine or its religious and political significance, and most documentation focuses on the Shrine's entertainment value.<sup>19</sup> The Shrine provided an optimal view of Tokyo Bay and was the site of many festivals and celebrations, quickly becoming an attraction for the locals (horse races, fireworks, sumo, noh drama, festivities, etc. were often held at the Shrine).<sup>20</sup> During the Tokugawa Era (1603-1867), the ordinary public was largely removed from armed conflict, and so the purpose of the Shrine and the individuals who were enshrined there remained largely out of the public mind.<sup>21</sup> With the consolidation of imperial power, events at the Shrine began to take on an increasingly militarized dimension, and during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), Japanese victory enabled greater linkage between entertainment and the military implications of both the Shrine and Yushukan in the public consciousness.<sup>22</sup>

With the outbreak of World War II in the Asia-Pacific, the Imperial government sought to cultivate a public perception of war as something with a higher purpose and presented death in battle as a great sacrifice and ultimate means of resurrection in contrast to destruction and devastation.<sup>23</sup> Death was depicted as the highest military honour, and enshrinement at Yasukuni was broadcast through popular media as a desirable, respectable, and nationally recognized end to the war experience for soldiers.<sup>24</sup> When the death count became too high for the effective and timely return of bodies, spiritual enshrinement was emphasized as a way to cope with the memories of the war dead.<sup>25</sup> Yasukuni was thus used as a rallying point for patriotic sentiment and reconciling with war. In the immediate post-war period, attention to Yasukuni died down under the American occupation, and the Shrine lost its state sponsorship, returning to its original function as a private religious entity.

### ***1978: Ceremony of the Enshrinement of Fourteen Class A War Criminals***

In 1978 a ceremony at the Shrine resulted in the enshrinement of fourteen Class-A war criminals.<sup>26</sup> These individuals were the key figures in Japan's war of aggression, seven of whom were executed, five of whom died while serving their sentences, and two before the final trial before the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, overseen by the Allies.<sup>27</sup> Their enshrinement

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<sup>18</sup> Akiko Takenaka, "Mobilizing Death: Developing the Myth of Yasukuni," in *Yasukuni Shrine: History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 24-5.

<sup>19</sup> Akiko Takenaka, "Mobilizing Death: Developing the Myth of Yasukuni," in *Yasukuni Shrine: History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 24-5.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Akiko Takenaka, "Institutionalizing Joy: Turning War into Spectacle at Yasukuni Shrine," in *Yasukuni Shrine: History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 54.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-72.

<sup>23</sup> Akiko Takenaka, "Institutionalizing Grief," in *Yasukuni Shrine: History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 98.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 96-7.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 117-18.

<sup>26</sup> Akiko Takenaka, "Who has the Right to Mourn?" in *Yasukuni Shrine: History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 133.

<sup>27</sup> Akiko Takenaka, "Enshrinement Politics: War Dead and War Criminals at Yasukuni Shrine | The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus," *Asia-Pacific Journal* 5, no. 6 (2007): 1.

conferred onto them a status equivalent to other *kami*, or gods, enshrined in Shinto Special Government Shrines.<sup>28</sup> Much of the debate today centres on this infamous ceremony. It was not until 1985 when Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone (1982-7) paid his respects at the Shrine, using public funds for offerings and signing the guest register with his official title that the Yasukuni shrine became a site of contestation.<sup>29</sup> Since his visit, prime ministerial visits have formed the heart of the controversy surrounding the Yasukuni Shrine.

Nakasone was aware of the reaction that his visit produced in Japan's neighbours and how it could hinder his foreign-policy goals. He had planned another visit to Yasukuni festival for the Autumn Festival but he decided not to go out of 'consideration of the feelings of the peoples of neighbouring countries.'<sup>30</sup> Subsequently, he took further action on the issue as he fired a cabinet minister who denied wartime atrocities<sup>31</sup> and issued an apology in the United Nations in October 1985:

Since the end of that war, Japan has profoundly regretted the ultra-nationalism and militarism it unleashed, and the untold suffering the war inflicted upon peoples around the world and, indeed, upon its own people. Having suffered the scourge of war and the atomic bomb, the Japanese people will never again permit the revival of militarism on their soil.<sup>32</sup>

It would be incorrect to assume that Japanese Prime Ministers' visits to the Yasukuni Shrine are the sole cause of the diplomatic friction with China and South Korea. Before Nakasone's visit and since 1945, 15 out of 17 Prime Ministers visited the Shrine which provoked virtually no criticism.<sup>33</sup> Partly because 1986 was the 40th anniversary of the War's end, more international media paid attention to this political move,<sup>34</sup> which then provoked Chinese criticism and Korean suspicion over the Japanese narrative on the Pacific War.<sup>35</sup> Nakasone's decision not to visit the shrine set an example for future Prime Ministers, for example, Prime Minister Tomi-Ichi Murayama made a statement in 1995 titled 'On the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the War's End' which expressed 'his remorse and apology for the damage and suffering to Asian Nations.'<sup>36</sup> The next Prime Ministers continued to refrain from visiting Yasukuni Shrine until Junichiro Koizumi was elected in 2001.

### ***2001- 2006: Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi makes six visits***

Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi visited the Shrine six times when he was in office from 2001 to 2006, drawing intense criticism from China and South Korea for insensitivity and

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<sup>28</sup> The designation Special Government Shrine was an early Meiji invention, elevating the status of shrines dedicated to persons who loyally served the emperor in one way or another.

<sup>29</sup> Akiko Takenaka, "Who has the Right to Mourn?" in *Yasukuni Shrine : History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 133.

<sup>30</sup> Jennifer Lind, "Beware the Tomb of the Known Soldier," *Global Asia* 8, no. 1 (2013).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Kei Koga, "The Yasukuni Question: Histories, Logics and Japan-South Korea Relations," *Pacific Review* 19 (2015).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*



disregard for the impact of Japan's wartime legacy in Asia.<sup>37</sup> In 2001, Koizumi first announced his intention to visit the Shrine on August 15th, the anniversary of Japan's surrender to the Allied Forces. However, upon protests from China and South Korea, Foreign Minister Tanaka Makiko, the secretaries-general of the ruling coalition, and Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda Yasuo pushed him to reconsider, resulting in the rescheduling of his visit from August 15th to August 13th.<sup>38</sup> The following year, Koizumi made another visit to the Shrine, causing Secretary Yasuo Fukuda, a private advisory panel to the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Chief Cabinet, to submit a report pushing for the creation of a separate government facility to pray for the war dead and for peace which would not include a site that held the fourteen Class-A war criminals.<sup>39</sup> However, due to Koizumi's persistent visits to the Shrine, his planned official visit to China in 2003 did not materialize,<sup>40</sup> which also forced Korean President Kim Dae-Jung to cancel his meeting with the Japanese Foreign Minister in January of that year.<sup>41</sup>

In 2004 Koizumi made an unannounced visit which sparked concerns in Japan's largest business lobby, the Japanese Business Federation (*Keidanren*). They argued that the visits were detrimental to Japanese businesses.<sup>42</sup> The same year, due to an increase in tensions in Sino-Japanese relations the Asia Cup Soccer Championship Games witnessed mass demonstrations in major cities across China after Japan's victory.<sup>43</sup> In response to these increased tensions, at an Upper House Budgetary Committee meeting, Prime Minister Koizumi defended his actions, stating that 'each nation has its own reasons to commemorate its war dead.'<sup>44</sup> That same year, at the Lower House Budgetary Committee meeting, he questioned whether any country should honour requests by other countries because they are opposed to the way a country commemorates its war dead.<sup>45</sup>

In 2005, following Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, anti-Japanese protests broke out in China, attributed by academic Hu Jintao to the visits and historical narratives presented in Japanese textbooks.<sup>46</sup> In addition, servers hosting the website of Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine, Japan's Ministry of Defense, and the National Police among several others were defaced with Chinese nationalist symbols or shut down in a cyber attack.<sup>47</sup> That same year around fifty indigenous Taiwanese people led by activist Kao Chin Su-mei arrived at Yasukuni Shrine with the intent of protesting the inclusion of Taiwanese names at the site given that Taiwan was under Japanese occupation from 1895-1945.<sup>48</sup> However, the protest did not come to fruition as a right-wing Japanese group of around 100 people had been causing unrest at the Shrine that day

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<sup>37</sup> 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): 27-9.

<sup>38</sup> Shibuichi, "The Yasukuni Shrine Dispute," 211-12.

<sup>39</sup> Japan Times, "Events Related to Yasukuni Shrine," *Japan Times*, December 26, 2013.

<sup>40</sup> 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): 34.

<sup>41</sup> Kei Koga, "The Yasukuni Question: Histories, Logics and Japan-South Korea Relations," *Pacific Review* 19 (2015).

<sup>42</sup> 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): 35.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*.

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

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Ryan Hang, "Freedom for Authoritarianism: Patriotic Hackers and Chinese Nationalism," *Yale Review of International Studies*, October 2015.

<sup>48</sup> Staff Reporters, "Rightists Thwart Yasukuni Rally by Taiwanese," *Japan Times*, June 15, 2005.

and police were present at the scene to manage tensions.<sup>49</sup> Following these developments, Chinese and South Korean leaders refused to meet Koizumi on account of these issues, and Japan's relations with its neighbours continued to sour rapidly.<sup>50</sup> In 2006, at the Upper House Plenary Session, Koizumi addressed their refusal to meet with him, stating that 'it is unthinkable from a commonsense view not to hold a summit meeting only because there is a particular [diplomatic] issue [that is contentious].'<sup>51</sup> Koizumi also criticized his domestic audience, citing frustration with those who supported Chinese and South Korean perspectives.

While there is a diversity of opinions among the Japanese public in regards to the Yasukuni controversy, a study of public opinion demonstrates that over time, following Koizumi's increasingly extreme perspectives on shrine visits and heightening of tensions in Japan's relations with China and South Korea, the public has become increasingly less supportive of ministerial shrine visits.<sup>52</sup> In 2006, across three major Japanese newspapers, the left-wing *Asahi Shimbun*, conservative *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and centre-left *Mainichi Shimbun*, more poll respondents were opposed to the continuation of ministerial shrine visits than in favour.<sup>53</sup> Trends<sup>54</sup> in *Mainichi* and *Asahi* polls from 2003-2006 indicate a clear decline in support for ministerial visits to Yasukuni Shrine.<sup>55</sup> The *Yomiuri* and *Mainichi* polls indicate that from 2001 to 2006, public opinion in favour of creating a separate non-religious memorial or removing the Class-A war criminals from Yasukuni, steadily increased.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, in 2006, the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* also reported that Emperor Hirohito stopped visiting the Shrine due to the enshrinement of the fourteen Class-A war criminals in 1978.<sup>57</sup> This led to widespread opposition to continued ministerial visits and a change in the position of the Japan War-Bereaved Families Association (JABF), which began to call for greater attention to the perspectives of Japan's neighbouring states in evaluating the Yasukuni controversy.<sup>58</sup>

### 2013: Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe Makes a Visit

Following the completion of Koizumi's term, no prime minister - including Shinzo Abe during his first term - officially visited the Yasukuni Shrine. However, in 2013, one year into his second term, Abe visited Yasukuni, much to the ire of China, South Korea, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and the United States.<sup>59</sup> Abe was aware that the visit would incite controversy but pushed ahead in line with both his personal convictions and concerns about losing support from

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> 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): 36-7.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 33-45.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>54</sup> Trends in major news outlet polls from 2001 to 2006 show a significant decline in support for ministerial visits from only 21% in opposition to 54% in the case of *Mainichi Shimbun*.

<sup>55</sup> 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): 38.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Hiroyuki Akita, "Abe Momentum Could Hit Skids after Paying Respects at Yasukuni," *Nikkei Asian Review*, January 9, 2014.

the more conservative factions in the Liberal Democratic Party.<sup>60</sup> Following his visit to Yasukuni Shrine in 2013, Prime Minister Abe released a statement explaining 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 and to renew the pledge that Japan must never wage a war again. It is not my intention at all to hurt the feelings of the Chinese and Korean people.<sup>61</sup>

However, international and domestic backlash to the visit soon followed. In the same year, a South Korean man entered the Shrine carrying a bottle of paint thinner, which he threw at the main hall in order to deface it.<sup>62</sup> The US administration refrained from commenting as many of the Japanese right-wing that support Yasukuni have also supported the Japan-US military alliance and accepted the continued American military presence in the country.<sup>63</sup> However, following Abe's 2013 visit, the US Embassy in Tokyo indicated its disappointment, citing the visit as an action that could be detrimental towards resolving tensions between Japan and its neighbours and urging Japan to seek constructive pathways to repair relations with China and South Korea.<sup>64</sup> A potential explanation for this dissatisfaction is the difficulties it generates for collaborative and effective dialogue between Japan, South Korea, and the United States over North Korea.<sup>65</sup>

In 2013 after this visit, the *Japan Times* held a poll in which 70% of respondents indicated that the Prime Minister should take diplomatic considerations into account when making decisions related to the Shrine, with 47% of respondents indicating opposition to visiting the shrine and 55% of respondents agreeing that Japan should build a separate facility to commemorate the war dead.<sup>66</sup> Since 2013, under international (notably that of the US) and domestic pressure favouring the improvement of relations with China and South Korea, Abe has not visited but has sent private monetary offerings in a personal capacity.<sup>67</sup>

On October 17, 2021, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida sent a ritual offering to the Shrine, a 'masakaki' tree, to celebrate the Autumn festival at Yasukuni. However, following the steps of his predecessors, he is said to not visit the Shrine.<sup>68</sup> This offering has provoked strong reactions from China and South Korea; Chinese observers have said that 'the foundation of China-Japan ties is being eroded through a series of provocative moves,'<sup>69</sup> and the spokesperson for the Korean Foreign Ministry expressed their 'deep disappointment and regrets that Japanese leaders again

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Shinzo Abe, "Statement by Prime Minister Abe - Pledge for Everlasting Peace," *Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet*, December 26, 2013.

<sup>62</sup> BBC News, "Japan Police Arrest Korean Suspect in Yasukuni Shrine Bomb," *BBC News*, December 9, 2015.

<sup>63</sup> Daiki Shibuichi, "The Yasukuni Shrine Dispute and the Politics of Identity in Japan: Why All the Fuss?" *Asian Survey* 45, no. 2 (2005): 208.

<sup>64</sup> Michael Green and Nicholas Szechenyi, "US-Japan Relations: Big Steps, Big Surprises," *Comparative Connections* 15, no. 3 (2013): 15-22 and 149-151.

<sup>65</sup> Sheila Smith, "Abe's Yasukuni Visit: The Consequences?" *Council on Foreign Relations*, December 30, 2013.

<sup>66</sup> Japan Times, "69% Say Abe Should Heed Fallout from Yasukuni: Poll," *Japan Times*, December 29, 2013. It should be noted that as Japan's largest English-language newspaper, Japan Times' readership is mainly composed of expatriates and foreign residents. Therefore, polling might present a more Western perspective.

<sup>67</sup> Nikkei Asian Review, "Japan PM Abe Refrains from Visiting Yasukuni Shrine on WWII Anniversary," *Nikkei Asian Review*, August 15, 2018.

<sup>68</sup> Xu Keyue and Yan Yuzhu, "Kishida makes 'bad start' by sending ritual offering to Yasukuni; foundation of China-Japan relations eroded, observers warn," *Global Times*, October 17, 2021.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.



sent the offerings and visited Yasukuni Shrine that glorifies Japan's past war of aggression and enshrines war criminals.<sup>70</sup> Japan's neighbours consider these offerings and pilgrimages as a 'lack of remorse over its military aggression and an attempt to glorify the past deeds instead.'<sup>71</sup>

### *Yasukuni Shrine Outside Japan*

The Yasukuni Shrine developed its reputation as a contested historical site for Japan's neighbors in the 1980s. In 1985, following Prime Minister Nakasone's 'official' visit to the Shrine, the Korean newspaper DongA suggested that the visit could trigger 'the revival of militarism'.<sup>72</sup> International media also contributed to the creation of this image, and from 1985 onwards Yasukuni Shrine was situated in the context of an emerging Japanese nationalism. By 1996 South Korea considered it a 'symbol of Japanese Imperial militarism that whitewash[ed] the war.'<sup>73</sup> In addition, Japanese politicians at the time made controversial comments. This includes Masayuki Fujio, the former Education Minister, who in 1986 said that Japan's annexation of Korea was 'legitimate', and Seisuke Okuno, director-general of the National Land Agency, who said that Japan fought for security reasons and was never an aggressor.<sup>74</sup>

Today, the Yasukuni Shrine still generates regional tension between Japan and its neighbours, as China and South Korea continue to ask the Japanese government to 'face history and show by action their humble introspection on and genuine self-reflection for the past history'<sup>75</sup> to 'build trust with its neighbours'.<sup>76</sup> For the Chinese, the Shrine commemorates the 'invasive actions conducted by the Japanese government in China and the pacific region during WWII'.<sup>77</sup> They take the statue of Justice Radhabinod Pal from India as further evidence of the Japanese government denial of history and avoiding responsibility, as he was the only judge in the Tokyo Trial that found the Japanese military not guilty.<sup>78</sup> They are also critical of the Shrine's museum, the Yushukan Museum, as they believe it beautifies the history:

According to the introduction of the museum, the September 18th Incident in 1931, marking the beginning of the Japanese invasion against China, was the result that 'Chinese soldiers and civilians were strongly against Japan, and Japanese there were living in tears'.<sup>79</sup>

So, the Chinese government has urged Japan

To draw lessons from history, to face up and reflect upon its history of aggression, to listen to the just voices of the international community, to completely draw a line from militarism, and to take concrete actions to win the trust of its Asian neighbours and the international community.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Ahn Sung-mi, "Seoul 'regrets' over Kishida's Yasukuni offering," *Korea Herald*, October 17, 2021.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Kei Koga, "The Yasukuni Question: Histories, Logics and Japan-South Korea Relations," *Pacific Review* 19 (2015): 19.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 19-20.

<sup>75</sup> Ahn Sung-mi, "Seoul 'regrets' over Kishida's Yasukuni offering," *Korea Herald*, October 17, 2021.

<sup>76</sup> Laura Zhou, "China hits out at Japan over ministers' Yasukuni Shrine visits," *South China Morning Post*, August 15, 2021.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Xin Ping, "The Yasukuni Shrine: Why Do We Protest, Over and Over Again," *Global Times*, August 25, 2021.

<sup>80</sup> Global Times, "China opposed Japanese moves on Yasukuni Shrine issue, lodges solemn representations as Japan marks 76th anniversary of surrender in WWII," *Global Times*, August 15, 2021.

For South Korea, the Shrine represents the militaristic and colonial past of Japan<sup>81</sup> and believe that the Japanese government should 'show by action their genuine atonement for the past wrongdoings.'<sup>82</sup> The South Korean government has argued that the issue would not be resolved even if the Class A War Criminals were removed from the Shrine, suggesting that Japan builds a new memorial and has demanded the return of approximately 21,000 tablets of enshrined Koreans who they believe were 'forced into fighting for Japan' under its colonial rule.<sup>83</sup> South Koreans believe that the visits to Yasukuni are acts 'illustrating ignorance of historical truth,'<sup>84</sup> which suggests that their concern is more about Japan's refusal to acknowledge its history, rather than the physical memorial itself.

Many other countries have shown their disagreement with the Japanese Prime Minister's visits to the shrine, including Russia, Singapore, Pakistan and Indonesia.<sup>85</sup> Even the US Embassy in Tokyo issued a statement following former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to the shrine in 2013, expressing their disappointment in the visit which 'will exacerbate tensions with Japan's neighbours.'<sup>86</sup>

The discontent has taken on a physical dimension, as Chinese and Korean activists have protested at the Shrine and it has been the target of violent attacks. In December 2011, a young Chinese man threw a flaming bottle in front of the main gate causing a fire.<sup>87</sup> In November 2015, a South Korean man was arrested for bombing one of the public toilets at the Shrine after a ceremony in which newly harvested rice was presented to the dead.<sup>88</sup> And more recently, in 2018, two Hong Kongese men were arrested<sup>89</sup> on suspicion of starting a fire inside the Shrine. They allegedly set fire to an ancestral tablet with the words 'Class-A War Criminal Hideki Tojo,' and displayed a banner that read 'Lest we forget the Nanking Massacre' and chanted 'Down with Japanese militarism.'<sup>90</sup> The Nanking massacre of 1937 was the destruction by the Japanese military of the city of Nanjing, China estimates that over 300,000 citizens died, while some Japanese conservatives denied it even happened.<sup>91</sup>

## Decision-Making Processes

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<sup>81</sup> CGTN, "South Korea expresses deep worry over Japanese leaders' visit to war-linked shrine," *CGTN*, August 15, 2020.

<sup>82</sup> Korea Times, "Foreign ministry summons Japanese diplomat over Yasukuni visit by defence minister," *Korea National*, August 13, 2021.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Kei Koga, "The Yasukuni Question: Histories, Logics and Japan-South Korea Relations," *Pacific Review* 19 (2015): 21.

<sup>85</sup> CGTN, "Yasukuni Shrine: Controversy, history and peace," *CGTN*, August 14, 2020.

<sup>86</sup> US Embassy & Consulates in Japan, "Statement on Primer Minister Abe's December 26 Visit to Yasukuni Shrine," December 26, 2013.

<sup>87</sup> HKT, "Patriotic young man Liu Qiang: Burning Yasukuni Shrine, after fled to South Korea, setting fire to the Japanese Embassy," *iNews*, October 18, 2021.

<sup>88</sup> Jonathan Soble, "Explosion at Yasukuni Shrine in Japan Does Minor Damage," *New York Times*, November 23, 2015.

<sup>89</sup> Tony Cheung, "Two Hong Kong activists charged for trespassing in Japan over protest at Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine," *South China Morning Post*, December 27, 2018.

<sup>90</sup> Kimmy Chung, "Diaoyu Islands activist from Hong Kong starts fire at Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine in protest at 'Japanese militarism'," *South China Morning Post*, December 12, 2018.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

Right-wing groups in Japan argue for the commemoration of the spirit of fallen heroes and claim that Japan's wartime atrocities have been exaggerated by external actors.<sup>92</sup> While the spectrum of rightist perspectives on the issue varies, with some more radicalized than others, they are views of particular significance given their influence on the dominant party in Japanese politics, the Liberal Democratic Party. These groups range from religious associations like the Association of Shinto Shrines, to ideological associations like the Japan Conference (*Nippon Kaigi*), and small subsets like the retired military men's Association to Commemorate the Spirits of Fallen Heroes. A majority, however, are affiliated in some way with the LDP.<sup>93</sup>

The LDP has been at the helm of the Japanese government for most of the postwar period. In the 1960s and 70s, the JABF, a rightist civilian group dedicated to supporting the interests of the descendants of veterans of the Asia-Pacific War, became a key voting constituency for the party. In an effort to appease the demographic, the LDP pushed forward proposals to once again grant state sponsorship to the Yasukuni Shrine.<sup>94</sup> JABF was then fairly visible and active in promoting its interests, conducting hunger strikes to push public officials to visit the shrine.<sup>95</sup> It is important to note that starting in 2014, the JABF has in some ways changed its stance, arguing for the continued support for the Shrine in conjunction with the removal of plaques honouring Class-A war criminals and their transfer to another location.<sup>96</sup>

Another group in favour of the Shrine is *Nippon Kaigi*, an independent nationalist association that pushes for patriotic education and support for Yasukuni under the slogan 'let us build a country we are proud of.'<sup>97</sup> Key members of the LDP, including former Prime Ministers Koizumi and Abe, and former Finance Minister Taro Aso, are also members of the group, and as of 2016, a report in the *Asahi Shimbun* indicated that 40% of seats in the Japanese Parliament were occupied by representatives who are members.<sup>98</sup> The group holds important political clout and reflects conservative attitudes towards the controversy. The LDP has thus largely expressed support for visits to the Shrine and continued remembrance of the spirits enshrined at Yasukuni, without change to the status of the enshrined Class-A war criminals.

On the other hand, leftist groups in Japan argue that the Shrine is a relic of Japanese militarism and feudalism and that the prime ministerial visits to the shrine breach concepts of separation of religion and state under the Japanese constitution.<sup>99</sup> The groups opposing visits to the Shrine on account of its historic implications and enshrinement of war criminals include the Japanese Communist Party, Social Democratic Party, the National Organization of Pacifist Bereaved

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<sup>92</sup> Daiki Shibuichi, "The Yasukuni Shrine Dispute and the Politics of Identity in Japan: Why All the Fuss?" *Asian Survey* 45, no. 2 (2005): 199.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 200-1.

<sup>94</sup> 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): 29.

<sup>95</sup> María Del Pilar Álvarez, María Del Mar Lunaklick, and Tomás Muñoz, "The Limits of Forgiveness in International Relations: Groups Supporting the Yasukuni Shrine in Japan and Political Tensions in East Asia," *Janus.net e-journal of International Relations* 7, no. 2 (2016): 34.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Daiki Shibuichi, "The Yasukuni Shrine Dispute and the Politics of Identity in Japan: Why All the Fuss?" *Asian Survey* 45, no. 2 (2005): 203-4.

Families, and media sources like the *Asahi Shimbun*.<sup>100</sup> These groups have been able to influence the direction of Yasukuni politics. Notably, leftist groups opposed proposals for the re-nationalization of Yasukuni in the 1950-70s.<sup>101</sup> However, these parties and political groups have not been able to pool the same political power, and the LDP has only lost its parliamentary majority once, in 2009.<sup>102</sup> Their main function has been aligning with China and South Korea to exert pressure on the conservative LDP majority, instead of taking direct control over the manner in which the Yasukuni controversy is handled.

### *Typology of Key Stakeholders*

Despite the complexity of the contest and the varying views of different actors, the main viewpoints can be classified as follows;

Category	Actor	Position on Issue	Consequence
Key Decision Makers	Former PM Koizumi	Received political support from Japan War-Bereaved Families Association prior to the election. Visited 6 times (several times unannounced) and opposed international interference.	Caused significant tensions with China and South Korea, and drew major public attention to the Yasukuni controversy.
	Former PM Abe	Visited once, but the visit was ill-received by China, South Korea, and the US. Has since sent offerings in private but not visited in person.	Helped maintain more stable relations with China and South Korea. Walking a fine line between campaign promises to conservative factions and Japan's diplomacy.
Actors Exerting External Pressure	Shrine Officials	Opposed to the removal of Class-A war criminals and Taiwanese/Korean/Okinawans who do not want to be listed on the register. Support for historical narratives sympathetic to Japan.	Source of opposition to changes in the status quo. Actively maintains the image of Yasukuni as a key and deeply meaningful war memorial to Japan's war dead.
	China & South Korea	Deeply opposed to continued ministerial visits, the inclusion of Class-A war criminals, and Yasukuni historic narrative. Direct diplomatic pressure on Japan to change the way it handles its historical remembrance.	Resulting in the souring of diplomatic ties with Japan. Koizumi 2003 visit to China was called off. Lack of dialogue. Challenges in carrying out effective diplomacy.
	United States	Issued a statement of disappointment in reference to Abe's 2013 shrine visit.	Signalled to the Japanese government that the shrine may be an obstacle in US-Japan-Asia

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 204.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> BBC News, "Japan Profile- Timeline," *BBC News*, April 26, 2019..

		relations.
Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	The dominant party in Japanese politics, a strong support base in right-wing associations that support the shrine.	Ties to pro-shrine groups ensure that it continues to be included in PM campaign promises.
<i>Komeito</i> <sup>103</sup>	LDP coalition partner with pacifist Buddhist platform, became increasingly opposed to Koizumi visits and voiced opposition to Abe's visit.	Has been needed as a political partner by the LDP, serving to temper some of the LDP's stances.
Japanese Communist Party & Social Democratic Party	Leftist perspectives on the shrine, opposed the re-nationalization of the shrine, feel it is a relic of militarism and feudalism.	Parties continue to generate opposition, bolstering support for South Korean and Chinese perspectives.
Japan Conference ( <i>Nippon Kaigi</i> )	Key members of the LDP are involved within this group. Holds political clout and reflects support for continued shrine visits and cultivation of Japanese national pride.	Influence is not as direct as that of the Japan War-Bereaved Families Association but reflects rightist attitudes towards Yasukuni within the LDP.
Japanese Business Federation ( <i>Keidanren</i> ) & Japan Association of Corporate Executives ( <i>Keizai Doyukai</i> )	Largest business actors. Opposed Koizumi's visits when they started impacting Japanese business interests with China.	Signal to the Japanese government that visiting the shrine has economic ramifications.
Japan War-Bereaved Families Association (JABF) ( <i>Nippon Izokukai</i> )	Key LDP constituency. Aggressively argued in support of visits to the shrine. Recent support for the transfer of Class-A war criminals to a separate facility.	Actively influenced ministerial decisions and promises to visit the shrine. Key element in shaping the governmental view of the controversy.
Public Opinion	Varied views on the issue, a sizable portion of citizens have supported continued visits to Yasukuni. 2001-2006 noted an increase in opponents to ministerial visits and increased support for creating a non-religious facility for war remembrance/removal of Class-A criminals.	Reflects the public's rising concern for the fallout of the Yasukuni visits. While many support visits to the shrine, there is a concern for how this is carried out.

<sup>103</sup> Japan Times, "Komeito Chief Calls on Takaichi Not to Visit Yasukuni," *Japan Times*, October 15, 2014.



As a result of the numerous different views by different actors in relation to the shrine, three key issues have emerged which have complicated the decision-making process surrounding commemoration at the Yasukuni Shrine.

### *Issue I: Private or Official? Separation of State and Religion under Article 20 of the Japanese Constitution*

Although memory laws do not exist concerning the Yasukuni issue, under the Japanese constitution, separation of religion and state is underlined in two key articles. Article 20 posits that beyond freedom of religion for all, the state must also actively refrain from privileging any religious organizations or exerting political authority in any way - this includes refraining from 'religious education or any other religious activity.'<sup>104</sup>

Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to the shrine in 2001 heightened discussions on the relationship between the Japanese state and religion. To avoid this issue, he declared it an unofficial private visit, and following Nakasone, he wrote in the registry that he was not visiting as Prime Minister but as 'a man who is prime minister.'<sup>105</sup> However, his visit resulted in six lawsuits against the Japanese state, calling into question if his visit was constitutional according to Article 20.<sup>106</sup> There have been conflicting rulings as to what exactly constitutes private or official ministerial visits. In 2004, the Fukuoka District Court ruled that Koizumi's visits were unconstitutional whereas the Osaka District first initially ruled in Koizumi's favour only to rule the visits unconstitutional a year later on appeal.<sup>107</sup> In addition in 2006, the Japanese Supreme Court rejected the lawsuit against Koizumi and compensation was not given to those who believed the visit violated Article 20.<sup>108</sup> Indicating that the legality of official visits to the Shrine remains ambiguous in light of the constitution.

### *Issue II: Vowing for Peace or Commemorating War Criminals? Differing Views on the Significance of Paying Respects at the Shrine*

Differing conceptions of the way China, South Korea and Japan view Yasukuni can contribute to the inability of governments to resolve issues. There is a gap between the broad understanding of the significance of the Yasukuni issue in Japan and in China and Korea.<sup>109</sup> To the Japanese, visiting Yasukuni serves the purpose of promising to never wage war again, remembering those who died, and reflecting on the significance of the war without any intent to offend China or South Korea.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> *Nihonkoku Kenpo* (Constitution of Japan), Art. 20. The full provision reads: Freedom of Religion is Guaranteed to all. No religious organization shall receive any privileges from the state, nor exercise any political authority. 2. No person shall be compelled to take part in any religious acts, celebration, right or practice. 3. The State and its organs shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity.

<sup>105</sup> Jennifer Lind, "Beware the Tomb of the Known Soldier," *Global Asia* 8, no. 1 (2013).

<sup>106</sup> Akiko Takenaka, "Who has the Right to Mourn?" in *Yasukuni Shrine : History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 144.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, 146-7.

<sup>108</sup> Martin Fackler, "Japanese Supreme Court Rejects Lawsuit Challenging Prime Minister's Visits to War Shrine," *New York Times*, June 24, 2006.

<sup>109</sup> Yongwook Ryu, "The Yasukuni Controversy: Divergent Perspectives from the Japanese Political Elite," *Asian Survey* 47, no. 5 (2007): 714.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, 713.

This is exemplified by Former Prime Minister Koizumi's 2005 statement, in which he commented that:

We should not forget that the peace we enjoy today is founded on the sacrifices of those who went to the battlefield against their will and had to lose their precious lives there. My intention of the visit to Yasukuni Shrine is to mourn the war dead. Also, I visit Yasukuni Shrine to pledge that we shall never again wage a war.<sup>111</sup>

Furthermore, the separation of religion and state is a key part of Japanese domestic discussion. Surveys indicate that when polled about resolving the Yasukuni dispute, Japanese politicians were more in favour of creating a separate, non-religious memorial rather than removing the fourteen Class-A war criminals from Yasukuni.<sup>112</sup> In contrast, China and South Korea perceive Yasukuni as a symbol of the way in which Japan understands and glorifies its history and actions during the Second World War.<sup>113</sup> Yasukuni Shrine's official historiography of the war in the Asia-Pacific is that it was a 'war of self-defence' aimed at liberating Asia from Western colonial powers and not one of aggression. This position has ostracized China and South Korea and has drawn attention to Japan's reluctance and difficulty in accepting its role as an aggressor in the war.<sup>114</sup> To the international audience, official visits to Yasukuni where Class-A war criminals are enshrined implies the recognition of a distorted image of Japan's role in the war and justifying major acts of aggression and war crimes within the Asia-Pacific.<sup>115</sup>

### *Issue III: The Enshrinement of Class A War Criminals*

China and South Korea's objection to Yasukuni largely result from the enshrinement of fourteen Class-A war criminals.<sup>116</sup> They contend that Korean, Chinese, and Japanese citizens all suffered under the war of aggression waged by the fourteen Class-A war criminals and that ministerial visits to the shrine which houses these fourteen criminals are a reflection of Japan's justification and neglect of wrongdoings in the war.<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, the affiliation of the Yasukuni Shrine with the *Yushukan* which actively emphasizes narratives of self-defence and downplays atrocities committed by the Japanese has been a particular point of concern for Chinese and South Korean governments.<sup>118</sup> To external observers, the way the Japanese government handles the Yasukuni controversy is an indication of the broader way Japan reflects on its wartime past.<sup>119</sup>

During World War II, as Japanese colonial subjects, Taiwanese and Koreans were forced into Japanese military service, and then enshrined in Yasukuni without familial knowledge or consent.

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<sup>111</sup> Junichiro Koizumi, "Press Conference by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi Following the APEC Leaders' Meeting," November 19, 2005.

<sup>112</sup> Yongwook Ryu, "The Yasukuni Controversy: Divergent Perspectives from the Japanese Political Elite," *Asian Survey* 47, no. 5 (2007): 714.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 712-3.

<sup>114</sup> Akiko Takenaka, "Mobilizing Death: Developing the Myth of Yasukuni," in *Yasukuni Shrine: History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 49.

<sup>115</sup> Yongwook Ryu, "The Yasukuni Controversy: Divergent Perspectives from the Japanese Political Elite," *Asian Survey* 47, no. 5 (2007): 711-13.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 711.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 712.

<sup>120</sup> In the case of Okinawa, many Okinawan war casualties, some of whom are listed at Yasukuni, were caused by Japanese imperial forces.<sup>121</sup> Consequently, a notable group of Taiwanese, South Koreans, and Okinawans feel that enshrinement at Yasukuni is a violation of their dignity and that of their family members.

Family members of war dead or enshrined individuals who are still alive have brought forth lawsuits to strike their names from the Yasukuni register, and all have been rejected by Japanese courts.<sup>122</sup> Lawsuits have been raised throughout the 2000s. In 2006, 414 South Koreans sued the Japanese government to have their names or those of their relatives struck from the Yasukuni list, but their demands were rejected.<sup>123</sup> In 2008, Okinawans raised a lawsuit at the Naha District Court, suing to remove civilian names from Yasukuni Shrine and reparations receive a payment of 100,000 yen to each of the five plaintiffs in compensation for pain and suffering. This was also rejected by the court.<sup>124</sup> The reason for their rejection can be traced to Shinto rights. The Association of Shinto Shrines claims that the names of the fourteen Class-A war criminals cannot be removed from Yasukuni Shrine, because Shinto doctrine does not permit the removal of particular names from an ancestral tablet that includes all of the war dead.<sup>125</sup> Thus representatives of the Yasukuni Shrine have argued that the enshrinement is not reversible.<sup>126</sup>

## Summary and Conclusions

There has been no clear outcome on the Yasukuni Shrine issue as of 2021. The fourteen Class-A war criminals have yet to be removed from the Yasukuni Shrine and shrine officials continue to oppose doing so. A separate, non-religious war memorial has not been built. Since 2013, Prime Minister Abe has not visited the shrine, and this is the second consecutive year during which no Cabinet Ministers have paid respects at the shrine.<sup>127</sup> The Prime Minister continues to send private ritual offerings.<sup>128</sup> Many lower-level government officials and Diet (Parliament) members continue to pay respects at the Shrine.<sup>129</sup>

The Japanese Supreme Court has not made a clear statement on the constitutionality of the visits, and plaintiffs hoping to have their names, or those of their family members struck from the Yasukuni register, have not been successful. China and South Korea remain wary of visits and paying respects at the Shrine.

## Research contributed by Sherilyn Bouyer, Mairiri Niino, Paula O'Donohoe, and

<sup>120</sup> Akiko Takenaka, "Who has the Right to Mourn?" in *Yasukuni Shrine : History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 134.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Jun Hongo, "Koreans Sue Yasukuni to Get Names Delisted," *Japan Times*, February 27, 2007.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Akiko Takenaka, "Who has the Right to Mourn?" in *Yasukuni Shrine : History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 134 and 152.

<sup>125</sup> John Nelson, "Yasukuni: Behind the Torii: From Government-Run Shrine for War Heroes to Bone of Contention (Yomiuri Shimbun)," *Asia-Pacific Journal* 3, no. 7 (2005): 1-8.

<sup>126</sup> Japan Times, "Yasukuni Shrine Remains Opposed to Enshrining War Criminals at Separate Site," *Japan Times*, August 11, 2014; Japan Times, "Separation of War Criminals 'Will Never Happen': Yasukuni," *Japan Times*, June 5, 2005.

<sup>127</sup> "Japan PM Abe Refrains from Visiting Yasukuni Shrine on WWII Anniversary."

<sup>128</sup> "Japan PM Abe Refrains from Visiting Yasukuni Shrine on WWII Anniversary."

<sup>129</sup> "Japan PM Abe Refrains from Visiting Yasukuni Shrine on WWII Anniversary."

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## Figures

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## About Contested Histories

In recent years, there have been many contestations over memorials, street names, and other physical representations of historical legacies in public spaces. These contestations often reflect deeper societal tensions whether triggered by political transitions, demographic shifts, inter-ethnic strife, or a growing awareness of unaddressed historical injustices.

The Contested Histories project is a multi-year initiative designed to identify principles, processes, and best practices for addressing these contestations at the community or municipal level and in the classroom. Conflicts about history, heritage, and memory are a global phenomenon, and, although each case is different, comparative cases can indicate lessons learned and reflect best practices.

## About IHJR at EuroClio

The Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation (IHJR) is a research centre at EuroClio - European Association for History Educators in The Hague, The Netherlands. The IHJR works with educational and public policy institutions to organise and sponsor historical discourse in pursuit of acknowledgement and the resolution of historical disputes in divided communities and societies.

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